

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 33

by Zac Poonen

To be a radical disciple of Jesus Christ, one must be willing to be inconvenienced and sacrifice anything to follow the Lord, being led by the Holy Spirit moment by moment.

Duration: 24:19

Scripture: Romans 8:14

Topics: "Radical Discipleship", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon delves into the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 8, emphasizing the importance of following Christ wholeheartedly, even if it means sacrificing comfort and social obligations. Jesus exemplified a life of simplicity and reliance on the Holy Spirit, demonstrating the need for radical discipleship and being led by the Spirit in every aspect of life. The sermon highlights the discernment and prophetic ministry displayed by Jesus, encouraging believers to seek God's wisdom and love to minister effectively.

Transcript

Today we turn to Matthew's Gospel chapter 8 and verse 18, continuing our study in all that Jesus taught. Remember we are following Jesus' instructions in Matthew 28 verse 20, where he said that we were to go into all nations and teach people everything that I taught and commanded. So we are trying to see what Jesus taught through his words and also by his actions and by his life.

He taught in two ways, by his words and by his actions. So when Jesus saw the crowd around him in Matthew 8 verse 18, he gave orders to depart to the other side. And a certain scribe, a scribe refers to someone who is a scholar of scripture, one who spent years studying the Bible.

There were many people like that in those days, like today. You know the Bible college graduates. And he came and said to him, teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.

And Jesus said to him, the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head. He immediately told him the price he would have to pay if he was to follow Christ. Jesus never hid from people the price of physical inconvenience or physical loss that they would suffer if they were going to follow him.

A lot of people today try to hide that, but not Jesus. Right at the outset, for example, he told a rich young ruler, if you want to follow me, you got to give up all your money. He didn't say that to everybody.

But in that rich young ruler's case, his love of money was so deep-rooted like a cancer where the whole organ had to be removed. Whereas in the case of a man like Zacchaeus, the Lord only accepted even when he said half of his goods he gave to the poor. That was acceptable.

In the case of Lazarus and Mary and Martha, the Lord didn't ask for anything. So this cancer in many areas has progressed to different degrees in different people. So we find the Lord, in one case, told a person to give up everything he had.

Here, he sensed something in this person. The Lord had such tremendous discernment when he spoke to people exactly according to their need. That's one of the things that happens when we walk with God for many years.

That this is part of prophetic speaking. Prophetic ministry is not only in the pulpit. Prophetic ministry is in ordinary conversation as well, where you discern by God-given discernment a person's need.

And God gives you exactly the right word which that person needs. So when the Lord said this to him, this is not a sort of a standard reply he gave to everyone. He didn't tell this man, go and sell all that you have, give to the poor.

That he said to one person. To this person he says, foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests. Now, scribes tend to just quote standard scriptures.

They've been taught in seminary, for this problem quote this scripture, for this problem quote this scripture. And their ministry to people and their counseling of people is based on academic understanding of the Bible. You know, just like people are employed by computer companies to answer customers over the phone.

And the customer asks for a problem and this guy looks up on the computer. That particular problem enters that into the computer, gets a reply on the computer and reads it out on the phone to the customer. This is not how we are supposed to do ministry.

Ministry is to be done by supernatural discernment. That's why we need the anointing of the Holy Spirit to have exactly the right word. Like the Old Testament prophets, when they were anointed by the Holy Spirit, they had exactly the right word for each person who came.

Ministry is a very costly affair. It's not something you can do just by studying the Bible. You've got to walk with God.

When you walk with God, that fellowship with God will give you the right word for each occasion. And that's why you find Jesus always said different things to different people. For example, when there was the Pharisees who wanted to stone a woman caught in adultery.

Well, Jesus didn't give them a big lecture on legalism. What would you have done in such a situation? He didn't give them a big lecture on compassion. He sought the Father.

