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GOOD MORNING – Bobby Schuller (BS) and Hannah Schuller (HS)

BS: This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Hello everybody. It's such a joy to be with you. I know it looks like we're in Southern California outside or something. We're actually on the other side of the planet. We are in the northern part right now of Israel. Behind us is the Sea of Galilee, just below us is Capernaum, and today in our church we're beginning a journey through the Holy Land. Today and in the next two Sunday's, we're going to be coming to you from the Holy Land, while we have music in Irvine, worship in Irvine, we'll also be coming to you back and forth from Israel. We're really excited to bring you along on our trip and show us what it looks like to follow Jesus in the Holy Land. We're hoping that everybody learns a lot and that it's a really meaningful experience for you.

HS: Yes, hello from the Mount of Beatitudes. Many people believe this is where Jesus did His most famous teaching. So thank you so much for joining us. You are loved.

BS: Let's begin with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you so much for calling us together, and we pray at the beginning of this short journey, Lord, that you would help us see the Bible come to life. Some of us have been reading it in black and white, we want to read it in color. Show us what it means, Lord, to follow the Rabbi Jesus and to live in His eternal life every day. We pray that you'd help us grow as disciples, and we thank you for calling us, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

HS: Amen. Turn to the person next to you and say God loves you and so do I.

SCRIPTURE – Matthew 4,18-25 – Hannah Schuller

In preparation for the message, Matthew 4:18-25. As Jesus was walking beside the sea of Galilee, which is this sea right here, he saw two brothers – Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake where they were fishermen. Come, follow me, said Jesus, and I will send you out to fish for people. At once, they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee preparing their nets. Jesus called to them and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. Jesus went throughout Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. I love that, every disease and sickness. News about him spread over all of Syria and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases – those suffering severe pain, the demon possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem and Judea, and the region across Jordan followed him. Amen.

INTERVIEW – Ron Winter (RW) – Bobby Schuller (BS)

BS: I'm here today with my good friend Ronnie Winter. Ronnie, I've known you for.. you seem a lot taller than me, but we're standing on a hill because we're at the sermon on the mount. We're about the same height but.. thank you. Ronnie, you're a marine archaeologist, you're very knowledgeable about the Bible, and you've been a tour guide in Israel since your twenties, after serving in the army, the Israeli army. And it's great to see you again. And we've known each other for, I think, seventeen years, something like this, and we've had lots and lots of tour guides, but you're one of my favorites, and you're going to be taking us through Israel over the next few weeks. But we're starting off in a wonderful place where Jesus's rabbinic ministry began. Behind us is the Sea of Galilee, and right now Capernaum is down there and we're on the Mount of Beatitudes where tradition says Jesus gave a sermon on the mount.

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We don't know where it was, but it was somewhere like this. But tell us, first of all, about the Sea of Galilee and Capernaum and what life was like in the first century.

RW: The Sea of Galilee was very lively the first century. Most of the fishermen villages are going to be along the northern shore, because most of the fish are going to be here, so we have Bethsaida, Capernaum, Chorazin right over here. These are the same Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum that you mentioned later on in Matthew 11. And the sea is a sweet water sea, and very comfortable to be here. It's not a big sea. And a matter of fact, it's a lake. We call it (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE) in Hebrew but the Bible call it Sea of Galilee so we go with that name.

BS: I want to start with the idea that a lot of Christians don't recognize, they don't see it in the way Jews would see it in the gospels, but Jesus really begins first as a rabbinic ministry. I mean He was a famous rabbi, wasn't He?

RW: He was super famous. I mean everybody knew Him in the area. He left Nazareth because the people didn't understand what He is, and He came to Capernaum. It was the biggest city here on the northern shore. He became to be right away one of the most popular rabbis around, and He's wandering around. We know that He goes from here to Chorazin and He goes to other cities. This is His base. This is a ministry. Capernaum.. out of 33 miracles, ten are going to be performed in Capernaum, so this is really His base.

BS: Yes. So I think that's something that people miss is how revered and respected rabbis were in these small Jewish communities around Galilee. So when Jesus invites these young people to follow Him, it's a big deal, isn't it.

