

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 74
October 2, 2020

Section 54 The Sermon on the Mount A. T. Robertson's Harmony of the Gospels

Absorbing the Principles

Session 2

Welcome to “The Mind of Christ” study. We are continuing our quest to understand the mind of Christ. I have entitled this entire series, “Challenger Deep” because Challenger Deep is the deepest spot in the ocean; it is deeper than Mount Everest is tall, I mean even by about 10,000 feet deeper than Mount Everest is tall! Challenger Deep is somewhere around 36,000 feet deep and I thought it would be a fitting metaphor for “The Mind of Christ” because I believe the mind of Christ is also incredibly deep and *we need to explore it very carefully*. You might even think of it as a little bit of an ‘archeological dig’ where we are being *very careful* to excavate in a way that we don't *destroy something in the process*. We are engaged in that kind of endeavor here with “The Mind of Christ”. We are just a short way into The Sermon on the Mount; that is the last section that we have engaged with.

I am going back, at this point, and giving a little bit of a summary of some of the material that I've covered thus far. Most of what we call the beatitudes, the statements that begin with the word “blessed”.

I started that process last week and got about half way through it and I hope to finish it up this week, and then we will return to some more discussion on the idea of persecution and how we, as Christians, should *handle* that persecution or *think* about it through the mind of Christ.

Thank you again for joining us. We're going to jump back into the series. If you are receiving the written version of this, you will be seeing these laid out in some bullet points or some numbered points so you can kind of summarize what we've studied thus far in The Sermon on the Mount.

I want to pick up on the beatitude in **Matthew 5:7** that says, “*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive (or obtain) mercy.*” I don't have a lot to say about that in summary but let me give you about three points about **mercy**. {I ended with point 22 last week so I'll begin with point 23 this lesson}.

Point 23

First of all, regarding the fifth beatitude, **mercy is the norm** of the Christian's life. We should be able, as Christians, to be touched by the circumstances of other people. When I say ‘**mercy is the norm**’, I believe that that is the norm of the way God deals with us human beings because God looks upon our circumstances, and His inclination is to be **merciful** to us. So don't think of **mercy** as just simply a trait or a feeling to be employed *occasionally* in life, it *really* is the norm of our lives. We are to live a life where we look at other people and we look at circumstances with an inclination to dispense **mercy**, forgiveness, love ... those kinds of things in the situation.

Point 24

The *second* point about **mercy** is that **mercy** indicates that one has power over another. It's not really mercy unless you can extend mercy, and you have to be in a *position* to extend that mercy. So it really is an indication that you have some power in a situation. You could, for instance, seek revenge; you *could* prosecute to the full extent of the law; but you make a decision *not* to do that. You make the decision to "show mercy" to the individual in the situation. You *could* require many, many things. You *could* heap many burdens upon the person who needs **mercy**, but you recognize that that power that you have should be tempered by **mercy** that you *need* to give in that situation.

Point 25

Then, the *third* point about **mercy** is that **mercy** should be shown in the same way that God shows it to us. If we expect to *receive* **mercy** in this life from God, then we should *show* **mercy** to or fellow man. There is a correlation between the **mercy** that we will receive from God and the **mercy** that we give to others. *That's why* it should be a norm of life ... because I want God's mercy to me the normative way of God dealing with me. I want Him to hold me in a perpetual state of **mercy**.

Now **mercy** doesn't mean that I'm not accountable and doesn't mean that I am free to do whatever I please. Actually, when I'm held in that place of mercy, it really causes me to want to be more careful about how I live my life for others. So those are three summary statements about the beatitude on mercy.

Point 26

The sixth beatitude is "*Blessed are those who are pure in heart, for they shall see God.*" The first point I want to make about this is that there is a strong connection between the **pure in heart** to *clear thinking* or an *undefiled mind*. When you think of **purity of heart**, don't just think in terms of just some kind of *moral purity*. It goes *further* than **moral purity**. It has the idea of 'someone who has clear thinking'; 'someone who has a pure mind,' and who has the ability to 'think in a pure way'.

