>>>>>>> Matthew – Lesson 24 <<<<<<<

1) Before we continue with our passage-by-passage study, I want to address something we discussed briefly last time.
2) It has to do with the fate of demons.
3) In Luke and in Matthew we have the reference that I brought up last time about the final condition of a house after a demon had left and returned.

Matthew 12:43–45 (ESV)

Return of an Unclean Spirit

43 "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless
places seeking rest, but finds none. 44 Then it says, 'I will return to my house from
which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order.
45 Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they
enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also
will it be with this evil generation."

4) The Luke passage (Luke 11:24–26) says basically the same thing but leaves off the "So also will it be with this evil generation."
5) What I learned with a little investigation is that the passage's main point is not demonology but a warning about Israel's response to Jesus.
6) Most modern commentators argue:
   a) Jesus uses a demonological scenario as a parable-like warning.
   b) The "house swept and put in order" refers metaphorically to Israel or the present generation.
   c) The "seven worse spirits" symbolize a greater future judgment, **not** a literal clinical description of demon behavior.
7) So, the demon-story functions rhetorically, much like a parable does.
8) The imagery here is from 1 Enoch and also from Isa 13 and Lev 16.
9) The investigation also pointed out that there are no scriptural incidences of cast out demons actually returning.

1) Ok, back to our study.
2) Next, we have a scene at a house, a house that is assumed by most to be Matthew's house.
   a) The dining area of some houses was open to view by passersby.
   b) In some cases, the meals were held in a courtyard.
   c) This perhaps explains how the Pharisees might have come to be in the position to ask the question that they are going to.
      i) Knowing, they would not be guests at this party.

Matthew 9:10–13 (ESV)

10 And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners
came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. 11 And when the Pharisees saw

this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" [12] But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. [13] Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

d) To see the impact of this passage, we must first understand that in the mindset of the Pharisee ...

i) There were basically two types of people – righteous and sinner:

ii) The righteous were those who kept the law with the same seriousness and purity standards they did.

(1) To be clear, they did NOT believe these righteous folks were sinless.

iii) "Sinners" were everyone else who did not keep the law with the same seriousness and purity standards they did.

iv) With this definition, obviously, lots of folks fell into this category.

To this point, we really don't have a problem. Truth is, we sort of look at the saved and unsaved as a like set of two groups, correct?

e) So, what this meant to the Pharisees and what really precipitated the question they asked was their attitude and actions toward these "sinners."

i) Pharisees avoided close fellowship with "sinners," especially table fellowship, and generally had little to do with them.

ii) In fact, there was a list of no-no's.

(1) No shared meals.
(2) No close social fellowship.
(3) No intimate association.
(4) No approval of their lifestyle or religious laxity.
(5) And surely there was no treating them as "righteous" equals.

iii) Probably, they did not have any close friends who were "sinners."

iv) These no-no's were especially true for Rabbis – teachers of the Law.

v) In other words, this was a **boundary of holiness** in Pharisaical thinking.

vi) This did not mean they never spoke to sinners, taught them in public, or in any way wished them harm.

(1) However, there was a disdain for these folks as is obvious by the tenor of the question.

f) So, Jesus answers their question which they had asked His disciples:

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. [13] Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

g) First, Jesus strikes the comparison between well and sick which would translate in essence to sinners and the righteous in the mind of the Pharisees.

h) Then He uses a very meaningful phrase, "Go and learn."

i) In first-century Jewish teaching, that phrase as He used it was a rabbinic corrective.

ii) It was used by Rabbis as firm way of saying to someone, "You have misunderstood Scripture."

i) In this case the scripture is Hosea 6:6 which He quotes from the Septuagint 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.'

j) The complete verse in the Septuagint reads:

Hosea 6:7 (Brenton LXX En)

[7] For I will *have* mercy rather than sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than whole-burnt-offerings. (note – LXX verse numbering is off from normal translations by 1)

k) If you go to that scripture, most all of your translations are a little different text for Hosea 6:6, e.g. the ESV has:

Hosea 6:6 (ESV)

6 For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

i) With either of these translations, it is plain to see that God does not want ritual obedience without covenant loyalty or religious activity without compassion or mercy.

l) So, when Jesus says [13] "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice" we see that Jesus is addressing the problem that is indicated by the question the Pharisees asked.

m) He then adds, "For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

i) One paraphrase I read I thought was really appropriate:

"My mission is to show mercy and bring repentance to those who know they need God—not to affirm those who think they're already righteous."

3) One commentary I read really gets to the heart of where the Pharisees are.

One of the most undeniably distinctive features of Jesus's message and ministry is the promise of salvation to "sinners." But in an incisive play on terms, Jesus shows the Pharisees that he has a different view of what it means to be a sinner than they do. From the standpoint of the Pharisees, a sinner was a person who had violated the law according to their interpretations. But from the standpoint of Jesus, a sinner was any person who remained opposed to the will of God. The Pharisees consider themselves to be righteously healthy before God because they define righteousness by their observance of the law—their "sacrifice." But they are blind to their real sinfulness before God.[26]

a) As a little side note here, the definition of the actual word pharisee means "separated ones."

i) Now, there are several ways one might apply that as separated:

(1) from ritual impurity
(2) from non-observant Jews
(3) from Gentiles

[26] Michael J. Wilkins, *A Theology of Matthew's Gospel: Jesus Immanuel; Messiah of the Kingdom of Heaven, Israel, and the Church*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2025), 444.

