

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 66

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility and servant leadership in the Christian life, and warns against the dangers of hypocrisy and pride.

Duration: 25:04

Scripture: Matthew 22:41 - 23:3, Matthew 23:11-12, Matthew 23:23, Matthew 23:25-28, Matthew 23:33, Matthew 23:37-39, Matthew 24:4-5, Matthew 24:12-13

Topics: "Discipleship", "Hypocrisy"

Description

This sermon delves into the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 22 and 23, emphasizing the importance of understanding and applying His words in our lives. It highlights the need to focus on the inner life, humility, and sincerity in our actions, contrasting the Pharisees' legalism with true discipleship. The sermon warns against hypocrisy, self-exaltation, and burdening others with unrealistic demands, urging listeners to prioritize genuine faith over outward appearances and titles.

Transcript

We turn again to continue our study on all that Jesus taught to Matthew's Gospel chapter 22 and verse 41. It's very interesting to go through Matthew's Gospel keeping in mind to understand what did Jesus teach that we can learn from to do in our life. We learn from his words, we learn from his life, his actions.

We also learn from the circumstances in which he took his disciples and the way he dealt with difficult circumstances. We learn something there too. And we also learn from the way he answered questions.

His dependence upon God the Father for a right answer without going into complicated reasoning. So often when people ask us questions, we go into so many complicated reasonings to give an answer. Jesus very often answered with a brief story or a brief answer.

And that is the best way to answer. So here, then the Pharisees were gathered together once and Jesus said, now let me ask you a question. You guys have asked me so many questions.

Now let me ask you a question. What do you think about the Messiah? The Christ is another word for the Messiah. And the Jews were expecting to come.

They knew that a Messiah would come. Whose son is he? They said they knew from the scriptures. He's the son of David.

Then he said to them, why does David in the spirit call him Lord? When he says the Lord said unto my Lord, that's a quotation from Psalm 110 and verse 1. The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I put the enemies beneath thy feet. The Lord said to my Lord. And if David calls him Lord, how is he then his son? They didn't know.

They couldn't answer that. They were confused. And from that day onward, no one dared to ask him another question.

He silenced them forever. God is an answer to every question. The more we are in touch with God, the more we will know the answers.

I remember in my early Christian life when I was soon after I was born again, I did not know the answers to many things in the scriptures. But today I know a lot more. Not everything, but a lot more as I've studied it.

Not just studied it, but as I've sought to live before God and sought to know God better. The word of God has become clearer and I found the answer to many, many things that puzzled me in my younger days. There's absolutely no contradiction in God's word.

I can tell you that after 53 years of studying it. There is no contradiction. What look like contradictions are because you haven't understood them properly.

There is an answer for everything which appears to be a contradiction in scripture. And there's an answer for every question that there is for life's problems in the world. I can't say I have found all the answers, but I found a lot of them which I didn't know 50 years ago.

So don't reject something just because you don't know the answer. Be humble enough to say, I'm not yet mature enough to know the answer for that. You know, it's like a child studying mathematics in school.

When it's in second standard, it doesn't know algebra and geometry. And it may think, what's algebra and geometry? That's not part of mathematics. I know mathematics.

2 plus 2 is 4 and 2 times 3 is 6. The multiplication tables, there's algebra and geometry is rubbish. That's what he sincerely thinks because he's only in the second standard. Now when he gets up to the eighth standard or something and he studied algebra and geometry quite a bit, he says, yeah, that's right.

He probably studied it from the fourth standard onwards. And he says, yeah, there's something right in that. But then he says at that stage, what's all this calculus? Differential calculus, integral calculus, it's all rubbish.

Well, wait till he gets to the 11th or 12th standard. Then he'll understand that. So whatever you think is absolute rubbish, give four or five years.

If you walk with the Lord, you'll discover the truth of that. So it's good when we are younger to be humble enough to say, I don't know. My spiritual understanding is not yet grown to the level where I can understand that.

But there must be some truth in it. I'm talking about when you go to scripture and you find something you can't understand or you find something that looks like a contradiction. Don't be so arrogant to think that it is a contradiction just because you can't explain it.

It's because you're immature. You're in a kindergarten class, perhaps. No wonder you can't explain it.

Someone else who's more mature, who's walked with God and progressed in the Christian life, he understands it very clearly. But proud people can never accept that answer. They think that if I've got intelligence and I've got intelligence to understand math and science and physics and things like that, I'm sure I'm going to understand the Bible.