RW It's a huge deal because first of all in order to become a disciple, you have to be brilliant student; to have it almost by heart. You kind of become a disciple by saying okay, I grew up and I be a disciple. You have to be picked up by a rabbi. And here Jesus is picking the 12 disciples, which are not the most brilliant one, but He knows what He wants to do. He knows that through them He can bring the new message.

BS: That's amazing. Just down the hill here, I can see Capernaum. Tell us a little bit about that city or village.

RW: Capernaum is a city that's a fisherman village. Its right on the border between the kingdom of Herod Antipas, that his capital was here in Tiberias. And maybe the territory of Herod Phillip, so it was a border city and that's why you have tax collectors like Matthew that are going to collect taxes from the people, and the people who cross the border. And it's a center city for the north part over here. We excavate the city; when I say we, I mean the Franciscan excavated the city, and the big part of the city will excavated, and we can see how people lived over there. Very simple people, very simple life, no big buildings, but everything that we found in Capernaum is mentioned very much what we read in the Bible.

BS: And this is where Jesus picks up most of His disciples, right? And like I think most of His ministry is done within three/four miles of Capernaum, right?

RW: Absolutely. This is His center. This is His office. That's where He goes, this is His way comes back. Everything is going to be around Capernaum.

BS: A lot of people think He's really a Nazareth the most, but not really, that even though that's maybe His home town. So how did He go from Nazareth to Capernaum? How did that happen?

RW: We know that on one side of day, according to Isaiah 6, He was reading Isaiah 61 in the synagogue, and of course the people of Nazareth said what is He talking about? I mean is He referring that He is the Messiah? And they didn't like the idea, and in those days there were two ways to solve a problem like that. One of them is to stomp people to death and the other way was to push them from the cliff, and as we know it, they chased Him out of the city trying to push Him from the cliff. And the Bible tells us very clearly, He turned around and with a lot of authority, He walked through them and He never ever comes back to Nazareth.

We call Him Jesus of Nazareth because Constantine in the first century during the first economic convention gave Him the title Jesus of Nazareth. But Matthew 9 is very clearly when it says Jesus went back to His city Capernaum.

BS: Interesting. That's something I learned new today so Jesus really maybe didn't spend most of His life in Nazareth. He was born in Bethlehem as they said the Messiah would be. But then maybe He lived a lot of His life in Capernaum.

RW: He lived three years. I mean that's long enough. But He was born in Bethlehem because of the census. He moved in with His parents back to the Galilee, to Nazareth, but the main part of His life, the most powerful is when we take this here, right over here.

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BS: We're going to be in Israel for the next three weeks, today, and then the next two weekends, but my hope is that people really understand the Jewishness of Rabbi Jesus, and how that impacts us today as Christians, that we can see the Bible in fresh light, if we see the Jewish part of Jesus. That's important, isn't it?

RW: Absolutely. One of the things that I do as a tour guide is to try and then to let people look at the Bible through His eyes because when He came here to Mount of Beatitude, He didn't come with the 12 Southern Baptists. He came with a bunch of Jews who followed Him and admired Him and wanted to hear every word, and not to miss a word, and they were witnessing every miracle that He did. So He was very powerful.

BS: He's sending all sorts of messages, too, like I didn't know this, but in Jesus' day, the rule was of a rabbi could only have five disciples, right?

RW: Absolutely.

BS: Why did Jesus have 12 then?

RW: Unusual. Very unusual. The rabbi is going to pick five disciples. Only one rabbi in the whole history of the Jewish people has 7, it's Rabbi Hillel (SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE). He picked 12 disciples because it represented 12 tribes of Israel. And for Him, He wasn't just talking to 12 people, His message is through those 12 people to all the 12 disciples; all the 12 tribes of Israel.

BS: Thank you, Ronnie. We're excited to begin this journey with you and we're so glad to be here with you.

RW: Have a good trip here. Thank you so much.

BS: Thank you.

RW: Bye.

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "Follow Him Even Unto the Grave!"

