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*Reclining at the table occurred because they probably sat on cushions on the floor. It was a social event as well as a meal.*

*Tax-gatherers during this time were fellow-Jews who were hired by the Romans to exact tribute or taxes. They often were incredibly corrupt and added excess charges to tax bills. You can imagine why they were listed with other undesirables.*

## Eye Witnesses of His Authority

DAY FIFTEEN

15

### **HARD TIMES AHEAD**

Matthew 9:1-38

And getting into a boat, He crossed over (to the other side of the sea of Galilee), and came to His own city. And they brought to Him a paralytic, lying on a bed. Seeing their faith Jesus said to the paralytic, "Take courage, My son, your sins are forgiven." And some of the scribes said to themselves, "This fellow blasphemes." And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, and walk'? But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" - then He said to the paralytic - "Rise, take up your bed, and go home." And he rose, and went home. But when the multitudes saw this, they were filled with awe, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

And as Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting in the tax office; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he rose, and followed Him. And it happened that as He was reclining at the table in the house, many tax-gatherers and "undesirables" came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax-gatherers and sinners?" But when He heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

*Fasting was and still is a way to draw close to God. Jesus is the Bridegroom and His followers are His Bride. Wineskins are a picture of what is new (Christ) and what is old (religion).*

*Synagogue officials had positions of prestige and authority in Israel.*

*The synagogue was where copies of the Word of God (the Law and the Prophets) were kept.*

*All Jewish worship that took place apart from the Temple in Jerusalem occurred in these local synagogues.*

*Jesus is the Great Shepherd of the sheep and His heart breaks over the bondage and lack of guidance under which these sheep were living.*

Then the disciples of John (the Baptist) came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" Jesus said to them, "The wedding party of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. But no one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results. Nor do men put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, and saying, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" And after He had come into the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "Let it be done to you according to your faith." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, "See to it that you let no one know about this." But they went out, and spread the news about Him in all that land.

And as they were going out, behold, a man unable to speak, demon-possessed, was brought to Him. And after the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke; and the multitudes were in amazement, saying, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." But the Pharisees were saying, "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons." And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore earnestly ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

*The "Sent Ones" were given a mission and the privilege of carrying Christ's authority that had been given to Him from His Father. They were called apostles.*

*The term "man of peace" is a curious one. Apparently the disciples were to look for men and women who had some sort of hunger and concept of what it meant to look for and find peace. Such people would provide fertile ground for the Good News.*

*There are two classrooms and ideologies from which all schools of thought originate. There is the teaching of idolatry (Satan) and the teaching of the Living God (Christ).*

Matthew 10:1-23

And having called His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: the first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-gatherer; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.

These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them, saying, "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give. Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.

"And into whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is noble-minded in it; and stay there until you go away. And as you enter the household, give it your greeting. And if the house is worthy, let your greeting of peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your greeting of peace return to you. And whoever does not receive you or listen to your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off of your feet. Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves. But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the courts, and whip you in their synagogues; and you shall even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not become anxious about how or what you will speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what you are to say. For it is not you speaking, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. And brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents, and cause them to be put to death.

"And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be delivered. But whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes."

# DAY SIXTEEN 16

## TRAVELING COMPANIONS

Matthew 10:24-42

*Jesus is Teacher to those who follow Him. We either become like Him or like Beelzebul (Satan). We will become like our teacher.*



*It appears that whoever chooses to follow Christ will make sacrifices on some pretty basic and significant levels. The King becomes the focus of a Christ-Follower's life.*

“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave as his master. If they have called the head of the house Satan, how much more the members of his household! Do not fear them, for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

“Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows. Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”

“The one who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it. He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward.”

## SEED & SOILS

Mark 4:1-5:43

And He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very great group of people gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching, "Listen to this. Behold, the sower went out to sow; and it came about that as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. And other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. And after the sun had risen in the sky, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it produced no crop. And other seeds fell into the good soil and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundred times as much." And He was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

And as soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables. And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but those who are outside get everything in parables, in order that while seeing, they may see and not perceive; and while hearing, they may hear and not understand unless they return and be forgiven."

And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? And if you don't, how will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. And in a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, and the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And there are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it, and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundred times as much."

And He was saying to them, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not brought to be put on the stand? For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it should come to light. If any man has ears to hear, let him hear."

And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it shall be measured to you; and

*Speaking in parables was one of the primary ways Christ communicated truth. Parables were word pictures or stories that illustrated some principle or truth.*

*He would drive home His point by giving a basic story to teach complex and soul-changing concepts.*

*This particular parable is sweeping in its scope and application. Jesus is explaining how the Kingdom takes root in the world, and also how His Kingdom can come to nothing because of adversity or hardness of heart.*

*As Jesus taught in parables, He gave timeless pictures of the Kingdom.*

more shall be given you besides. For whoever has, to him shall more be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.”

And He was saying, “The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts up and grows - how, he himself does not know. The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. But when the crop is ready, he immediately brings in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

And He said, “How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds which are planted, yet when it is sown, grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade.”

And with many such parables He was speaking the word to them as they were able to hear it; and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own followers.

## DAY SEVENTEEN



*Walking on the water sealed it for the followers of Christ. He was able to do everything in the face of anything.*



### **CHAINS IN LIFE & DEATH**

Mark 4:35-5:43

And on that day, when evening had come, He said to them, “Let us go over to the other side.” And leaving the multitude, His followers took Him along with them, just as He was, in the boat; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. And He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awoke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are about to lose our lives?” And being awakened, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still.” And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, “Why are you so timid? How is it that you have no faith?” And they became very afraid and said to one another, “Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”

And they came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. And when He had come out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, and he made his home among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had