(4) from certain interpretations of the law

ii) From all that we have said and observed here I think for this discussion the separation would be from non-observant Jews and from Gentiles – both of which we have already seen the Pharisees considered "sinners."

iii) Actually, they really all could apply.

b) Mercy has several definitions.

i) Though we first think of forgiveness to the offender, it can be much more.

ii) It is giving food to the hungry, comfort to the bereaved, love to the rejected, and companionship to the lonely.

Given that, what definitions of mercy were the Pharisees to learn from reevaluating scriptures?

Are there groups that we consider "sinners" in the same way and with the same attitude (disdain) as the Pharisees did? i.e. do they fall outside our "boundary of holiness."

Considering all the things mercy can be, can one be merciful and selfish at the same time?

1) These next 4 verses are rather strange as a paragraph which is the case in most translations.

2) We will try to uncover the reason why they are together and, at the same time, seek out the meaning for us and how we need to apply them.

3) I'm going to read all 4 but we will start our discussion with the first two verses …

Matthew 9:14–17 (ESV)
A Question About Fasting

14 Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" **15** And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. **16** No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. **17** Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved."

4) Back a few weeks, we discussed fasting.

a) People would fast in times of disaster and as a sign of their humility and repentance and during special days.

b) Fasting represented mourning as well.

c) It showed an increased contriteness in times of prayer.

d) It focused their attention on God and demonstrated their change of heart and their true devotion.

5) Jesus' view of fasting regards this question was that the Messiah had come and the people did not need to mourn; they needed to rejoice.
   a) Jesus' presence was as joyous as the presence of the bridegroom at a wedding feast. [27]
6) However, in his second statement, Jesus makes it very clear that soon he *(the bridegroom)* would be *taken away from them.*
7) "The days [that] will come" refers to the days of Jesus' crucifixion and death.
   a) Jesus' disciples would definitely fast and mourn during those days but then they will rejoice.

John 16:20 (ESV)

20 Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.

8) So, what about us?

Are we mourning or rejoicing?

If we are rejoicing does that mean we should never fast again?

Why? Why Not?

9) Ok, now the last 2 verses which if we just read over them, they don't seem to fit …

16 No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. **17** Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved."

10) One commentator I read stated that "John's disciples embraced the traditions of the Pharisees."
    a) This is very much an overstatement!
    b) There are no explicit statements in the New Testament that this would be the case.
11) However, I do think if there is a connection at all in these two verses to the previous two, it may be a reference to the fact that John's disciples were indeed fasting "as the Pharisees."
    a) Now this could mean that they were observing the normal days of fasting etc. as did the Pharisees and implicitly it says Jesus' disciples were not.
    b) This does not imply that they were embracing the complete traditions of the Pharisees.
    c) As a matter of fact, you may recall that John called the Pharisees a "brood of vipers" even before Jesus did.

Matthew 3:7 (ESV)

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

    d) I think we could safely say that this would be an indication that John would not have his disciples "embrace" their traditions.

[27] Bruce B. Barton, *Matthew*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 183.

12) Now, for the connection.

a) John's disciples were fasting as did the Pharisees which was as we indicated earlier, it showed signs of their humility and repentance, it also represented mourning.

b) As with Jesus' disciples, mourning was not really appropriate for John's disciples either.

c) In fact, this leads to what I think is the main point - the fact that John's disciples were to become Jesus' disciples.

13) Let's spend a couple of minutes looking at the Gospel of John and his account of John the Baptist's ministry and I think this will become very clear and obvious.

John 1:23–37 (ESV)

23 He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

24 (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) **25** They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" **26** John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, **27** even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." **28** These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Behold, the Lamb of God

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! **30** This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' **31** I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." **32** And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. **33** I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' **34** And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

14) Clearly, here John is recognizing Jesus as the Son of God and the one to whom he has been referring as being superior to himself.

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

35 The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, **36** and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" **37** The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

15) And then from John 3 …

John 3:22–30 (ESV)

John the Baptist Exalts Christ

22 After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. **23** John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized **24** (for John had not yet been put in prison).

25 Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. **26** And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him." **27** John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. **28** You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' **29** The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. **30** He must increase, but I must decrease."

16) So, I think this gives us a very clear indication that John the Baptist had every intention of his disciples becoming Jesus' disciples as time passed and especially after he was imprisoned.

17) That being said and looking at these two verses again, I also think we can see that Jesus is telling John's disciples that it is time to come join him and completely give up the "old things."

    a) To look instead at the new things and to totally rejoice with His disciples because Jesus is with them now.

    b) John had already told them who Jesus was.

    c) Two of John's disciples had already joined Jesus, one of them was Andrew Peter's brother.

18) John has told them it was time to move on to the one he had been all about and that has made "this joy of mine complete."

19) Patching old garments with new cloth or putting new wine in old wineskins is staying half in the old ways and half in the new.

20) I think this was Jesus' way of telling them the same thing – you no longer have to follow the one who came before Him they were free now to follow the Christ himself.

21) Regardless of the connection, Jesus is obviously saying not only to them but to us it is not good to try to make old ways fit with new ways.

22) Paul echoed the same sentiment throughout his ministry when dealing with the Jews who wanted to be Christian and remain Jewish as well – it plainly will not work.

So, does that all fit with you or do you have questions?

Looking at these last two verses, can you think of a way this applies directly to us today?