

Hanging Out With Jesus: The Kind Of Man Who Pleases God

Matthew 21:33-46

Good morning, men! We are in the series called *Hanging Out With Jesus*, but before we get started, let's do a shout out. I'm really excited about today's shout out, it goes to a group up in Webster, NY, at the Webster Assembly of God. The group is called "Rise and Shine" and the leader is a man many of us know, he's been involved with Man in the Mirror for many years, Will Fox. This is a new group, just started October 5th. They meet on Saturdays at 7:00am and they're doing the video Bible Studies with us. So I wonder if you would join me in welcoming Will Fox and the Rise and Shine guys with a big rousing welcome. One, two, three, hoorah! Glad to have you with us!

On Sunday morning, my wife likes to sleep in. I went to get her up with a cup of coffee, and I said it's time to get up for church and she said, oh I don't want to go to church today. I said well, would you like me to be your spiritual leader? She said no, just leave me alone. Okay, all I'm trying to do is please God! And that's the title of our talk today, *The Kind Of Man Who Pleases God*.

We're looking in Matthew 21. We all go through different stages on our spiritual journey, right? In the beginning, we are the ministry; somebody is trying to reach us and explain the gospel to us. Then we come to faith, we begin to grow, and as we grow we start to develop a desire to do something to serve God and others as an expression of that. What I want us to talk about is how that actually plays out in the real world. When we become mature, we stop thinking less about what we want and we start thinking more about what the master needs. This is a progression. You come to faith, grow in your faith, want to serve, mature increasingly and focus less on what we want and more on what the master needs.

The Plan Of God

So what is it that the master needs? First off I want us to talk about the plan of God, and we see this of course on every page of scripture, but in Matthew 21 beginning at verse 33, Jesus tells a parable. Let's take a look at this:

"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to

another place. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

Lot's of symbolism in here. In interpretation of scripture, you're always looking for what is the necessary meaning, if you can find that. If not necessary, then what is the probably meaning? And if not that, what is the possible meaning, and then you start to get a little nervous about telling people what it means if it's only possible! But it's pretty well agreed that the probable interpretation of this is that the land owner is God. In many other parts of the scriptures, this would be the case, so we're pretty sure about that.

So the land owner here is God, and the vineyard is clearly the nation of Israel. Today, that would be the church, the successor to the nation of Israel. That's what the vineyard is. The farmers, those would be the people who are populating the property, the tenants. Then, the servants would be those men who are prophets, priests, Godly shepherds and kings God sends to work with his people. So that's what's going on here in the particulars. What's going in the big picture? Let's read on:

“The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.

These would be men like Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Habakkuk. Verse 36:

“Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time...

Throughout history the kingdom of God is constantly growing, constantly increasing, and there are more and more servants. You bring it all the way up to today and there are millions of us now who are servants of God who are out helping with the sowing and the reaping. You see what's going on here, this is a very familiar metaphor for Jesus to use, sowing and reaping. The farmers are sowing and then he sends the servants to do the reaping. Some of us sow, some of us reap, some of us do both. Verse 37:

“Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said.

“But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

“Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

Now Jesus is in the middle of talking to the Pharisees, to the religious leaders of the nation, and they respect him because he's considered to be a prophet. They hate him, they're jealous of him, but they're not disrespectful. They don't just dismiss him at this point. Verse 41:

“He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes”?

“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.

So what's going on in this text is that they're not producing fruit. They're sowing seeds perhaps, but they're not producing fruit, they're not pleasing God, they're not paying rent, they're not becoming disciples nor making them. So what's going on in the bigger picture? You can see that Christ is revealing here that all through history God has been calling people to himself through the faithful efforts of servants who are sowing and reaping his Gospel. Through servants who are becoming disciples themselves and then making disciples of others. That's what's going on in this text.