No, God has hidden these things from the clever and the intelligent. He reveals them to humble people. Please remember that.

So once you understand that, Jesus will silence you just like he silenced all the Pharisees. Matthew 23, verse 1. Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to his disciples. And he said, the scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses.

Therefore, all that they tell you to do, observe, do, but don't do according to their deeds, for they say things that do not do them. This is the definition of a hypocrite. He preaches things that he does not practice.

They say things, but they don't do them. They preach, speak, but they teach, but they don't do. This is the opposite of Acts 1.1 where we read about Jesus.

He did and taught. Compare Matthew 23, verse 3. They teach, but do not do. With Acts 1.1, Jesus did and then taught.

And all of us are in one of these two categories. If you're a Christian, you either preach a lot of things you don't practice or you first practice something and then preach it. In one case, you're just a Pharisee.

In the other case, you're following Christ. The descendants of the Pharisees, spiritually, are very much in the church today. There are lots of them, millions of them, who preach a lot of things from the pulpit which they don't practice in their lives.

And there are very few who are following Christ who first do and then teach it, who decide that they'll never teach what they haven't done or what they're not aspiring to do and accomplish. The other thing I want you to notice here is that the Pharisees had a couple of good qualities. And you see this here in this chapter.

It's not everything that was wrong with the Pharisees. There were some good qualities in them. For example, number one, Jesus said, everything that they tell you to do, do.

Now, Jesus wouldn't say that about the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Seventy Adventists or even the Roman Catholics, everything they teach is correct, you can do it. It's not correct. To teach that keeping the Sabbath is a way of salvation is not at all correct.

To teach that Jesus Christ is not God, like the Jehovah's Witnesses say, that's not correct. To teach that Mary is a second mediator between God and man, that's not correct. So Jesus will never say about these groups, whatever they say to you, do, do.

He will not say that about the liberal Christians either, but he will say that about evangelical Christians. And they've got the right doctrine, but they could be Pharisees, because the Pharisees had right doctrine. So here's one good quality in the Pharisees, they had the right doctrine.

Another good quality he mentions in verse 25 is, you scribes and Pharisees, you clean the outside of the cup, but the inside is full of robbery and self-indulgence. So, this was hypocrisy, the inside was dirty, but the outside was clean. But you have to give credit for them that the outside was clean.

Here was a certificate that Jesus gave, your external life is good, you keep the law. You do everything the law commands on the outside. So there were two good qualities about the Pharisees that Jesus himself gave a certificate about.

One, their doctrines are all correct, verse 2 and 3. Second, their external life was clean and upright, verse 25. Now most Christians that I have met, evangelical Christians, they glory in these two things. My doctrines are all correct, my external life is clean.

That qualifies you to be a Pharisee. The group to whom Jesus said, you generation of vipers, how will you escape the damnation of hell? Would you believe that Jesus would come into an evangelical church and preach that to evangelical Christians who got all their doctrines right and whose external life was clean? Have you understood scripture? What did Jesus look for? The inner life. Is your inner life clean? The inside of the cup, is that clean? That's what the Lord was looking for then, and that's what the Lord is looking for today.

So let's stop glorying in the fact that our doctrines are right and our external life is right. Those are essential. We're not like the Sadducees who were like the liberal Christians.

We're like the Pharisees. But we're not Christ-like. We're not true Christians if we don't take care of the inner life.

And that's the difference between a Pharisee and a Christian. A Christian has got his doctrines right, his external life right, and the inside of the cup is also clean. That's one big difference.

So this is how you distinguish a Pharisee from a true disciple of Jesus. And you can ask yourself which you are. They say things but they do not do them.

And here's the mark of legalistic people. Legalistic preachers particularly, and there are millions of them in the world. Matthew 23 verse 3. They tie up heavy loads.

That means they preach such high standards. And tell people you must do this. Lay them on men's shoulders.

But they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. Do you know there are a lot of people who preach tithing, never tithe themselves. Do you know that? They don't pay a tithe themselves.

They teach other people to pay their tithes. And they are absolute hypocrites. They don't pay the tithe themselves.

I don't believe tithing is part of New Testament teaching at all. It is abolished with everything under the law. Today we don't give 10%.