He waited for a few moments and that's why he was scribbling on the sand, to be clear in his mind. And as soon as he heard from the Father, he just said one sentence. He who is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone.

That's all. And they went away one by one. It wasn't a sermon that solved the problem.

It was one sentence. This is an example of the way we can walk as well in our ministry. If we walk with God, there's a price to be paid for that.

We have to keep a clear conscience. We have to walk in humility. We have to be free from the love of money.

We have to be totally committed. No area of our life must be free from surrender to the Lord. That's how Jesus walked.

And so here this man came and Jesus discerned something in him. And he said, the foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. He discerned that this man was a Bible seminary scholar, scribe.

And he thought serving the Lord he could live comfortably and serve the Lord. And Jesus said, no, you may not have a place to sleep. Now this is an answer to many people who are teaching nowadays that Jesus was a very rich person.

There is that type of teaching going on in the last 40, 50 years, or 30, 40 years, or the last 25 years more, which was never heard of before in Christendom. And that's because we are living in a day when a lot of preachers have become fantastically rich through receiving tithes and offerings from their followers, through preaching that, collecting that, and the opportunity there is through television and so many other ways to collect from a whole lot of people who have never seen your face, to collect through mail and through the bank, etc. And there are preachers who have become multimillionaires.

And how to justify their millions and to still say that they are following Jesus? The only way to do it is somehow find scriptures from here and there to prove that Jesus was a rich person. For example, they say things like, the Roman soldiers did not tear up his inner garment because it was sort of a branded type of thing that Jesus was wearing. It's ridiculous.

But here is a clear proof of how he lived. The son of man has nowhere to lay his head. He didn't always find a place to sleep.

He was not a wealthy man. He was not a person who could go and stay in some five-star inn in those days and spend the money that he collected from people. He was a very simple preacher.

Here is a proof of this. The son of man has nowhere to lay his head. I want you to turn with me to John's Gospel, Chapter 7. And here we read of that great sermon he preached in the temple where in the last day of the feast he said, If anyone is thirsty, John 7, 37, come to me and drink.

He who believes in me from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water. And there were many other words he preached. It was so impressive that the multitude said in John 7, 40, certainly the prophet and the Pharisees and others had sent some people to catch him.

And the officers came back in verse 45 and they asked him, Why didn't you bring him? And even those military officers who had gone to capture Jesus came back saying, Never did a man, verse 46, John 7, 46, speak the way this man spoke. They were impressed by the tremendous sermons he preached at that particular occasion in the temple. And then we read at the end of that chapter after everything was over, Everyone went to his own home, John 7, 53.

Remember, Jesus is in Jerusalem. His home is more than 100 kilometers away in Capernaum. And everyone went to his own home, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

These two sentences are actually one sentence even though it's been split by the chapter division there, John 7, 53 and John 8, 1. Everyone went to his own home, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Have you ever thought of that? A preacher comes in from another town and preaches these powerful messages that bless everybody. And at the end of the day, nobody asks him, Where are you staying tonight? They just ignore him and go home.

And Jesus didn't have a home in Jerusalem. So what does he do? When everybody's gone and nobody's invited him to their home? He says, Well, it's not raining. I can go and sleep under the trees in the Mount of Olives.

He goes to the Mount of Olives, sleeps there under the trees. The Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head. The foxes have holes.

The birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Why didn't he spend some of that money which Judas Iscariot had in his bag at this time and go and stay in an inn? He wouldn't do that. Because I thought a lot about this once when I saw this.

I said, Didn't you want to be fresh, Lord, for the next day? You could have had some rest in an inn instead of sleeping out in the open. I felt the Lord said to me that a lot of that money that came to Judas Iscariot came from poor widows who had put in their mites. And he would never think of using those poor widows' mites to go and stay in some posh hotel.

He would rather stick it out. It's that type of faithfulness that you see in Jesus. I'm not saying it's wrong to go and stay in a hotel.