That's the plan of God for all time, so what's the plan of God today? The plan of God today is for us to be the ones who produce this fruit. Otherwise, if we don't produce this fruit, and this is not just for those people then, this is for us now. Verse 43, I tell you the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will be faithful to produce fruit. So it's about producing fruit today, just as then, and the way we produce fruit is we obey his command. We go and we become disciples and we also make disciples. Everybody got that? Is that clear? I mean doesn't it make perfect sense that this applies to us today in this way? John 15:8 says this it is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. Making and becoming disciples; this is how we bear fruit. He's looking for a people who will produce the fruit of the kingdom of God. Become and make disciples, that's the Big Idea today. **Becoming and making disciples is the fruit that pleases God.** If you want to be the man who pleases God, do what God wants to have done. Go and bear much fruit, become a disciple, and make disciples. There's some other things you can read in the next few verses, but we will move on.

The Patience Of God

I want to talk to you a little bit now about the patience of God. In this big master plan that God has, from the beginning he made man righteous. Man had free will, and because of the fall men have been in rebellion against God ever since. God's plan is that he would call out his people to himself, but the problem is that it doesn't work as robotically as he could have made it work because he's made us into human beings and we are rebellious. Ezekiel said God does not willingly bring affliction and grief on the children of man. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. God our savior wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. In order to accomplish that, 2 Peter 3:9 says this:

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness (that would be the natural man). He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

This is the heart of God, this is the desire of God, and yet we're in this rebellion against him. From the very beginning, God developed a system to approach rebellious people: prophets, priests, Godly kings, shepherds, and eventually he sent his own son knowing that he would be killed, but that he would flip that and turn the killing of his own son into an atoning sacrifice for our sins so that we might have this eternal life, become part of this harvest. So that's all the big picture stuff.

He's doing this like you would do it, because we're created in his image. God is acting like a loving father who is constantly trying to reason with his son. All through that parable which is really a reflection of the history of the nation of Israel, the church of Jesus. All through our history we have been in rebellion! We get engrossed in the world! We exchange the truth of God for a lie, we exchange the glory of God for a lie! We love the world, the pleasures of the world! The lust of the flesh and the eyes, the boastful pride of life! We let the yeast of culture work its way through the whole batch of dough! You were running a good race! Who cut in on you and kept you from the truth? We've become like the third seed. The worries, the pleasures, the riches of the world, they choke the word and make it unfruitful. Everyone ends up doing what seems right in their own eyes and we become luke warm. But God loves us in spite of all that, and sends these throngs of servants to reason with us as his agents, as the other sons of this father that loves you and me so much. That's what's going on, that's the fruit that he wants us to produce. Becoming and making disciples, that's the fruit that pleases God. So if you want to be the man that pleases God, this is how you do it.

The Servant Of God

Let's talk a little bit now about this servant of God. There are two parts to the mission. The first part of the mission is to become a disciple. You can't make a disciple if you're not a disciple. Let me give you four practical goals for becoming a disciple. Number one, attend a weekly worship service. Not just the

Bible Study! Attend a weekly worship service. I had somebody tell me recently, I just don't feel like I'm getting much out of church. I said that's not what church is for. It's not for what you get out of it. We go to a weekly worship service to give God the glory that he is due. It's not about you, it's about God! When I said this to him he was like oh my gosh I'm so embarrassed I thought that. But that's the reality, a lot of times we think it's about us! Attend a weekly worship service to give God the glory, worship, honor, majesty, and blessing that he alone is worthy to receive. That's goal number one. Attend a weekly worship service. I don't care if you do it online or in your home town. God doesn't care where you do the worship service, but he cares immensely about the Sabbath. This every seventh day thing, it's not an every other week thing.

The second goal is read God's word for yourself on a regular basis. There's some very interesting research that has been developed that shows that people who read the Bible four or more times a week have a substantially different result from their lives behaviorally. Like 57% less likely to have a problem with alcohol. Three days is okay, but when you hit that fourth day, there's something about the regularity of it. I don't understand it, but I do understand this: if you want to please God, you need to become a disciple and you do that by reading his word on a regular basis for yourself.

