

Jesus Taught

SCOTT HOEZEE

For many of us, some of our earliest memories involving people and things outside of our own home come from the time we first started going to school. For the first time in our lives, we had a teacher; and probably all of us could name to this day our kindergarten and 1st grade teachers—maybe we could name every teacher we ever had. Teachers are important, and good teachers make an indelible imprint on us that can last our whole lives long. Today on *Groundwork*, we begin a look at the ministry of Jesus, a key part of which was Jesus as teacher. Stay tuned.

DAVE BAST

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Dave, we are starting a new series here. We are going to have four programs on the ministry of Jesus; and this is a focus during the season of Epiphany, or the time after Epiphany, which is twelve days after Christmas—January 6th—until the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday, but really, all throughout the Church year we think about the ministry of Jesus and his actions.

DAVE BAST

Right; and when we say Jesus' ministry we mean, of course, those years of his earthly ministry and the interactions that he had with people leading up the supreme act of ministry on the cross, where he gave his life for the sins of the world. So, prior to that, the things that Jesus did during those years...or year perhaps...and that is actually a question, isn't it, Scott?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, it is. Nobody is completely sure how long that public ministry lasted. We know Jesus was well into adulthood; maybe almost 30 years old before he left the family carpentry shop and lighted out as a new rabbi and a preacher. John's Gospel mentions the annual celebration of Passover three times, in Chapters 2, 6, and 11. So, that would mean three years...

DAVE BAST

And that is the traditional period, isn't it, most people say three years.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Matthew, Mark and Luke only mention the last Passover, on the night when Jesus was betrayed; but John would indicate it was three. Most scholars think his ministry was probably two to four years in length.

DAVE BAST

Yes; so if you just went by the synoptics you might think everything he did was packed into one year. He started out in Galilee, then he shifted to Jerusalem, and then he was crucified; but we get this longer sense of a timeframe, and certainly there is plenty of material in the four Gospels that would fill up that length of time.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and in this series, these four programs, Dave, we are going to look at Jesus as teacher, and then Jesus as preacher...Jesus as exorcist—driving out the demons—and then the general healing ministry—so Jesus as healer; and we are beginning this program on teaching. The next program will be on preaching. People might think those are kind of the same thing, or what’s the difference? And it can be a little blurry, but I think we can say something that distinguishes them.

DAVE BAST

Yes, we will, and get into that in just a bit; but first let’s listen to this foundational statement about Jesus’ ministry from Mark Chapter 1, which describes how he began: ²¹So, they went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²²The people were amazed at his teaching because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. ²³Just then, a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ²⁴“What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” ²⁵“Be quiet,” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him.” ²⁶The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. ²⁷The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching; and with authority. He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.” ²⁸And news about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So obviously we have an exorcism...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

A casting out of a demon here, but we are going to save that for the third program in this series. Here, we want to zero in on the fact that it was Jesus’ teaching, and the style and manner and authority of his teaching that got people’s attention, apparently even more than this amazing and somewhat spine-tingling spectacle involving this man, and that is rather remarkable.

DAVE BAST

I once had an experience...I was preaching in Africa, and our ministry leader was translating and leading the service; and after I finished the sermon, he gave an invitation for people who wanted prayer to come forward. Some people started coming forward, and there was an incident just like this. A woman started to shriek and stiffen up, and my friend said: She is possessed by a demon; and I said: You take it over...you take it from here, friend; but, nobody remembered the sermon; you know, they were all kind of focused on this spectacle.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, I don’t think I would either. I mean, if this happened in a church where I was...I mean, if you actually saw something like that, I think I would be physically trembling a little bit; and so, it would be quite amazing if I walked to my car in the parking lot after the service to have another person say: That was a great sermon this morning. It is like: Why are you even talking about the sermon after what just happened?! And yet, that is exactly what happens here. They *do* comment on the fact that Jesus could cast out the impure spirit, but they are struck more by his teaching, and that he had authority.

You know, we looked at this passage, Dave, in a recent series on *Groundwork* from the Gospel of Mark, and we had a guest on that program named Dr. Gary Burge; and Dr. Burge pointed out, you know, there are different kinds of authority in our world; there is charismatic authority—the force of your personality; there is positional authority—you are the boss—you are the manager, and so based on your position, you have authority; but he pointed out that in Jesus’ day, the kind of authority the Jews thought about was who stood behind a rabbi—who stood behind a leader who authorized them to teach.

