

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 62

by Zac Poonen

We must learn to cry out to the Lord with specificity, humility, and sincerity, acknowledging our need and God's need of us.

Duration: 25:51

Scripture: Matthew 20:30

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Humility Before God"

Description

This sermon delves into the teachings of Jesus found in Matthew chapters 20 and 21. It emphasizes the importance of crying out to the Lord in genuine need, being specific in prayer, acknowledging our sins and needs before God, and humbling ourselves like the donkey that carried Jesus. The sermon also highlights the significance of understanding the words we use in worship and the need for constant cleansing in our lives and in the house of God.

Transcript

We continue our study today on all that Jesus taught. We have been looking through the Gospels, the Gospel of Matthew, first of all, to try and understand what Jesus taught by his life, by his words, and by the circumstances through which he took his disciples to teach them life's lessons. So we've reached Matthew chapter 21 and verse, Matthew chapter 20 and verse 29 now.

As they were going out from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, Lord, have mercy on us, son of David. And the multitude sternly told them to be quiet.

But they cried out all the more, saying, Lord, have mercy on us, son of David. And Jesus stopped and called them and said, What do you want me to do for you? They said to him, Lord, we want our eyes to be opened. And moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes.

And immediately they regained their sight and followed him. There are at least three things we need to learn from here. Three or four things.

One, when we cry out to the Lord, when we are in need, we must cry out to the Lord for help. Even if we have found no solution in all of our life to our problem. That's what these blind men did.

And when they cried out to the Lord and others tried to stop them, they cried out all the more. That's the other thing we need to learn. When we are asking God to meet our need, a genuine need.

We have a promise in Philippians 4.19. My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. He hasn't promised to supply us all that we want, but certainly all that we need. Just like a good father will not give his children all that they want, but he'll give them all that they need.

There's a difference between our needs and our wants. Very often what we pray for is what we want. And God will give us what we need.

That's the promise in Philippians 4.19. So here is a genuine need. Blind people need sight. And they cried out to God and people said stop, don't do that, don't disturb him.

And there could be many reasons why other people tell us not to cry out to God, but we must just ignore them and carry on crying out to God for our need. That's the very important lesson that we need to learn first. And then, if they hadn't done that, just imagine here, if they hadn't done that, if they just listened to the advice of others, they would have missed out all their life on what God wanted to do for them.

And it's possible that some of you have missed out on what God wanted to do for you thus far because you listened to other people. Why don't you go to scripture and see what Jesus says instead of listening to the wrong advice maybe your parents give you or your relatives or your priests or pastors. Go to God's word and you will find what God has in store for you.

Don't miss out on that because people around you give you some contrary advice. That's a very, very important lesson to learn. Otherwise you'll miss out on something that could be yours, something that could be a life transforming experience for you.

I'm sure these folks never regretted the fact that they ignored what people said and did what their heart said. Cry out to God some more. And it says here they cried out all the more.

So when people tell you not to seek God for something, just ignore them and cry out to God all the more. And say, Lord have mercy on us. And the other thing I want you to see here is what we considered before that when we come to the Lord and pray a general prayer like, Lord have mercy on us or Lord bless us, these are most of the general prayers that people pray.

Lord bless me. Lord bless me. And the Lord says, what exactly? Specify what blessing you want.

What do you want me to do for you? Verse 32. We had to be specific. Lord, I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Lord, I want to be anointed to serve you. Lord, I want the gift of prophecy which you have told me in 1 Corinthians 14 verse 1 to seek for. Lord, I want a heart that can forgive other people completely, which you have told me to seek for so that I can be forgiven myself.

Lord, I want a heart that's filled with love for you and love for God's people. Ask for it. Be specific.

Don't just say, Lord bless me or Lord have mercy on me. Very often we don't get what we ask for because we're not specific. What do you want me to do for you? They said to him specifically, Lord, we want our eyes to be open.

That's the point where I want to stress that we must be willing to acknowledge our need. Lord, I am blind. That's what they were saying.

I want my eyes to be open. Acknowledge your need. Lord, I'm a very lustful man.