A third goal is to participate actively in a small group. In other words, there are things that you can get through relationships of trust, a degree of intimacy, vulnerability and transparency that develops when you do life on life small groups. Let me just say that even in these groups here, if you want to you can hide. How do I know that? Because I've done it! How do I know that? Because I've seen some of you do it, too! You can hide in this group if you want to, that's why I say actively participate. Do a life on life kind of thing, let people know who you are, let them into your life. Let you into their life. Do it! Make it happen! If you want to be a disciple.

The fourth goal is to get some training on how to serve God and make disciples. If you want to become a disciple, learn how to make a disciple, get some training. It might be some training on how to lead a small group, how to lead a weekly Bible Study, or how to do disaster relief if that's the thing that gives you the sense of God's pleasure.

These are simple. There are certainly other things that you can do, but these four are simple, easy to grasp, and a good place to start. I would also say that if you do these four things, you will find that you are doing everything else anyway. Think of it as progressive, too. These four goals, some of you have already been doing them for a long time, and some of you are doing a couple, some of you haven't started this yet. Wherever you are, think of it as a progressive process that you ease into over the next couple of years. So say to yourself, at the end of two years from now I'm going to be doing all four of these things, for example. If you do that, you will find that you are becoming a disciple. How do you please God? You become a disciple.

As you mature in your faith, you don't move on to other things, you always keep doing these four. You never stop doing these four, these four are foundations. It's not like you've suddenly become so mature that now you don't have to be in a small group anymore! That is an invitation to fall back into the risks we talked about, about being engrossed in the world, the lust of the flesh and all that. We continue to do these. It's like spring training for the baseball teams that all come down here to Florida. They don't practice all these intricate, strategic kind of things to win baseball games. What do they do? They come back and they do the basics, hitting, throwing, running, you get the idea. That's what we all need to do to as we become mature.

Then there is a second part of this mission. The first part is becoming a disciple and doing those four goals. The second part of the mission is making disciples. This is where it really begins to get fun and exciting! There are five things you might want to write down: my spiritual gifts, my calling, time, talent, and treasure. It's the unique combination of those five things that will give you an idea of what it is that God wants you to do to make disciples. Keep in mind that making disciples, and becoming a disciple, too, is several things. It's calling people to live in Christ, equipping people to live like Christ, and it's sending people to live for Christ. Galatians 2:10, Paul went up to Jerusalem to talk with the council just to see if he was doing the right thing, to see if he was making disciples the way you are supposed to do it. They said yeah you are, the only thing they said to is that they urged him to remember the poor, the very thing he was eager to do. Part of becoming and making disciples is taking care of the poor, too, and that fits right in with this sending piece of it, sent to live for Christ.

There are men in this Bible Study right now who are ministering to other men here. There's one man that somebody just paid a month's worth of housing for. Another man got that same guy connected with the food bank and a job placement center. Another guy got him a part time job at night just to get a little spending money. That's going on right here! That's becoming a disciple and making disciples!

There are so many entry points for making disciples, taking care of the poor being one of them. You think that that guy that's being ministered to is not being profoundly impacted by this? Let me tell you, I've been talking to him, and he's blown away! He said I heard of these kinds of things happening, but I never really believed it was true! But now, it's happened to me! So he's becoming a stronger disciple.

There's a group of men in another city, I'm not going to mention where it is, but they have money. Lot's of money, like millions and millions of dollars. They believe that their calling to make disciples is to finance, they call it making huge bets. They're making huge bets on different ministries that they think have the potential to dramatically change the direction of our nation for Christ. So, it could be that you have finances. Maybe you have talent? Maybe you could be volunteering somewhere? Probably already are in this group, or whatever it is. But it's the idea that pleasing God involves making disciples as well as becoming disciples.

