

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 47

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of true discipleship and understanding Jesus' teachings in the context of the Great Commission and the role of the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 24:59

Scripture: Matthew 12:30

Topics: "Discipleship", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of following all that Jesus commanded, teaching others to do the same, and the promise of Jesus' presence to those who obey His teachings. It delves into the significance of being with or against Jesus, the concept of forgiveness for speaking against the Son of Man, the warning against blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, and the need to focus on producing good fruit by having a good tree. The message stresses the importance of genuine discipleship and discerning true spiritual fruit.

Transcript

We continue our study today on all that Jesus taught. We've been looking at this for a number of weeks now, concerning everything that Jesus taught by his life and his words, because this is what he said before he went up to heaven, that we are to go and teach others to do everything he commanded. So, in order to understand that, we need to see what he taught by his life and his words, and it's only then that he said in the last verse of Matthew, Lo, I am with you always to the end of the age.

That promise is specifically given, if you read that last verse, only to those who do everything Jesus commanded, and who teach others to do what Jesus commanded. If that is your passion in life, to do everything Jesus commanded, and to teach others to do everything Jesus commanded, and with that end in view, you study the Gospels, study the life of Jesus and his teaching, you can have the perfect assurance that the Lord will be with you in a special way in which he is not with many other believers. So that's important for us to understand.

That's a great blessing to have the Lord say to us, Lo, I am with you always to the end of the age, because you're going around doing what I've commanded, and teaching others to do what I've commanded. I would urge you to meditate on that last verse of Matthew's Gospel. It's on the basis of that that we've been studying all that Jesus taught in these last few weeks.

So we turn today to Matthew chapter 12 verse 30. The Pharisees had just told Jesus that he was casting out demons through telling the people that Jesus was casting out demons through the power of the prince of demons, Satan. So he was going on to say there, when he said that a house divided itself cannot stand, he taught an important principle here.

Who is with Jesus and who is not with him? In Matthew 12 verse 30, he says, He who is not with me is against me. Now, this appears on the surface to contradict what Jesus said in another passage to the Gospels in Luke chapter 9, where he told his disciples when they were concerned about someone who was not following them. And Jesus said to them something which appeared to be very different.

In Luke chapter 9, when they met certain people who were casting out demons, but not following with them, Jesus said, don't forbid him. Don't follow him, don't forbid him. Because it doesn't matter if he doesn't preach discipleship, he's casting out demons, that's fine.

Because he who is not against us is for us. In Luke chapter 9 verse 50, Do not hinder him, for he who is not against you is for you. Now that appears to contradict what it says here, he who is not with me is against me.

But when you see two apparently contradictory verses in scripture, you must remember that both are true. In the context in which Jesus was saying it here, in Luke chapter 9 verse 50, he was replying to the disciples saying, Master we saw someone casting out demons, Luke 9 verse 49, and we tried to hinder him, we wanted to stop him, because he doesn't follow along with us. In other words, if I were to paraphrase it, his ministry seems to be casting out demons.

He doesn't seem to be emphasizing discipleship. So what do we do when we find someone like that today? They just go around casting out demons, and they're not teaching people to follow Jesus, and to be disciples. Well, the word of the Lord is, don't hinder him, because he who is not against you is for you.

In other words, he was telling the disciples, at least the guy is not against you, he's not speaking against you, he's doing a certain ministry, casting out demons, leave him alone. So the principle is, don't hinder him, and don't join him. That's important to remember.

He didn't say, okay, you fellas go and join him and do the same thing. No, leave him alone, let him do his work, but you do what you're called to do, which is discipleship. It doesn't mean that we have to work together with people who have a different vision, because the work will get diluted.

If God has called you to make disciples, you must stick to that. But we don't hinder or speak against others who are casting out demons. We believe ultimately the Lord wants to make disciples, and that was the commission that he finally gave to his disciples in Matthew 28, and verses 18 to 20.

But remember, this was long before that. This was long before the Day of Pentecost. There was no commission at that time to go and make disciples.

So if people were casting out demons, that was fine. If they didn't join up with Jesus and his disciples, that's okay. But today the situation is different.

We still follow the principle that we don't hinder someone who is doing that, but we can't say that that person is doing the full purpose of God. The full purpose of God is you cast out demons, bring the person to Christ, make him a disciple, baptize him and make him a disciple. If that's not done, we don't hinder him,

but we make it clear that that's not the calling of the church.

And we have to make it clear to people who may be deceived by such a ministry also. So we must remember when we are reading the Gospels that certain things permitted, Jesus permitted, for example, he permitted the payment of tithe. Lepers to go and show themselves to the priests.