Don't misunderstand me and don't misquote me. What I'm saying is that there is a time and a place for that where it's needed. But in this particular case, he was led by the Father to, Well, I shouldn't use that.

Let me go and sleep under the trees. And the next morning, John 8, verse 2, he came back again to the temple. And the people came to him and he began to teach them again.

And the interesting thing I see here is nobody asks him, Lord, where did you sleep last night, by the way? No. It's amazing the callousness of people. And we see here he just continued to teach.

He didn't have a complaint about it. Isn't that wonderful to follow his example? That people ignore you even though you're the great invited preacher. And you don't have a complaint against anybody about anything.

It's a wonderful way to live. And I want to encourage all of you who are preachers of God's Word, who expect people to do so many things for you and expect so many things and you're disappointed when they don't do it or you have a little complaint or a little grumble in your heart, be satisfied with what you have and don't expect anything. And then you'll always rejoice in the Lord.

You'll never have a single murmur of grumbling or complaining in your heart ever. So when Jesus said in Matthew 8 and verse 20 that the Son of Man is no place to land, it was literally true in some places as we just saw in the Gospels and probably in many other places too. We don't have the full record of his three

and a half years of ministry.

So what he was telling this man is you want to follow me wherever I go? Matthew 8, 19, you see this is what you want to do? Do you know what it's going to cost you? You won't be able to exploit poor people and take advantage of their money and live in great style yourself. No. If you want to follow me, be willing to be inconvenienced, be willing to give up some of your comforts, be willing to deny yourself a good bed, deny yourself good food, many other things like that.

Then we read in Matthew 8, 21, another of the disciples said to him, this was a disciple now, not a scribe. The first was a scribe. Matthew 8, 21, another disciple came to him and said, Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.

Now, I don't know exactly what was meant by that. It's very difficult to say because I cannot imagine if his father had died and it was just a matter of going for the funeral service that Jesus would be so hard-hearted to say you can't even go for the funeral service of your father if you want to follow me. I don't think it's exactly that.

It's difficult to say. Perhaps, I'm only saying perhaps, perhaps it meant let me wait till my dad dies and bury him, then I'll come and follow you. I've got certain obligations at home and my dad's old and when he dies and I buried him, I'll follow you.

And the Lord said, follow me. Allow the dead to bury their own dead. Now, whatever the reason for that be, one thing is clear.

There are times when the Lord speaks to us and says, following me and my ministry is more important than even a social obligation like burying your father. Sometimes it happens like that. I remember I was in a conference, in the middle of a conference, when I heard that my mother was dying.

She was in her last moments. She had been sick for a while and then I heard she died. And I sought the Lord about it that morning.

I said, Lord, what shall I do? I'm sure everybody in this conference will understand if I walk away from it because I have to go and go for my mother's funeral. Nobody will object to that. And the Lord gave this word to me.

So I wrote to my brother, sister, and my sons over there. I can't come. You please take care of it.

And I continued to the conference. I'm not saying that's a rule. There are times when God himself tells you something.

And if you are a disciple, you must be willing for anything. So I didn't go. And I don't have any regret.

I went to see my mother in heaven. She was saved and she went to be with the Lord. To me it was just like her traveling to another country.

Okay, I couldn't be there to send her off. Fine. Dear brothers and sisters, if you are going to be a radical disciple of Jesus Christ, if you want to walk as Jesus walked, if you want to accomplish what God has planned for you in your one earthly life, I want to tell you, you can't live by certain social rules and don't quote me and make this a law in your life.

I have not made it a law for anybody. But what I say is, you must be willing to be inconvenienced and sacrifice anything if you want to follow the Lord. Jesus said, if you love father or mother more than me, you are not worthy of me.

Now this is radical teaching. But that is the type of discipleship that is so lacking in Christendom today. And that is one of the reasons why there is such shallowness in the lives of most Christians.