Welcome to Israel. If you're just joining us, we are coming to you on this weekend from Israel. We're here right now. It's an amazing feeling. I said earlier in the intro that it feels like when you're in a place like this, you've been reading the Bible in black and white, and all of a sudden it comes to you in living color. You see the grass. You see the Sea of Galilee behind me where Jesus walked on water and called the fishermen to follow Him. So much of the culture and landscape that was there in the first century, a lot of it is still here. You could see many of the places from the Roman empire, the ruins. You can see what the houses looked like and what it felt like to be here. And most of all, there's just almost a spirit. There's something in the air that when you wake up in the morning to know that the Holy Spirit has done so much. That this is Israel's land where God made covenant with His people, where the Bible was written. It's a special thing and I'm so glad you're with me. I know you're not here physically, but you're with me in spirit on TV or online and I'm so glad. I wanted to start our holy land journey here. Many of you know that, of course, for all Christians the teachings of Jesus are important, but for me the Beatitudes and especially the sermon on the mount are so important. Years ago, I took about a year and I memorized the sermon on the mount. It's about three chapters, and I just did it as slow as I could. I did about a verse every day or two, and I took my time to the point where I could recite the whole thing. And I noticed that as I did that, the words got into me and I watched how the sermon of Jesus changed. There's something about memorizing a scripture that's different than studying it. And when you study, you kind of almost approach the text looking for what you already think, or something. But when you memorize it, you catch these words that you wouldn't have caught before by just simply studying it. And so I watched as the Beatitudes and the sermon on the mount transformed my life. Let's begin there. I noticed that.. I made this reflection maybe about three months ago. As a pastor, I do lots of weddings. I think I've done hundreds of weddings. And actually in Orange County, where I live, the average cost of a wedding is about \$30,000. And I've noticed that there are so many people who focus so much on the wedding, and not on the marriage. Like even for me, they're talking to a pastor, most of the questions are not 'pastor, how do I be a good husband;' 'how do I be a good wife.' And people aren't asking 'pastor, what's a Jesus way of living in my marriage.' Or 'pastor, how do we have a happy marriage or raise good children.' All those things are important, and I'm always happy to do that, and the wedding is important, but I notice that when people are engaged, they think a lot more about the wedding than they do about the marriage. But you know what, the wedding will give you one or two days of happiness, hopefully; maybe they won't, but a good marriage will give you a lifetime of happiness. I think so often as Christians, we proverbially focus more on the wedding than the marriage.

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We focus a lot, and we should, but we focus a lot on things like baptism, praying a prayer, getting people to make a personal decision, and those things are super important. I'm glad that people do that. But sometimes we forget that beyond a wedding, there's also a marriage. There's a relationship with God that brings us life. And this is the first thing I want to tackle today. The way that so many of us, we have this great sort of wedding memory – when I came to God and I chose Him, or He chose me, and I was forgiven and rescued and became a new creation, but maybe we feel like in our daily lives, we still feel thirsty for God, or maybe we feel confused, or we wonder why we're still struggling with those same things. Or we wonder why we can't feel the spirit. And I think it's because so often in our churches, our sermons, and sometimes I do this, we make the mistake of forgetting that Jesus isn't just our Savior, He's our rabbi. He's here to give us the words of life, and we're going to learn in that way. Here in the sermon on the mount, Jesus begins His sermon with the Beatitudes. I have heard many wonderful sermons on the Beatitudes, and all of them to me usually teach something that's really meaningful and really helpful. But I find that many teachers and pastors actually misunderstand what Jesus is saying in the Beatitudes. Typically this sermon goes here are the eight or nine things that if you follow these things, then this will happen to you. So if you can learn to be poor in spirit, then you'll inherit the kingdom of God, like it's a new ten commandments. But that's not what Jesus was doing. Jesus wasn't giving in the Beatitudes – here's eight or nine things you can do, Jesus was making a proclamation. See poor in spirit isn't a good thing. If you're poor in spirit, it means your heart is broken. It means you have no will left. It means you've been crushed by life. But Jesus says if you've been crushed by life, if you can't even bring yourself to believe in God anymore, if you've had it with church, if you've had it with whatever, blessed are you because the kingdom of God has come. We see that there's another Beatitudes in Luke, and it makes it a little bit more clear because Jesus says blessed are those who are poor. Blessed are those who are hungry. Blessed are those who weep. Blessed are those who are insulted, right? And that's how we're supposed to read the Beatitudes, not to read it as commandments of things we should do, but rather a proclamation from Jesus saying, if you're broken hearted, if you're pushed around, if you need justice and you never got it, if you've been bullied, if you've been left behind, if you're uninvited, if you're unwanted, if you're hungry, if you're sick, if you're broken, you're in luck. The kingdom of God has come. In fact this word "blessed" we often think it's like blessed, right, like you're holy. The word blessed means happy. A lot of scholars think that the opening of the sermon on the mount is a hyperlink back to Psalm 1 that also begins with "blessed is the one who does not walk in the way of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers, but his delight is on the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. He's like a tree planted by streams of living water." It's a hyperlink to a happy life. It's a promise that if you want a good, rich, wonderful life, something that Rabbi Jesus called eternal life, follow His commands, live life His way, and you'll inherit the life you're looking for. But there's one thing that will never pass away, and that is the word of the Lord. The spirit of God living within you, and if you build your life on the words of Jesus, that's what leads to a truly good and happy life. Then after those proclamations, Jesus tells us what this life looks like and how to live this way, and if we trust in these words, we'll live a good life. In fact, the sermon on the mount ends with this line. He says "anyone who hears these words of mine is like a man who built his house on the rock. The rains came down, the streams rose, but the house stood because it had its foundation on the rock. But anyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice, is like a man who built his house on a wadi." You know what a wadi is? We don't always know in the U.S., but here in, especially in the desert, you have these empty riverbeds full of sand. And most of the time, it's a completely safe place to be. But when a big rain comes, the rain will come down and rush into the desert and these big flash floods will come through and destroy everything in its path. Very often animals or travelers who don't know better will stop and maybe the animals will graze in the grass or something like that because sometimes wadi has some water underneath and they'll graze from whatever is there. But it's a dangerous place to be. It's like a man who has never been to the desert, and he's looking for a place to build his house, and he says I'm going to build it here on the wadi. It seems like the best place, but the truth is when trouble comes, its coming for him. And that's what it's like when we build our lives on something other than the Bible, on the word of God that was given to us. Jesus promised to us is if we understand this and we build our lives around it, that even when trouble comes, when the rain comes down, we'll have a strong foundation. We often think that the foundation is Jesus Himself, and it is, but He says very plainly it's His teachings. We're going to get into that deeper.