And even when one rich young ruler came to him and said, what must I do to inherit eternal life? What would you answer someone who asked you today? How can I have eternal life? Would you tell him keep the commandments? But that's what Jesus said. You read in Mark chapter 10. That's one of those clear, many examples like this which show that the new covenant age had not yet started.

That started only on the day of Pentecost. So until then, somebody spends his time casting out demons, is not interested in discipleship, don't hinder him, let him do that. Now, we have to urge everyone to make disciples because that's a great commission.

So in that connection, he says here in Matthew 12 verse 30, he who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. So in this matter of following Jesus and building his church, if you're not wholeheartedly with him, you're in a limited way against him. See, the non-Christian is obviously against the Lord.

He's not even claiming to have anything to the Lord. But when a Christian claims to be belonging to the Lord and claims to be doing the Lord's work, and he's not gathering together, he can actually be a hindrance. For example, we can take the example of a building site.

Supposing you've got 20 workers there, and 10 of them are working hard, and 10 of them are just sitting around doing nothing, and talking, and wasting people's time, and getting in the way of other people doing the work. Would you say they're doing nothing? They're doing no harm? They're doing a tremendous amount of harm. They're against the building of that building because they're hindering the others who are working.

They're wasting their time talking about a lot of things. If they had gone away from that site, those 10 people could have done a better job. So there's an example of, he who is not with me, is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.

If you're gathering from the fields, the harvest, and a lot of people are hanging around there, and the fields are not doing anything, just standing there in the way of others, they're hindering. They're going to stumble others, and hinder them, and whatever they gather will slip out of their hand, and it scatters. So there are examples like this which indicate that if you're not a wholehearted disciple of Jesus, just forget about being a Christian.

We must have no interest in going around gathering people whose only aim is to go to heaven. I personally said that openly and to the Lord. I have no interest at all in gathering together people who want to go to heaven when they die.

Is there any human being in the world, 7 billion people, who don't want to go to heaven when they die? Every single person wants to go to heaven. Nobody wants to go to hell. And if that is the only reason for which people are coming, and I'm not interested, because Jesus said, go and make disciples.

So therefore, we're not really interested in people who just come around because, hey, I want to go to heaven when I die. And that's not the gospel we preach. But unfortunately, that is the gospel being preached by a lot of people today.

Whereas the Great Commission is, go and make disciples, and teach them to do every single thing that I have commanded. And I want to tell you, that very few people are doing that. But those are the people who are really doing God's work.

You may not realize it today, that work is small. Obviously it's small because they're concentrating on quality and not on quantity. In the world, they emphasize quantity.

Every company examines its progress by, what does the balance sheet show? How much is the profit? And when a Christian church goes that way, it's gone the way of the world. Jesus made disciples. It's not quantity, but quality he looked for.

Whenever he saw huge numbers, he turned around and said to them some of the hardest words that he ever said. Luke 14, 25, and 26, when these great multitudes followed him. And he turned around and said, you can't follow me if you don't hate your father, mother, brother, sister, wife, and children.

Is that the type of sermon any preacher would preach to a great multitude following him? No, because Jesus was not interested in quantity. He was interested in quality. I've heard a little story of a mother rabbit talking to a lioness and saying, I had 20 little rabbits last year.

You know, rabbits multiply very fast. How many do you have? And the lioness said, I had only one last year, but that was a lion. You see, that's the difference.

Are we gathering a whole lot of rabbits or having some lions? Are we having disciples or a great crowd of people who are sitting in our church whose only aim is to go to heaven when they die? And they want preachers who will tell them how to go to heaven when they die. And I want to say this also. Most of them are not going to go to heaven when they die because their preachers have deceived them.

Just believe in Jesus. Even the devils believe. That type of thing is not going to take anyone into God's kingdom.

The safest thing is to be a disciple and to make disciples. Then you're sure of where you're going. So he who does not gather with me scatters.

He hinders God's work if he's not gathering wholehearted disciples. 31. Any sin can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

So there is only one sin that Jesus said will never be forgiven. And what is it? From the context, what we see here is an attitude towards the Holy Spirit. You know the Holy Spirit is working here and you stand against it.

The Holy Spirit is trying to say something to you and you resist it. You know there are two types of sins. Sins of action and sins of attitude.

For example, telling a lie. That's a sin of action. Or slapping somebody.

That's a sin of action. Adultery is a sin of action. But there are other sins which are sins of attitude like hatred, bitterness, jealousy, an unforgiving spirit, pride, selfishness.