We give whatever we are happy to give. According to 2 Corinthians 9 verse 7. That's New Covenant teaching. But there are a lot of people.

There are millions and millions of pastors and preachers who tell others to tithe. But they don't do it themselves. You ask yourself.

You who are a person who is very eager to promote tithing. Do you give 10% of all your income to God? Everything you earn? That's a very searching question. Well even if you do, you're just keeping the law.

And I'm not under the law. And you'll never bring me into bondage to that. You can bring a whole bunch of ignorant Christians.

Who don't know the New Covenant and don't know the Bible. To obey your laws. But you can't bring me because I know the New Covenant.

And it says here. They bind heavy burdens on people. And they don't lift them with a finger.

That means they have never practiced it themselves. And put unrealistic demands on others. I remember once when I was at a young people's camp.

And I was there with another speaker. And he was a bit of a legalist. And a hypocrite.

And we were two speakers. And he preached there saying. We must not only tithe our money.

We must tithe our time. We have 24 hours. 2.4 hours every day must be given to spending time alone with God.

Now there was a guy. Who I knew was not even tithing his income. Because he was a very rich doctor.

And he was definitely not tithing his time. So what happened. Okay I didn't say anything when he said that.

I disagreed with it but I kept quiet. Because he is the other preacher with me. And I don't want to humble him.

Humiliate him publicly. So I kept quiet. But these students were sharp.

One session was a question time. And one of them said. I want Brother Zach to answer this question.

Is it right what the other speaker said. That we have to tithe our time. But I was put on the spot then.

I said I don't agree with it. There is no verse like that in scripture. And then I turned around to the other speaker.

And said Brother. Do you spend 2.4 hours every day with God. Sheepishly he said.

No Brother I don't. I had to expose him for the sake of these poor people. On whom he was putting a heavy burden.

Which he hadn't lifted with a little finger. That's what I mean. There are plenty of preachers like this.

So don't allow anybody to put a burden on you. The yoke of Jesus is easy. His burden is light.

You are weary and heavy laden dear friend. Because you have allowed all these hypocrites. To put burdens on you.

Which they themselves don't lift with a finger. All their deeds verse 5. They do to be noticed by men. They broaden their phylacteries.

And lengthen the tassels of their garments. All their deeds they do to be seen by men. Whenever we do things for men to see us.

We are like the Pharisees. We are to live our life before God. I am not saying men won't see us.

If they see us we can't help it. But we don't do it in order for men to see us. That's the point.

It's not that men see your good deeds. We can't help it sometimes. But we don't do it in order to get their approval.

There's a little book that I've written called 50 Marks of Pharisees. And it's a very interesting study. To see the characteristics of Pharisees.

Very enlightening. I found it very profitable. To study what the New Testament speaks about Pharisees.

And that's how I compiled that book. A number of those characteristics are here in this chapter. Binding heavy burdens on people.

Which they don't lift with their own finger. Doing our deeds to be seen by men. Verse 6. Loving the place of honor.

At banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues. People who want respect in the synagogues. The chief seats.

To be recognized as elders and pastors. Who in a function always want to sit on the platform. Are you like that? Jesus said go and take the last seat.

Where are the Christian leaders who obey that? Almost all Christian leaders want titles. And want to sit on the platform to be respected by others. They love the chief seats in the synagogues.

And you can apply that to the churches. These are Pharisees. They love respectful greetings in the marketplaces.

And being called by men Rabbi. They love greeting. They love to be greeted by others.

You know they want honor. Everything is for honor. The chief seats in the synagogues.

For honor. To be greeted by others. Honor.

And to have fancy titles. Religious fancy titles. For honor.

Everything is for honor. It's the motive behind it that God sees. God doesn't care what seat you sit on.

But he sees what's your motive in all that? What's your motive? I mean if in order to convey a message to people. The most convenient place is to stand in the front of a church. That's okay.

But if that's your motive. And if you stand on a little elevated platform. So that everybody can see you.

That's okay. But if you're standing up there. Because you want honor.

That's a completely different reason. God looks at the motive. The heart.

Man looks at the outward appearance. And he said don't ever be called Rabbi. Because one is your teacher.

You're all brothers. We are all supposed to be brothers. That's the one title he's given us.

We are brothers. And do you know what a wonderful thing it is in the new covenant. To be called a brother.

See when somebody calls me a brother. And I call somebody a brother. We are referring to each other as younger brothers.