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I think it's interesting, one of the things I always remember when I come back to Israel, is the power of and the honor of being a disciple to a rabbi. Jesus was, as Ronnie and I talked about earlier, a famous rabbi. In this region, it was a big deal to be a sage or a rabbi, or to be someone that knew the Torah and had a group of people following you. Jesus totally exemplified in so much of what He did the characteristics and the life of a great rabbi. Before we get there, I want to teach what does it mean to be a disciple, and where did this whole thing come from. Many of us, if you've studied the Bible for a long time, you might remember that the Babylonian exile is a critical point for so many Jews. They lived in Israel, but you see that there's this ongoing thing where the people are close to God, and then they fall into idolatry, and into turning their back on the poor. And finally it gets so bad that God exiles His people to Babylon. And after 70 years, when they come back to Israel and they begin to rebuild their lives, and rebuild the desert, there's a group called the great assembly made up of some characters you might know: Ezra, Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi and others. Sages and rabbis and teachers who gather together and decide this will never happen again. We will never turn our back on God. We will figure out what it means to build a life so that we never become a people who turn our back on God. It's in that time that they do several things, but most importantly, they decide what's the Bible. They choose what we call, as Christians, the Old Testament, they put together the Tanach – the what we call the Old Testament. And they say this is what cannon is. They also decide this is what's going to happen in a synagogue. This is how you have a minyan, which is ten men that can pray together to form a local group of Jews. And they decide this is what the oral traditions will be, and this is the beginning of what will later become rabbinic Judaism. Much later, we see that there's a guy named Simeon ben Shetach, who decides we need to teach our children the Torah. There was a wonderful book written called *When Children Became People*. And the argument was that in the ancient world, children were not considered people. They were considered property. And it was commonplace for children to be used as religious prostitutes, or to be sold into slavery, to be abused, and in the worst cases, to be sacrificed and tortured to pagan gods. It was the Jews who were in a way a unique group who made children people, and later the Jewish Christians, who emphasized the importance of caring for and loving children; creating orphanages, finding ways that children who didn't have parents could find a home and I just think that's such a wonderful part. And so part of this was a system of schools called Yeshiva that began where they decided we're going to teach our children Torah. I read this great line from a rabbi that said "we love to stuff our children with Torah as you would stuff an ox." As time went on and Yeshiva continued, this was about a hundred years before Jesus, there was this love of Torah that was beginning where they never wanted to lose Torah. The idea was what if we can get as many people to memorize as much of Torah as possible, that if they burned every Bible in the world, we could get our people together and we could ride it out word for word. Of course that never happened, but you can see that there's this just love for Torah, and these big questions about what does this mean? Who is my neighbor? What does it mean to love my neighbor? What does it mean to love the Lord with all my Mayod and with all my very. What does that even mean? How do we translate that into Greek later with the Greek Jews. And there's all these great discussions about how do we live the Torah the way God wants us to live Torah. And this is the community into which Jesus is born, a community of Jews that loves the Bible. They love to debate the Bible, they love to learn it, they love to teach it, and it's in that community that the teachers, the teachers of Torah, the rabbis that we call them today, become the great sort of pillars of the society. They're some of the most honored people in the community. And just like in Christianity how we have so many traditions. We have Presbyterians, we have Methodists, we have Catholics and all sorts, and we agree on critical things, but there's some smaller things that we disagree on. Many great rabbis in Jesus' day had different disagreements about what does this mean, or how does it live, what's the most important command. And this was called a rabbi's yoke. If a rabbi was famous, and he wanted to pass on his teaching, he would pass on his yoke to his disciples, and he wanted his disciples to carry on his interpretation of Torah. He wanted his disciples to live the way he lived. In fact some were so sincere about this that they wanted the disciples to walk the way they walked, look the way they looked, tell the jokes that they tell, and become as much like the rabbi as possible. To do whatever the rabbi does, to care about what the rabbi cares about and to teach the way the rabbi teaches. In that society of teaching children, some children were really special; they were super gifted. Some of them could memorize large, large portions of the Bible and recite it and debate it and they were quick minded and they were charismatic and catchy. And some of them would be chosen to be disciples to a rabbi. If a student was so gifted and so bright and so smart, the rabbi would say come follow me.