Point 27

A *second* point about this is *a mind can be defiled* by twisted thinking on many things. It can be doctrinal or it can be moral, but think of the *defilement of the mind* that causes the *impurity of the heart*. It gets twisted in some way. I begin to look at a circumstance; I begin to look at a situation in a *distorted* kind of *view*, and when that happens, then my heart becomes corrupted. It becomes a lens that is dirty, that I can't see very well through and it gives rise to bad thinking, and therefore, bad behavior. So, *a mind can be defiled by twisted thinking*.

Point 28

Thirdly, on the subject of **pure in heart**, is that there is a strong correlation with having a *clear* or a *clean* conscience. You are going to see that in the Bible as you study the idea of **purity of heart** and **cleanness of conscience**. *Conscience can become defiled*. The conscience is supposed to be an arbiter between good and evil; between truth and error; and between right and wrong. But if the conscience isn't functioning properly because it's

dirty...it needs to be cleaned, then you are not going to get a good “reading” from the conscience. **Purity of heart** involves the *cleansing* of the *conscience*, and in cleansing the conscience we become better able to distinguish between good from evil.

Point 29

The next point is that “*Jesus’ death is the means of purification*”. **How** do we cleanse our consciences? Well, that’s the problem. *We don’t have the ability* to cleanse our own consciences; therefore we rely upon **God** and through **the death of Jesus on the cross** to be the purification for our consciences.

So, when we become Christians, when we saved, we are *appealing to God* for a **clear conscience** according to **1 Peter 3:21**. I believe that *in the act of baptism, part* of what God does in that act is He *cleanses our conscience* from the kinds of things that would contaminate the conscience.

Point 30

The next point about this is that to try to “**self-purify** by good works” is *deceptive* and it *contaminates even more*. This is why it is called a “dead work”. Some people try to purify their own consciences by simply “*trying to be good*” or “*leading a better life*”. They try to clean up their own conscience. That is, I guess, noble to try to *want* to do that, but it really contaminates it even more. It would be like me having dirty hands ... hands that are not sterile, and I try to get in and try to clean something up that’s dirty but I’m using dirty hands to clean it. So, what is happening is that I’m contaminating it more. That’s why a surgeon purifies his hands, wears gloves and other things, so that he does not become a means of contamination in the operation.

But when we try to “**self-purify**” that cannot work because we are sinners. We have sinners trying to un-contaminate sinners, and we don’t have the power to do that. So, it is only through the work of Christ who is the only One who can purify us from these things.

Point 31

The next point is, the word that is used about purify, is the word Catheter. It is a medical term. We understand that a catheter is used when a person cannot eliminate and they need some help to get the impurities out of their body. A catheter is used to draw those impurities out of the person. It is interesting to see the correlation as how we use these Greek terms in various situations in life; in this case in a medical way.

Point 32

The next point I would make is that *it is what comes out of the heart* that defiles, and Jesus addresses many of these specifically in the Sermon on the Mount. So what defiles a person? It’s not simply “what goes into the person that defiles the person. It is what comes out of the person that defiles him.”

Jesus was very clear about that. He uses the idea of food. Food that is taken into the body is not what defiles the man. It is the impurities that come out of the body ... the elimination that defiles the man.

We take in many things in our lives. As we move through this world we *see* things, we *hear* things, we *experience* things and if those things are cleansed, or constantly cleansed by the blood of Christ, then they never defile us ... they never cause us to be **impure**. However, if those things get **inside** of us, and they find a place inside of us, and they **come out** in some *behavior*, in some *attitude* and some expression, then **that** is what defiles the person.

Point 33

The next point I would make is that perception or discernment is ★ key to keeping a clean heart; one that is sincere. So, if I am going to maintain or cooperate with God in maintaining a pure heart, then I need to have a *clear* heart; I need to have a *sincere* heart, I need to be going about this in a very sincere way. I need to have a *strong, focused desire* to live in a *righteous* way with God. If I don't have that, if I'm just haphazard about my life, if I'm not dedicated to Christ then I will find myself not having a purity of heart. So, sincere hearts are important if we are going to cooperate with the **purification** process that God wants us to experience.

Point 34

This point is that the location of **purity** is the heart. We 'think about' what we value. The things that we value are the things that are in our hearts. If we value *money*, that's going to be *dominating our thinking*; that's going to *dominate our heart*. But we were designed to be **purified** from within so that what comes out will be **pure**. The heart is the center of that, and the heart includes more than our emotions. It really includes more of our thinking.