DAVE BAST

It is like what we sometimes say a person will *cite* authorities: c-i-t-e, *cite* in the sense of quoting them. It is not enough for you to just say this on the basis of your own word or your own assertion, you need to be able to back it up somehow, and that is how rabbinic authority really functioned. You had to be able to point to the rabbi who had taught you, and who had taught him, and who had taught him, and so on, all the way back to the Law of Moses; but Jesus...and this is the thing that really startled people about his teaching...and maybe the first point to make about him...Jesus spoke on his own authority, and that is what got people to sit up and take notice. That is why, in fact, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount...and we are going to look at the Sermon on the Mount shortly in this program...but at the end, that same note was struck in Matthew Chapter 7. They were amazed because he taught as one who had authority, and not like the rabbis.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, what that would mean is that the only person who stood behind Jesus would be...well, God himself. In fact, you would almost have to *be* God to have that kind of authority, and that really struck them. In the Jewish tradition, of course, the only figure who had ever had no one behind him except God was Moses; and that is a towering figure in the history of Israel; and so, Jesus is looking like a new Moses here, which is, I think, partly...Matthew will make that point in particular, but boy, to teach the way he teaches with no other rabbi behind him, this might come directly from God. No wonder the people were struck by that.

DAVE BAST

Yes; they were astonished. We just referred a moment ago to the Sermon on the Mount, and that is really the repository of Jesus' teaching in the Gospels. It is where it is most concentrated, and at its fullest; and we will turn to that next.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Dave Bast, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and this first of four programs looking at the public ministry of Jesus as we find it in the Gospels, and today we are focusing on Jesus' role as a teacher; and Dave, you just mentioned that we are going to go next to one of the most significant stretches of teaching in the four Gospels. We call it the Sermon on the Mount...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And yet, we are using it in a program on teaching. So, even though we have called this the Sermon on the Mount—Matthew 5-7—it really is teaching; and Matthew himself says in verse 1: He began to teach them. I think one thing we can say, Dave, is that when we get to the next program here on preaching, we will say preaching was public proclamation...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And the core of Jesus' preaching was when he stood up to declare the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, is at hand. It has come near; and then to talk about the kingdom and to call people to repentance—that was preaching. Teaching was more when the disciples were at Jesus' feet for longer stretches of time, and Matthew concentrates all kinds of Jesus' teaching here in the Sermon on the Mount—teaching on the mount: Matthew 5-7.

DAVE BAST

Yes; you know, for us the word *sermon* suggests the act of preaching. We intimately connect those two; but really, it is more of a blurred kind of activity because many sermons contain teaching...basically principles or application of Bible truths...whereas, as you said, Scott, preaching is really the act of proclaiming or proclamation; and for Christian preaching, it is the proclamation of the Gospel...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, the Good News.

DAVE BAST

It is the delivery of a message—it is telling a story about what Jesus did on the cross and in the empty tomb for our sins. So, that is the distinction; and today we want to focus on Jesus' teaching, as you said, using the Sermon on the Mount.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Matthew 5:1: Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ²and he began to teach them; and he said, ³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; ⁴blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted; ⁵blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth...(and then there are a few more)...

The Beatitudes—the blessings here; and again, you know, in Matthew's Gospel in particular, Dave...so, we had a passage from Mark in the first part of this program...but in Matthew's Gospel, teaching is so important, because Matthew is writing his Gospel to convince fellow Jews who have not yet embraced Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, that he is; and so Matthew wants to teach...and have Jesus teach...in a way that will convince people that is so.

DAVE BAST

Yes, absolutely; and as soon as we raise the issue of teaching in the context of Jewish tradition we have to talk about that very thing: Tradition. Because for the rabbis it was all about handing on what they had inherited from of old, and there is a verse later on in Matthew Chapter 13...kind of a curious verse...not many of us, perhaps, have reflected on, but it is very crucial for Matthew's understanding of Jesus' ministry of teaching, and for Jesus himself, because Jesus is speaking, and he says: ⁵²“Therefore, every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house, who brings out of his storeroom new treasures, as well as old.” So, Jesus is saying something new has come with me and if you are a disciple in the kingdom of God...or kingdom of heaven, as Matthew puts it...you need new along with the old.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; you know, Dave, Matthew is 28 chapters, and this is just before Chapter 14, so this is almost smack-dab...literally the smack-dab center of Matthew's Gospel; and this is a very significant saying. Jesus is saying that in all of his teachings, including in the Sermon on the Mount, which we are looking at right now, he is not creating stuff out of thin air. He is taking what was old and applying it in a new way. He is reappropriating the tradition of Israel because he is the authorized one to do that, as we said in the first part of the program; and so, he is taking what is old and applying it in a new way to show what the nature of *his* kingdom is, and what being a member of that kingdom will be.