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It's a line that people in those days would have understood, and it's something that any boy would have just lit up. I mean it would be like getting accepted to Harvard or some prestigious school that you never thought you could get in. It's just the top one percent could get into. And to become a disciple was a huge, huge deal. Think about that. We look back here down on the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus is this uber famous rabbi. People are following Him. He was already at I think 12 years old teaching at the temple. Mother can't find Him and He's performing these miracles. And people know there is something really special about Jesus. By the time He comes here to Capernaum, He's a famous rabbi. And of course we know the story. He goes up to Peter and Andrew, and I mean all He says is follow me. So why would Peter and Andrew just leave their nets there and just walk away from their boats. Well it's obvious now, isn't it. If a famous rabbi says follow me, I mean you're not going to wait. This is the greatest honor of your life. In fact, you're going to ask permission to go home and tell your dad – dad! Dad! Guess what! A rabbi, Rabbi Jesus, Yahshua, He's the famous rabbi here in Galilee. He asked me to follow Him. He thinks I'm good enough to be His disciple. He thinks I can carry on His yoke. He thinks I can remember all that He's going to teach. He thinks I can become like Him. He thinks I can live out His yoke in my life. What do you say, father? And the father, it's a historian Ray Vanderlin says, that there was a saying that a father could say to his son whose been called to be a disciple, he would say "may you be covered in the dust of your rabbi." Isn't that a beautiful line? You know what that means? That you have a rabbi, an older man with younger men walking behind him, and the dust gets kicked up and as they follow their rabbi, that they're always so close to their rabbi that some of the dust gets on their feet or on their shoes or on their clothing. And the idea is that because they follow the rabbi so much, that when they get home, they have the rabbi's dust all over them. May you be covered in the dust of your rabbi. May you love your rabbis' words so much, and love your rabbis teaching, that when you get home at the end of the day, the rabbi's dust is all over you. Like a blessing. Isn't that beautiful? When Peter and Andrew are called to follow the rabbi, of course they're going to leave it behind. One of the most amazing things about Jesus is He calls people in many cases that shouldn't be called. To me, my favorite is the calling of Matthew, and Matthew gives his own account in the book of Matthew of when Jesus called him. In Jesus' day, they had this group of outsiders in Judaism called tax collectors. We have tax collectors today, right. In the United States, tax collectors have rules that you follow, and you hire an accountant, and you fill out all your forms, and you pay your taxes. And you might be upset about your taxes. My taxes are too high, my taxes are too low, but most people would say that its sort of equally fair for everybody. But in Jesus' day, there were Jewish tax collectors who were religiously and ethnically Jewish, but they worked for the Roman empire. And the Jews of those days saw the Roman empire as the evil empire occupying. And they wanted the Romans out of Israel. And so when you had tax collectors that were collecting money for the Roman empire, they were seen as like traitors. They were seen as outsiders. And they really were, in most cases, bad guys because the way they collected taxes was through an arbitrary system of adding just a little bit on top. Now imagine that. Imagine that there's a secret tax amount that only the tax collectors know. Let's say its 10%. And the way that the tax collectors make money is by arbitrarily adding a little more. And they go to your mom's house and they say hey Linda, the tax this year is 12%. And she says oh 12, that seems a bit high. And then you're there, and you say mom it's not 12%, its much lower. It's got to be lower than that. And then you start arguing with the tax collector, maybe you throw a punch, and he throws a punch at you, and then fine, I'll go down to 11%. But he's still taking a cut and you don't know what it is. And this is why people just hated tax collectors is because they were liars, they were cheaters, they were swindlers, but they had to do it. And of course in Jesus' day, what's the job that most people do? Well, you do what your dad does. It's probably true; Matthew didn't choose to be a tax collector. His dad was a tax collector, right? More than likely, Matthew's dad was a tax collector and he just had to do what his dad did. And so here he is, he's maybe figuring out how to make money for his family, he's collecting taxes, and one day famous Rabbi Jesus who he probably isn't even allowed to associate with. He's not even allowed to go and listen to His sermons. He has to stand far back. Maybe he's not welcome at the synagogue. Maybe the Jews in the community hate him. Maybe he has to live in another village. But Matthew is there, he's collecting taxes, and there's all these gifted, religious young men around him. These wonderful guys who can recite the Torah and they're brilliant and they're smart and they look good, and they come from great families. And there's all these people around, and Jesus looks at Matthew the tax collector, the outsider, the sinner, and the famous rabbi says Matthew, come follow me. Isn't that amazing? Jesus, hearing this, He says in Matthew chapter 9 verse 12: "it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick."