These are sins of attitude. Now is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit a sin of an action, a single action, or a sin of an attitude? I believe it's a sin of an attitude because that's what these Pharisees were demonstrating here. An attitude against the Holy Spirit.

And it need not be just in the way they spoke to Jesus. Today it could be in an attitude where you resist and resist and resist the pleadings of the Holy Spirit till you cross a line and the Holy Spirit just stops pleading with you. That can happen.

Now the important thing is not to define what the sin against the Holy Spirit is. What is more important is to know whether you have committed it or not. It doesn't matter.

Definition is not important. It's not, for example, the definition of humility is not the main thing. The important thing is to be humble.

So in the same way, in this area the important thing is not a definition which is what a lot of people seek. What is the sin against the Holy Spirit? That's not important to know because it's not very clear what exactly it is and we don't want to be wrong here. But one thing we can be sure of we can know definitely whether we have committed it.

And that's enough. How do we know whether we have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit or not? It's the Holy Spirit who brings us to repentance. Look at this verse, for example, in Acts chapter 11 and verse 18, the last part.

God has granted to the Gentiles repentance that leads to life. That is through the Holy Spirit's working. All the working of God today in the world in people's lives is through the Holy Spirit.

So the Holy Spirit led people to repentance. So if you find in your heart a desire to turn from sin to repent, to turn around then you can be absolutely sure that you have not committed the sin against the Holy Spirit. No matter what you have spoken against the Holy Spirit or what you have done in your life or however great crimes you have committed you have not sinned against the Holy Spirit if there is the slightest desire in you to turn around and come back to the Lord.

That is the test. Because in a person who has committed that sin a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit stops pleading with that person and he will never have a desire to repent. He will be hard and he can sin and have no desire to repent.

He makes a joke of sin. I think in my whole life I can think of only one person I have ever met like that who could sin and make a joke of the whole thing. I was amazed.

He could go and commit adultery and make a joke of the whole thing. And he was supposed to be a Christian. Well, there I would say it's possible that he had committed a sin against the Holy Spirit that he had resisted the Holy Spirit so long that the Spirit of God's conscience was hardened and he had no desire to turn.

But we are not here to judge who has committed that sin or not. I am still only guessing. But we can definitely know about yourself.

You may not be able to know about another person but you can definitely know about yourself whether you have committed that sin or not. I say this so that you don't let the devil bring you under unnecessary condemnation making you feel, oh, I've committed that sin, now there's no hope for me. I've had a number of people in my life ask me, do you think I've sinned against the Holy Spirit? I ask them one simple question.

Do you have a desire to turn from sin and trust in Jesus now? They say yes. Well, I can assure you that you have not sinned against the Holy Spirit. We go to the next verse.

Whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him. But whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven in this age or in the age to come. Again, I think that speaking against the Holy Spirit is a deliberate knowing standing against the work of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes there are these fake preachers who do all types of crazy things like pushing people down with their hand and saying this is the work of the Holy Spirit and they say don't you dare speak against the Holy Spirit because you'll never be forgiven. It's a verse which many preachers use to scare people. And so people get scared and say okay I will not speak against it.

I've spoken against that type of garbage all my life. And when people try to scare me with this verse, I say do you know there's another verse in 1 John 4.1. You know the devil also quoted a verse to Jesus saying it is written. And Jesus replied saying it is also written.

So when people speak to me and say don't speak against these things because it is written if you speak against the Holy Spirit you won't be forgiven. I say to them it is also written in 1 John 4.1 beloved don't believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. And that's what I'm doing.

I won't test every action. Is that from the Holy Spirit? And for me there's a fourfold test to see whether something is from the Holy Spirit. Did Jesus do it? Did Jesus teach it? Did the apostles do it? Did the apostles teach it? And if it's no on all four counts I say I reject it.

That's not from the Holy Spirit. Because if it is from the Spirit I'll see it in one of these four areas. So we should not be afraid to test the spirits.

If you don't do that you're disobeying 1 John 4.1 and you deserve to be deceived. Because you're not obeying God's word. And that's how so many people are deceived because they are scared by this verse.

Don't allow anybody to scare you by quoting scripture when there's some other scripture which tells you to test every single spirit and every single manifestation. Because there's a lot of deception going on in Christendom right now. Just like the Bible says.

Deceiving spirits will flood Christendom in the last days. So here it says in verse 32 also whoever speaks against the Son of Man will be forgiven. This is an amazing verse.

He's not just telling the Pharisees that they are forgiven for speaking against him at that time and calling him the ruler of demons or working with the ruler of demons. He's saying whoever for the next 2,000 or 10,000 years whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man is forgiven. God, Jesus is offering forgiveness to every single person who speaks against him.