People in the church think I'm a very holy man. But you know I'm a man full of sexual lust and I'm not able to overcome it in secret. Lord, I confess I'm watching internet pornography.

I confess I'm lusting with my eyes. Be honest. Whatever your sin is, confess it.

And then the Lord will deliver you. But if you sort of beat around the bush and say, yeah, I'm a sinner sort of thing, you remain in your sin. Be specific and say, Lord, this is my problem.

My anger. I just cannot control my tongue. I speak in tongues in the church, but here I can't control my tongue at home.

My problem is not with other tongues. My problem is with my mother tongue. Be specific and ask the Lord to deliver you.

Whatever your problem is. Specific. Lord, my eyes are blind.

I want them to be open. And the Lord moved with compassion. Touch their eyes.

And I'm sure he asked them, those not recorded here, we know that from Matthew 9, verse 29. He asked them, do you believe that I can do this for you? He always asks that. Once we are specific about our need, he will ask us, do you believe that I can do this for you? And when you say, yes, I believe you can do it, we get what we ask for.

God is a good God. In most of the areas, we know what his will is. He wants the very best for us.

And the last thing I want to say in this connection is, when you get what you want, do what the blind man did. What was that? It says, when they regained their sight, they followed him. They said, hey, now we can see.

We can follow Jesus. Till now we couldn't see. Why has God given us sight? So that we can see Jesus and follow him.

They had such wisdom. They saw the reason why God gave them sight, was so that they could see Jesus now and follow him. And the reason why God blesses us in whatever way, is so that we can follow Jesus a little closer than we ever did before.

There's so many things we can learn from circumstances. All that Jesus taught through circumstances. Here's a classic example of what Jesus taught his disciples through these circumstances, which they didn't understand then.

But when the Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost, their eyes were opened to see the meaning behind all these little, little incidents that took place in their walk with Jesus for three and a half years. Now we go to Matthew 21. It says, they approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives.

And then Jesus sent two disciples saying to them, go into the village opposite you. Immediately you'll find a donkey tied there and caught with her. Untie them and bring them to me.

And if anyone says something to you, you shall say the Lord has need of them. And immediately he will send them. So here also we learn something of a spiritual lesson.

When Jesus decided to go in a triumphal entry as the king of Zion into Jerusalem before his crucifixion, he did not travel into Jerusalem like all kings do on horses, the grand animal that kings and generals ride on. Every king and general in the history of the world has ridden on horses. It's a magnificent animal.

But Jesus chooses a donkey, which has the reputation for being the most stupid and clumsy animal. Why did he do that? It says in verse 5, this took place, verse 4 and 5, that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled. Say, this is prophesied in Zechariah chapter 9, verse 9, say to the daughter of Zion, behold your king is coming to you, gentle, mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.

The king of the Jews, the king of Israel, the king of Zion, the church, comes riding on a donkey. Can you imagine how humiliating that is, to be riding on the stupidest animal of all. The devil chose a serpent to come into, because it says in Genesis 3, that that was the shrewdest and sharpest and cleverest of all the animals.

And Jesus chooses the stupidest and the dumbest of all animals to ride on. It's humility, you see the pride of Satan and the humility of Jesus Christ. And if you are proud of your cleverness and your wisdom like the serpent, you're a candidate for Satan to get into fellowship with you.

But if you're willing to humble yourself, I'm not saying we have to become like donkeys, but we must recognize that when it comes to spiritual matters, we are like donkeys, however clever we may be in earthly things. So if you take that position, God can use you. It says here that when the donkey was to be loosed and set free from being tied up, if anyone asks you, verse 3, just say the Lord has need of them.

What's the word? The Lord has need of that donkey. Look at yourself like that. Lord, you have need of me? Some of you may have a very low self-esteem.

You may say about yourself, Lord, I'm not like these gifted preachers. I'm just a useless ordinary person. I'm a poor helpless widow or just a very simple uneducated illiterate woman here in this church.

What can I do for you? I'm like a donkey. Aha, the Lord has need of you. That's the word in verse 3. You feel you're like a donkey? The Lord has need of you.

Remember that. Take that word from the Lord. The Lord has need of you.