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But go and learn what this means. I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” That’s from Hosea. “For I have not come to call the righteous; I have come to call sinners.” So often we think that God only calls righteous people that got it all together. Maybe you come from a past of brokenness. Maybe you’ve made a lot of mistakes in your personal life. Maybe you used to be a Christian and you sort of wandered away. Back when you were a kid, it was important to you, but now in life you’ve just found yourself so far away, and you think how could I even come back to God. How could I even show my face to my family and my friends. You think God would never want to be with someone like me. But you know what, Jesus shows us what God is like. God is merciful. He’s so full of love for you. His heart swells with kindness towards you the way a loving father sees a child, just as the father runs out to the prodigal son, God loves you just as you are, not as you should be. He’s for you, and He knows you can be a disciple, too. And very often, there’s an old saying that your mess becomes your message. Your test becomes your testimony. Just remember that there’s no tragedy, there’s no falling short that God cannot turn around. I had a friend back in high school who was like a drug dealer. And he was one of the first people that I led to the Lord. I had this radical experience where I was like I’m going to tell everybody in my school about God, and I want them to know the Lord, and I want them to change their lives. And my first thought was go to the most influential people in my school. And these were people that came from good families, but they weren’t religious. Nobody was interested. Nobody cared about what I was saying. It wasn’t until I started talking to the bullies, and the people with all the piercings in the wrong places, and the people that sold drugs. I never thought in a million years they would be the ones who were most interested. In fact, my first sort of disciple was this guy named Dave in my school, Broken Arrow. He was one of our schools like drug dealers. And I remember talking to Dave, and he just lit up, and he came to faith in the Lord. And it like took a while; there was a process. I remember it was about two weeks after he became a Christian, I thought he threw away all his drugs or something, and I saw him behind the school and he was selling drugs. I said Dave, what are you doing? You just came to faith. You can’t be selling drugs. And he said don’t worry Bobby, I’m just selling the rest of my drugs, and then I’m done. His thought was I’ve got all these products, I paid for these, I need to get my money back, and then once I get my money back, I’m done. And I said you can’t do that. You got to just throw them away. And he said no, I’m going to get my money back. I’m going to sell them. And you know what’s amazing, he sold his drugs and he got his money back, and he never went back to drugs. It was an amazing thing. I just learned that there was a realness and a vulnerability about people who were honest about their brokenness rather than hiding it. They were honest about their sins, rather than hiding their sins. They were honest about the struggles they had in their family, rather than hiding it. And that God seemed to be able.. it’s almost like God could use that in a better way. And I saw how this guy radically became a totally new person and later on he ended up being a chaplain in the Navy. He’s a wonderful man. And you can see how God could turn any mess into a message, any test into a testimony. He can transform any heart. He can use any person to go from being a disciple to even being a rabbi. I’ll just finish with this. Remember that at the heart of Jesus’ message, and really at the heart of true Judaism, is to do unto others what you’d have them do unto you. This is the golden rule. There’s this great apocryphal story about one of the greatest rabbis of all time, the sage and rabbi, Rabbi Hillel, who lived about a generation before Jesus and was influential on all of Judaism in Jesus’ day. He had an opposing sort of house, and they were like rivals, and it was the house of Shammai, a different rabbi. And there was a young man who was considering becoming a Jew, and first he went to the house of Shammai and he talked to Rabbi Shammai and said, Rabbi, if you can explain to me while standing on one leg all of the Torah, I will become a Jew. And it says something like Rabbi Shammai rebuked him, or maybe chased him off with a stick, or something like this. We don’t know, it’s a legend, but then he came to Rabbi Hillel and he said Rabbi Hillel, if you could stand on one leg and tell me the Torah, then I will become a Jew. And Rabbi Hillel responds and first he rebukes him, and then he says don’t do what is hateful to your neighbor. Listen to this, this is the whole of the Torah, now go and study. We don’t know if this came from Hillel, but this is often called the silver rule. We see that both Cicero and Confucius say it, that it existed before Jesus, and the silver rule was don’t do to others what you wouldn’t want them to do to you. So like a great rabbi, Jesus takes a famous saying of His day and He changes it just a little bit to make it more amazing. Instead of saying don’t do, what does He say? The golden rule. Do to others what you’d want them to do to you. Its having eyes to see, having ears to hear, that if you see someone who’s hurting, or you see someone who’s brokenhearted,.