So we have this Area Director initiative that most of you have heard about. Man in the Mirror, the ministry of which this Bible Study is a part, we are hiring 330 Area Directors, one for every 1,000 churches in the United States. Their mission is to develop about a ten percent market share, to work with about 100 churches. So that's about 35,000 churches roughly that these men will work with. Man in the Mirror has already done transactions with 35,000 churches, so it's not a crazy out of reach kind of goal, but it is a big goal. The thing is that how this came about might be interesting to you, because it's about making disciples. We developed this model called *No Man Left Behind*, and then after we had worked with several hundreds of churches using this model, we decided to poll them, survey them. We did and we sent the results off to some Ph. D. statistician type people, and we said tell us what this means. They came back and they said that what this means is that churches that implemented the *No Man Left Behind* model in two and half years on average are experiencing a 48% increase in the number of men attending their church and an 84% increase in the number of men actually involved in discipleship! You're crazy! That's not possible! That can't happen! 1 Corinthians 4:2 says now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. So we had these results, and meanwhile on a parallel track for several years, we had been experimenting with a part time field force, but it didn't want to work. It was just an idea that didn't want to work because when you get down to a guy being a volunteer, you get down to his fifth or sixth priority. He's got a wife, he's got kids, he's got a job, he's got church, and then with whatever time that isn't left over he would help churches be more effective at discipling men. We realized that we had a way to help churches and we had a vision to help churches, so we began to sense that God wanted us to proliferate this model to as many churches as might be interested in using it. In order to do that, we realized that we needed people out in the field, but the way we had been doing that hadn't worked. So we realized that if men's discipleship is ever going to flourish, then we're going to have to figure out how to forge it into an industry. We're going to have to figure out how to give men a viable career path in men's discipleship. So we're sitting on this, we've got this incredible model to make disciples, we have this great idea about how to distribute the ideas and everything and really feel called to do it. But we're just sitting on it.

Then we have our 25th anniversary banquet, and **Bruce Wilkinson** comes and he wants to sit down with our Board of Directors before the meeting. He says tonight you want me to help fund your ministry. What is the one thing that could most impact the mission that God has given you? Well that would be to have boots on the ground, men in the field distributing these ideas. He said, well why aren't you doing that? Well, it's hard, that would be a lot of work. He said, let me ask you a question, do you think that God wants churches to disciple men? I started crying. He said that's a good sign. But I did, I started crying, and God supernaturally entered the room and BAM! The whole thing changed, and we were ready to go! In fact I said to David Delk, our president, okay we've made the decision, let's do it! He said you know Pat, I really think that we should take three weeks and pray about this, and of course then I felt about that tall. So we did that, and then after three weeks we got an appointment with Steve Douglass at Cru to ask him if they would show us how they built their staff. We're driving down the eastern beltway on the way to Cru headquarters, David Delk, Brett Clemmer and me. Brett Clemmer is in the back seat. About halfway down there, Brett says Pat, how are you feeling about this initiative. I said well to be honest with you, I could take it or leave it. I feel like this is what we're supposed to do, but I'm not carrying a big brief to do it. I just think it's the obedient thing to do. David Delk piped in and said that's so interesting that you would say that, because that's exactly how I've been feeling. If we do it,

fine. If we don't do it, fine. Brett piped in again saying that's why I asked the question because that's how I've been feeling, too. Isn't it just like God to instead of getting you all riled up with some excited human potential movement, self inspired, I'm going to pull myself up by my own bootstraps and we're going to will this into being, we're going to be successful mindset, to make you feel like yeah okay, or yeah no. But you know why we're doing it? You know we went ahead with it? Because we know this is how you please God. Becoming and making disciples, and that's the Big Idea today. **Becoming and making disciples is the fruit that pleases God.** Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Our Father in heaven, every man in this room, every man who ever listens to this message, Lord, you know that they long to be a disciple and to make disciples. They long to please you. So Father I pray that this process, maybe it's these four goals or maybe it's just taking a look at their gifts and callings in the company of a few friends to help them figure it out, that you give every man that pleasure, that indescribable joy that comes from becoming and making disciples, the thing that pleases you. We ask this in your name, Jesus, amen.