Of Jesus Christ who is our eldest brother. According to Romans 8.29. He's the firstborn among many brothers. So that's why a brother is the highest title you can give to any human being.

That means a younger brother of Jesus Christ. That's why he said you're all brothers. And don't call anyone on earth your father.

For one is your father. He who is in heaven. It's a question of addressing a person as father.

Jesus said don't do that. But people could be spiritual fathers. Even though you don't address them as father.

Paul said to the Corinthian Christians. He said you can have 10,000 teachers. But you don't have many fathers.

But I have become your father through the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 4.15. He writes to Timothy. In 2 Timothy.

And chapter 1. And verse 2. To Timothy my beloved son. Inspired by the Holy Spirit. And so we see that Paul would not allow anyone to address him as father Paul.

I mean that's true. He was an apostle. But he was a brother.

He was a brother in Christ. He said don't call anyone on earth your father. Don't be called leaders.

One is your leader. That is Christ. The greatest among you must be a servant.

Do we take all these words of Jesus seriously? Or we just ignore them? Most Christians just ignore them. They say oh that's not important. Which is not important? Which is the word of Jesus which you can say is not important? Jesus said if you love me keep my commandments.

Do not be called leader, father, teacher. You may have those functions. You may be a teacher of God's word.

You may be a spiritual father. And you may be a leader. That's fine.

But your attitude must always be that of a brother and a servant. The greatest among you shall be a servant. That's how it is to be in the Christian life.

If you're a real leader you're going to be a servant of everybody else. So I see here that there are two titles that God has given us. Brother, verse 8, and servant.

And all of us must be both in our relationship to other people. We must be brothers and we must be servants. We must not take upon ourselves a title that elevates us above other brothers.

We may have a function which may be the most important function of all. You may be an apostle. You may be a prophet.

You may be a teacher, but you're still a brother. Look at the apostle John who was a great apostle. But see how he speaks about himself.

He says in Revelation chapter 1, verse 9, I, John, your brother. 95 year old man, served God faithfully for 65 years. What is he at the end of all that? A brother.

And a servant. This is how the great apostles were. You say, well, these titles don't matter.

But Jesus called it exalting yourself. Matthew 23, in verse 12, Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. Now I know that these are not the most important commandments in Scripture.

Love God with all your heart. Love your neighbor as yourself. But even the small commandments, Jesus said if you ignore the least commandments, you'll be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

We are trying to understand all that Jesus taught. Not 90% of what he taught. Go into all the world.

Make disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And teach them to do every single thing that I have commanded you.

Every single thing. It's very, very important. Look at Christendom today, where numerous preachers and leaders take upon them all types of titles.

You think that's God's will? I'm not here to judge them. I ask you to compare it with God's word in Scripture. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

And as you go through this chapter, you find this is how he begins with denouncing the Pharisees. And then he goes on to say, Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men. You don't enter in yourself, neither do you allow those who are entering to go in.

Jesus spoke like a prophet. And I tell you, when a prophet speaks, a lot of people are going to get offended. But the prophet was showing the way into God's kingdom.

And he's saying, you Pharisees, you don't enter the kingdom yourselves, and you close it up to others who want to go in. How did they close it up? With all these legalistic rules and regulations that they made, binding heavy burdens on people, instead of showing them the way into God's kingdom. We need to understand this even today.

A legalist, though he appears to be very righteous in many ways, is actually closing the door into God's kingdom. People who make much and who analyze small little things and make them bigger than God has

made them. You know, like I said about the Sabbath, the Pharisees made the Sabbath much bigger than God had made it.

And they were actually closing up the kingdom to the people who wanted to enter in. That's what he says here. You don't enter in yourself, and you don't let others enter in either.

Won't you, scribes and Pharisees, verse 14, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers, you'll receive the greater condemnation. Here's another thing that they did. They would squeeze money of rent out of poor widows, and then to cover up their troubled conscience, they would come to the synagogue and pray long prayers to cover up the unrighteousness in money matters, the way they were troubling and squeezing money out of poor widows and young people, and other people who were poor.

God sees all this. And these type of things are happening today. All these things, and many others.

As you go through this chapter of Matthew 23, you will see all that Jesus taught. There are many, many things that he wants to deliver us from. If you really love him, we will keep his commandments.

We'll continue in our next episode.

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