What an attitude to have when we say we want to be like Jesus. Every Christian says I want to be like Jesus. What does it mean to be like Jesus? Well, there's one area we can be like him that we decide right at the outset whoever ever speaks or harms me, speaks against me or harms me in any way right now I say he's forgiven.

I have nothing against him. I'm not going to hold anything against him. I will not keep a grudge against him even for a single moment.

Leave alone for a single day. He is forgiven. He's forgiven because he doesn't know what he's doing.

He doesn't know what a serious crime it is to speak against the child of God. He doesn't know it. If he knew it, he wouldn't dare to do it.

But he's so blind. He's so lacking in spiritual intelligence that he speaks against God's children. Forgive him.

He's a spiritual idiot. What do you do with an idiot who comes and says some foolish things to you on the road? You don't pick up a fight with him. In the same way, there are spiritual idiots who keep on criticizing God's people and criticizing God's servants and finding fault with them.

Leave them alone. Just treat them like the dumb idiots you meet on the road, perhaps, and ignore them. Forgive them.

Don't take it seriously what they say because there's spiritual idiocy, just like there is normal idiocy. We go on to the next verse, Matthew chapter 12, verse 33. He's continuing to speak on the same subject, really.

He says, it's not just a question of slightly changing your words and your behavior. Just, you know, okay, in the future, I won't do this particular thing. That doesn't solve the problem because that is external refinement.

Management seminars conducted by companies for management executives teach people to refine their external behavior so that sales can improve and working together in a company can improve. They're all seeking their own gain and benefit and profit. But here, he says, this is not going to solve the problem as far as Christianity is concerned.

You have to make the total tree good and then its fruit will be good. Or make the tree bad and the fruit will be bad. The tree is known by its fruit.

For example, if you have a tree in your garden that's producing, let's say, bad mangoes, as soon as it comes out, it's rotten. You can see that it's rotten. It's very, very bad.

And you can do one thing. You can keep cutting off the fruit and go and buy some really good mangoes in the market and tie it up here and there in the branches of that tree and fool everybody who passes by your house that you've got a fantastically rich mango tree. So much of fruit and such luscious fruit.

But it's a deception. The real tree is producing a lot of corrupt mangoes. But you're not letting anybody see it because as soon as it comes up, you cut it off.

You're buying some good mangoes from the market and tying it up here and there carefully in the branches and people thinking that's the fruit of the tree. This is a perfect picture of many, many Christians.

They cover up all the wrong things that they do in secret, in darkness and in their homes and many other places.

But they put on all this good fruit in the presence of others to fool passers-by, to fool others who know them that they're godly people. And Jesus says that's not the answer. You need to make the whole tree good.

That's why John the Baptist said, the axe is laid to the root of the tree. We can say that the old covenant under the law, God gave Israel a pair of scissors to cut off bad fruit as soon as it came. And so you found in Israel, you found hardly any murder and adultery and theft, et cetera, because the commandments were there.

That was like fruit that cut off, that was like scissors that cut off the bad fruit immediately. Whereas in the other nations around Israel, there was terrible sin. But they had a pair of scissors.

They were just as bad, but the pair of scissors immediately nipped everything so they didn't develop, so the nation had a good testimony. But it did not make the tree good. In the new covenant, God has taken away the pair of scissors.

Jesus came with an axe, as you read in Matthew chapter 3, and laid it to the root of the tree to cut it from its root. You know, once the bad tree is cut from the root, it can't produce any bad fruit. And Jesus has planted a good tree, a tree that produces good fruit.

Then you don't have to go to the market to buy good mangoes to fool people, because you're not interested in fooling people now. You're interested in having a really good tree. So that's the point here.

Make the tree good, and then its fruit will be good. But if the tree is bad, you know, the fruit will be bad, and the tree is known by its fruit. We cannot examine a person's inner life or his heart.

God alone knows the heart. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. The heart means the roots of a tree.

We don't know anything about the roots of a tree. Whenever you see a tree, you don't see its roots. But we look at the fruit, and by the fruit, you can gauge what the tree is like.

So in a sense, you don't have to look inside a person's heart. The fruit that comes out of that tree is an indication. Jesus said, by their fruit, you shall know them.

You shall know by its fruits. He warned us against false prophets in Matthew 7 by saying, look at the fruit in their life. So remember this.

The main thing we should look for in one another is not gift, but fruit. By fruit, we know whether a person is godly or not. We'll continue our study in our next episode.

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