And that is why there are so few Christians in the world today who can say to others, follow me as I follow Christ. And the world needs more Christians like that. So here we see that Jesus said to him, let the dead bury the dead.

And he got into his boat and the disciples followed him. Very often Jesus would just say one word to someone. There was nothing more to be said.

And like I said, Jesus may not have given that same answer to someone else who also wanted to go and attend his father's funeral. To each person Jesus had an appropriate word. We don't live under the law in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament there were laws. In such and such a situation you do this. In some other situation you do this.

It was clear cut. But in the New Covenant we are led by the Holy Spirit. And in one particular set of circumstances the Lord may tell us to do something.

And in a similar set of circumstances on another occasion the Lord may tell us to do the exact opposite. This is the beauty of being led by the Holy Spirit. At one time he may tell you to attend a funeral.

Another time he may tell you not to attend it. You see it's like that. So many Christians unfortunately still seek to live by rules.

And that's why whenever they hear a preacher or hear a sermon they're looking for rules. I want to say to you I'm not teaching rules here. Jesus didn't.

What shall we learn from all that Jesus taught by his life? Basically listen to the Holy Spirit. He will lead you moment by moment to the right path. The Bible says in Romans 8 and it's a beautiful verse and you need to understand it properly.

In Romans chapter 8 it says in verse 16 verse 14 sorry Romans 8 14 those who are led by the Spirit of God these are the sons of God. What about all the others? They are children of God. There's a difference between children and sons in the New Testament.

As many as received him to them he gave the authority to be children of God. As soon as you receive Christ you become a child of God. You're born again.

But if you allow the Holy Spirit to lead you thereafter day by day then you're a mature son. Many Christians are still babies. That's why we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

We need to live under the anointing of the Holy Spirit every day. If there's one thing we can learn from the way Jesus lived all that he taught by his actions it is to be led by the Holy Spirit moment by moment even in the answers one sentence answers that he gives to people exactly appropriate according to their need. I

wonder whether you believe that God can give you that type of anointing where you have a word according to the need of everybody.

Let me read a verse that's been a great help to me in my own life. In Luke chapter 21 verse 15. It's a promise I've claimed many times in my own life not for public ministry alone but even for private conversation with people who come to me asking questions.

Luke 21 15 the Lord says I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your enemies will be able to resist or refute. Luke 21 15 For me it's been a great promise in my life. You know if you don't believe the Lord can do that for you you won't experience it.

But if you claim the promise it's like taking a check to the bank and saying I want to cash this this is being signed by Jesus Christ take it to the bank of heaven and say in Christ's name I claim this. This is for me that I can have an utterance and a wisdom for every situation which nobody will be able to resist or refute. I mean they may hate me they may call me all types of names Beelzebub perhaps like they call Jesus it doesn't matter but it'll be the wisdom of God.

Dear brothers and sisters long for this. You brothers and sisters also the Bible says sisters can prophesy in the new covenant and that doesn't mean getting up in the pulpit and teaching it means having a word according to people's needs that's the prophetic word. So that's the great thing we see here in the way Jesus answered these two people with two different needs the spirit of God gave him discernment.

Now one two things I want to say in conclusion the Lord has spoken to me when I was seeking to know God to have how can I have a word for every single occasion that I am to speak whether it's individually to people or in a TV program like this or in a pulpit in a conference and the Lord says has spoken to me this saying first of all your heart must be filled with my word God's word must fill your heart and secondly your heart must be filled with love for my people that's it if you're anointed with the Holy Spirit that's of course primary and you don't just rely on that but you study God's word and fill your mind with God's word and let the spirit of God fill your heart with love for God's people I can assure you something God will always give you a word according to the need of the people you speak to I have experienced that for years and God has got no favorites what he does for me he'll do for you I believe many years ago what God did for Jesus he'll do for me I want to encourage you to believe that so that you can also walk on earth and serve the Father like Jesus did God bless you we'll continue in our next episode

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