Human beings may not have much need of you except to treat you like a beast of burden. But the Lord has need of you not to treat you like a beast of burden but to ride on you in the city. And we know that Jesus rode on that donkey.

It's interesting. Even in the Old Testament, we read of God using a donkey to speak to Balaam the prophet. Imagine a donkey speaking to a prophet.

It's an amazing story there. And it's the first instance that we know of in Scripture of an animal speaking in an unknown tongue, a language it had never learned. It began to speak to the prophet.

Donkeys don't speak in language. They began to speak in human language, supernaturally. And rebuking the prophet, correcting the prophet, God can use a donkey.

That's the message from the Old Testament. God can use a donkey. That's the message from the New Testament.

In both cases, we see the Lord using a stupid animal to speak His word and to be used for the Lord of glory to ride on. It also teaches us that a servant of God must always seek to have a low profile before men. We must not seek the high positions and seek to be like others riding on horses.

There are a lot of Christian preachers who want the latest cars and the best cars and want to use the money they get from other people to live in grand style themselves, completely contrary to the spirit of Christ. Now, if you're doing your own business and you've worked hard and you've earned money through your own business, live as you like. That's up to you.

You decide your standard of living and I'm certainly not here to dictate that to you. But, if you are living off the offerings of other poor people, then you better be careful how you live because that's not your money. It's money that poor people have given to God and you cannot use that to live in grand style yourself.

You have to humble yourself and say, well, I can't use other people's money to live like this. It's good for all servants of the Lord to take a low profile and to learn from Jesus. Behold, it says, look carefully.

The word behold means, verse 5, look carefully at your king. Is this the one whom you call your king? Look how he's coming, gentle, mounted on a donkey. And I would say to you, dear brothers and sisters, look carefully at your king.

We need to have this painting before our eyes always. Jesus riding on a donkey. All the time.

And the disciples went and did just as Jesus had directed them and brought the donkey and the colt and laid on them their garments on which he sat. And then the multitude spread their garments on the road. You know, so the donkey didn't have to walk on the dirt road, but could walk on the coats and shirts and scarves of the people.

It was being treated like a royal animal. Even the kings who rode in horses, people wouldn't throw their garments in front of the horse. But when Jesus came on a donkey, they threw the garments in front of it and respected him and they were waving their branches and spreading them on the road and they were crying out, saying, Hosanna, the son of David.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. Now I have often thought that that donkey could have suddenly had high thoughts about itself and saying, wow, what an important person I am.

People are throwing their garments in front of me. They're shouting Hosanna and waving palm leaves. I must be a really important person.

That's unfortunately how many Christians and Christian preachers behave when other people give them honor for their service. Maybe God has been pleased to ride you like he rode that donkey and give you gifts to serve him. And maybe that's gone to your head.

And you suddenly begin to think that you're a very important person. And especially when a lot of people honor you and exalt you, you begin to think that you're an important person. But what happened to the donkey as soon as Jesus got off that donkey? Everybody forgot about it.

Nobody cared for him. He just wandered around, didn't know what to do after that. All of a sudden he found nobody was throwing any garments in front of him and nobody was waving palm leaves and nobody was shouting Hosanna because the Lord had left.

So it's good for us donkeys to recognize that it's because the Lord is upon us, in us, that people give us honor. And never to imagine that it's because of what we are or who we are that people honor us. Let's be humble enough to give the glory to God and remain broken and humble saying Lord of ourselves we are nothing.

We are unprofitable servants. So that's the other thing we can learn from here. And what were these people shouting? Hosanna to the son of David.

Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna is a Hebrew word which means save us now O son of David. Save us now O son of David.

Because their understanding of salvation was to be saved from the Roman rulers who were ruling Israel. They were not asking to be saved from sin. But Jesus didn't come to save them from the Roman rulers.

He came to save his people from their sins. That's the meaning of the name of Jesus. But they were saying save us now O son of David.

Save us now. You who have come from the highest save us now. And blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

That's the meaning of Hosanna. A lot of people sing that word in Christian songs today without understanding what it means. In passing let me mention this dear brothers and sisters.