DAVE BAST

Right; so, as we dig a little more deeply into the Sermon on the Mount, we come to a section where Jesus starts to talk about the Ten Commandments. So, he is reiterating: These are old. They go right back to Moses and Mount Sinai, who got them directly from God; you know, the whole story with the stone tablets and inscribing these ten words or ten fundamental principles of behavior and of life; and Jesus...so, he is going to refer back to the old, but he is going to add his own *new* spin on them, and here we see that question of authority functioning as he claims incredible authority for himself, just in the way he words things.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; so listen to this series...and we won't read quite all of it, but Jesus says...this is Matthew 5:21: "You have heard it said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment;' ^{22a}but I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. ²⁷ You have heard it said, 'You shall not commit adultery,' ²⁸but I tell you, anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has committed adultery with her in their heart. ³³Again, you have heard it said to people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows [you have made.]" ³⁴But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all. ³⁸You have heard it said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,' ^{39a}but I tell you, do not resist an evil person..."

So, the pattern here, Dave, is: You have heard it said...you have heard it said...and now *I* say to you...

DAVE BAST

So, he is doing exactly what he says in that little mini parable about the householder who has old treasures and new in his storeroom. He is bringing out these old treasures of the law, but he is adding a new twist, on his own authority as *the* teacher for Israel; and in a sense, he is unpacking the commandment and going even deeper, isn't he? I mean, that is one of the things that Jesus does here.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

He radicalizes the law in the original sense of *radix*—the root. He is getting at the root of things; he is internalizing these ten laws.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; maybe you have forgotten, but here is what these have meant all along, and here is what they really mean going forward in my [Jesus'] kingdom of heaven. These deep, deep spiritual roots...not just murder but anger...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Not just literal adultery, but just lust in your heart.

DAVE BAST

So, he is actually getting at the root of the act. What is it that leads someone to lash out and actually kill a person? Well, it is that anger that seethes within them first. What is it that causes adultery? Well, it is the lust that precedes it. So, Jesus is...it is not enough just to avoid technically breaking the law...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

You have to look inside at what is going on in your own heart, and that is where the root of the sin lies. There is that *root* again.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And so, in all of the three chapters...Matthew 5, 6, and 7 in this long teaching of Jesus...eventually also about prayer...we get the Lord's Prayer...Jesus is taking what was old and making it new, because he is the authorized one who can tell us what the correct view of this is; and then, we get to the very, very end... You know, at seminary, Dave, we teach our seminarians that you should always end your sermon positively—end

with good news. Well, Jesus isn't one of my students, so he can do what he wants, and he does; because here is how the whole Sermon on the Mount ends. This is the end of Chapter 7:

²⁴“Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who builds his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, the winds blew and beat against the house, yet it did not fall because it had its foundation on the rock; ²⁶but, everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, the winds blew and beat against the house, and it fell with a great crash.”

DAVE BAST

The end. Amen.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Crash. That is the end of the sermon.

DAVE BAST

There is the end; yes. Not exactly a positive grace note, but a warning; and warnings are real, too; and that was part of Jesus' teaching. So, we really want to ask...maybe it is obvious...it is pretty self-evident that we want to follow Jesus' teaching for our lives, but let's talk a little bit more about what that actually means before we wrap up this program.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast; and in this program, we are talking about Jesus' ministry of teaching. We have seen how he taught with authority, which is what astonished the people. He didn't cite the rabbis necessarily, as his authority. He simply spoke as if God himself were speaking through him; and how he deepened our understanding of what God wants from us in life, by internalizing the law and its commands, and by getting at the root of what was really going on there.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we just saw at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, which as we said is a really long, extended teaching, Jesus said it is so important to found your life on his teaching that if you don't, your life will crash. That was the bottom line. So, what does that mean for us today now, practically speaking? Well, I think one thing it means is that, of course, we are lifelong learners...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In fact, the Greek word for disciples in the New Testament is *mathétés*, which literally means student.