Follow Him Even Unto the Grave

Maybe you see someone who needs help or needs some prayer, that you do what you would want done to you if you were in that position; that you'd be merciful and slow to judgement. And see these are the words of life. You want to live a happy life, do what I'm telling you today. Do what Jesus taught us. Forgive your neighbor. Be faithful in all things. Be faithful to your spouse and to your promises and to things that you say you'll do. Be an honest person. Don't lie or deceive, and be true about who you are, and be truly you. Love people. Love people the way that you need to be loved. And don't withhold mercy when you can give it. Never try and people please. Don't do religion to get people to brag about you or to say you're great, but whatever you do that's religious, do it for the Lord. Do it to honor Him and live for His applause. If you struggle with this, do good things in secret, things that only God can see, and then you can test your heart to see if you truly love what is good and hate what is evil. Remember that the greatest treasures are not silver and gold or clothing or things that can be destroyed by the things of this world, but the greatest treasure you have are heavenly treasures. That's your relationships, the knowledge of the word, the Holy Spirit, wisdom. Remember your family and your friends and your relationships are so much more important than many of the other things that we value. Don't worry when things get troublesome, but seek first God's kingdom and make God first in your life. Have faith. If you need something in your life, ask God for it. Live with confidence and boldness that God's promises are true in your life, and build your life on His word. If you do this, you'll never be the same. My friends, I want to encourage you to see Jesus, not just as the Messiah, not just as the Savior, and He is and thank God for that, but remember He's also a rabbi. His words are words of life. May you be covered in the dust of your rabbi. May you be covered in His spirit and His words, and may you build your life on that. Amen.