Don't ever sing something to God which you don't mean. Do you ever go up to your dad or mom and say something that you don't mean? Do you ever use a meaningless word to your dad or mom? Do you go to them or to a brother and use a word which you don't even understand what its meaning is? Just because other people are using it? That's foolish. When we speak to someone we always know what we are talking about.

We speak in language that we understand. We should never use words that we don't understand. Even if you say Hallelujah you must know what Hallelujah means.

That's not an English word. It's a Hebrew word. A combination of three words which means praise the Lord.

Amen. That's not an English word. You must know what it means.

Amen means it shall be so. It's an expression of faith. I believe what I prayed it will be so.

So it's important for us to know everything we say. There's nothing wrong in using these words. You can pray to God and use words in any language.

You can speak in an African language if you like or Russian or whatever you like. But know what you're saying. That's the important thing I'm stressing.

By all means say Hallelujah if you want to say praise the Lord. And by all means say Amen if you mean I believe it shall be so. And by all means say Hosanna if what you mean is Lord save me now from something you want to be saved from.

There's nothing wrong in it. But don't ever sing meaningless words to God like multitudes of Christians are doing today. That's what I'm saying.

People get taken up with the word and they keep on singing it. Particularly in singing I find multitudes of Christians sing meaningless words to the Lord. Because for them it's just the tune and the words and the swinging of the hips and the playing of the guitar.

That's more important to them. They don't even think about the words they're saying. That's carelessness.

And I want to encourage you to be more careful. You know it says in Ecclesiastes in chapter 5 that we must be careful with our mouth when we go into God's presence. Ecclesiastes 5 says guard your steps when you go into the house of God and verse 2 Ecclesiastes 5.2 Don't be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God because God is in heaven and you are on earth therefore let your words be few.

So when you promise something to God verse 4 don't be late in paying it because He takes no fools delight in fools. Pay what you vow. It is better that you don't make a promise than you make a promise and don't keep it to God.

So be very careful because in many words, verse 7, there is emptiness. So fear God. There can be a lot of emptiness in many words.

Particularly in prayer. People pray all these flowery words in prayer trying to impress God. God's not impressed.

He's more impressed by a sincere cry that comes from somebody's heart. God's not impressed with flowery language. He's a father.

And just like we don't go to our earthly fathers with flowery language we can go to God as our heavenly father and we must mean every word that we say. I say this because I see so many people using words like this which they have never bothered to find out what they mean. I say that in passing.

And Matthew 21, back to Matthew 21 in verse 10. When he had entered Jerusalem all the city was stirred saying, who is this? Who is this coming on a donkey? People waving their palms and throwing their garments on the ground and the multitudes were saying this is the prophet Jesus who has come from Nazareth in Galilee. And Jesus entered the temple, verse 12 and he cast out all those who were buying and selling in the temple overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves.

And he said to them it is written my house shall be called a house of prayer but you're making it a robber's den. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them. Now this is the second time that Jesus cleansed the temple.

He cleansed it once before at the beginning of his ministry in John gospel and chapter 2 we read after the marriage in Cana we read that he made a whip and chased people out that's the first time he cleansed the temple right at the beginning of his ministry. He found in the gospel of John 2.14 those who were selling oxen, sheep and doves, money changers he made a scourge of cords and drove them all out. And he poured out the coins of the money changers and said take these things away and stop make my father's house a house of merchandise.

But now it's not a house of merchandise. He says in Matthew 21.13 you made my father's house a robber's den. Things have changed terribly since that time.

So this is at the end of his ministry. So Jesus cleansed the temple twice. He turned out everybody right at the beginning and then when they when some time had gone they came back into the temple and started doing all those things all over again.

And then he had to drive them out a second time. So you see there's a constant need for cleansing in the Lord's temple. This is what we see here.

It's not just enough to have done it once. There's a need again and again and again for the temple to be cleansed. For the house of God to be cleansed.

For our heart and our life and in the church there needs to be a prophetic word cleansing the temple of God again and again and again. That's what we read here in the two cleansings of the temple that the Lord did. And let's pursue that way ourselves so that we can keep our temple as the Father's house and never let it become a robber's den.

We'll continue our study in the next episode.

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