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We are students at Jesus' feet, and we should be lifelong learners who delight again and again under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to do what we do here on *Groundwork*...

DAVE BAST

Yes, absolutely.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Dig into scripture.

DAVE BAST

And listen to Jesus. You have probably been out driving on the road and you have seen a car with the sign: Student driver...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

Well, in England what they do is they hang a little tag with a red letter L on it, meaning learner...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Learner.

DAVE BAST

That person is a learner, and we all ought to have those tags on our lives as we seek to follow Jesus and do what he told us to do with our lives in obedience to him.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, we are learners...lifelong learners...and students...disciples; but, we also are students who become teachers; and so again, we have been saying on this program, Dave, that for Matthew, teaching is his key theme. It is so important that we learn from Jesus. So, no surprise that when the book ends, we get the great commission, and Jesus says at the end of Matthew 28: ^{18b}“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (and now this) ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

So, baptism may come first on our list of things to do, but right behind that on divine hit parade: Teaching.

DAVE BAST

Well, and here notice how Jesus combines the idea of discipleship and teaching; and again, that is what a disciple is...that's what it means. I sometimes think that we have read that great commission text at the end of Matthew and think what Jesus wants is for people to make a decision for him. You know, come forward to the altar or raise your hand in a meeting or sign a pledge card or something; and that is all well and good...anytime anyone turns to Jesus is a good thing...but that is not really what he is after. What he is after are people who will take the road and follow him in a lifelong process of learning, of absorbing his teaching, of internalizing it, of prioritizing it in our own lives as we seek to become more and more like him. We need to become learners. That is what a disciple is.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And then we teach others what we learned, and it is kind of a happy cycle. You know, the best teachers are themselves lifelong learners, right? I mean, when you have a professor who doesn't rely on thirty-year-old lectures, but writes new lectures all the time, that is the best kind of professor or teacher you want because their classes are always so sparkling and interesting and lively.

So, we can think about our role as learner/teachers, and we can think about the what and the how: What do we teach? Well, Jesus just said it: Everything I taught you. So, we dig into scripture; we do Bible studies; preachers help to teach the Word of God; but all of us are called to dig into scripture. So, that is sort of the what, but I think we could also think about, Dave, the *how*...how do we teach others?

DAVE BAST

Absolutely; and the how is answered also by Jesus. We teach the same way he did, with grace, with acceptance, with forgiveness, with tolerance for the people who are burdened with their sins.

Years ago in college, I read Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, which is a classic work of literature; but there are all these different characters in there, and there is one who is a really good, wonderful person. He is the parson—he is a priest. Chaucer has this line that he says about him...you know, the old English word for teaching is *lore*, l-o-r-e, and Chaucer says of this person: Christ's lore and his apostles twelve he taught, but first he followed it himself. And I love that idea. Like you say, if we want to be teachers, we first follow it ourselves...we first begin to exhibit and demonstrate true discipleship and then we can kind of pass that on in the same way that Jesus taught.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and again, that graciousness of Jesus. You know, Jesus was seldom if ever shrill...he never screamed purple-faced at people or wagged bony fingers in people's faces. In fact, far from putting people off, sinners were attracted to Jesus. He was a sinner magnet because somehow his demeanor of grace matched his message of grace, and I think that is something for us to keep in mind. Yes, the Gospel message can be offensive, and some people don't like it...

DAVE BAST

Your house will crash if you don't build on it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But sometimes it is the teacher or the preacher who is the offensive one because of their manner. So, if the message offends people, okay; but let's make sure it is not we who offend them by being cruel or angry. Jesus was never that way. So, we teach *what* Jesus taught and we teach *how* Jesus taught; because as John wrote in his Gospel, Jesus is the one and only who came full of grace and truth. So, he had the truth, but he also had it with grace; and that is so important as a role model for us yet today.

DAVE BAST

It's a hard thing to do. We usually kind of divorce those two things. So, either somebody is full of grace, but there is not much truth there, and it is just sort of wishy-washy, or they are all about truth, but there is no grace; they are harsh and they are off-putting. Jesus was able to combine them both, and blessed is the teacher or the learner who can do the same.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Thanks be to God. Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Dave Bast, and we hope you will join us again next time as we look at Jesus as preacher.

Connect with us at our website, groundworkonline.com. Share what *Groundwork* means to you; make suggestions for what you would like to hear discussed on *Groundwork*.

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