Point 35

The next point is that the heart has a symbiotic relationship with the *blood of Christ* and the *Word of God*. When we study Scripture, the two things that are the cleansing agents of the heart is the *blood of Christ*; we are purified by His blood, but we're also purified by the *Word of God*; that when we hear the Word of God, the Word of God causes us to be *sanctified* or **purified** or *made holy*.

The heart, if good, moves the blood and the Word through our system to cleanse us. If you think about a heart that functions properly, it will continue to move blood through it into all the body. When the blood flows out, it is **clean** and it goes and it **purifies** the whole body. As it returns back to the heart, then the impurities it has picked up along the way are then cleansed through a very elaborate system that God has devised, so when the blood is pumped back *out* of the heart is clean and it goes back to do its cleansing work again. If you think about the blood of Christ coming into our heart, and the Word of God coming into our heart; *if that is consistently happening*, then what is flowing out of our heart is going to be *consistently good*. So, if the blood moves and cleanses, it keeps the heart healthy so it can keep moving ... this cycle of the blood and the word continues to cleanse us throughout our lives.

Point 36

The next point I would make is that *worldly* and *fleshly* contaminants are continuously cleansed away and expelled from our conscience or our heart. As I said, these *worldly contaminants* that get into us in the course of our lives, and the way the conscience is sometimes contaminated by these things, are constantly being expelled from our system.

This is a continual process; not something that is “one and done”. It’s a ***constant cleansing*** that takes place. That is why it says in **1 John 1:7** that “... if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” The blood of Christ ***continually*** cleanses us from our sins. It is a continuous process.

Point 37

The next thing that I would point out is that this compares to the ‘single eye’ that is going to be mentioned later on. Jesus says in **Matthew 6:22**, ‘If your eye is single, or if you have a single-***focused purposed*** eye, then ‘***the whole body will be full of light.***’ “***But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!***” The same is true with the process of purification ... that if your heart is bad, your whole life is going to be bad, so you have to keep the heart **pure** through this cleansing process.

Point 38

The next point I would make is that all of this makes it ***possible to see God clearly***. The **point** of what is going on here is “to be able to ***see*** God”. Blessed are the **pure in heart** for they shall see God. If I don’t keep my heart **pure**, I will not be able to see God; and that’s what I **want** to do. If you think about the heart as a lens, going back to that metaphor, the ***dirtier*** the lens the ***less*** I’m going to be able to ***see through the lens***. And the ***cleaner*** the lens is the ***more*** I am going to be able to see God.

Point 39

Now let’s shift our attention to the next beatitude in **Matthew 5:9**. “**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.**” A **peacemaker** is one who brings **peace** and **harmony** into one’s life by bringing a **person** into ***harmony with God and with others***. Being a **peacemaker** is really about **understanding** how we can help others have a ***harmonious relationship*** with God a ***harmonious relationship*** with others.

Point 40

Here is how this works. Terms of peace are worked out at the table. I’m using this from where He talks about ***terms of peace***. There needs to be some kind of understanding about the terms of peace that God offers us (**Luke 14:31-33**). ³¹ ***Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand?*** ³² ***Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.*** ³³ ***So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.***

We shouldn’t think of ***terms of peace*** as two equals sitting down at the table and negotiating ***terms of peace***. **God** offers **us** the **terms of peace**. He says that ‘this is the basis on which I can have peace with you and you can have peace with me. It’s a kind of “take it” or “leave it” kind of approach. We don’t bring anything to the table to say, ‘well, I’ll give you this if You give me that.’ **God says** ‘***This is how peace*** can be had between us, and **this is how** peace can be had between two individuals.’ The terms of peace are worked out at the table by us coming to the table, sitting down with God, and hearing what **He** has to say about the terms of peace.

Point 41

The next point is that Jesus is the **Peacemaker** and He always brings *with Him*, a sword. That may seem to be paradoxical, going back to what we talked about last week, and it **is** a bit paradoxical because when people will not 'live in peace' and will not accept the 'terms of peace' that God has laid out, then they continue to be enemies. There is a "sword" if you will, that now divides people.

Remember in the *Garden of Eden* how Adam and Eve were *separated* from the "tree of life" *by a sword* because they violated the **peace** that they had in the Garden because they did not accept God's terms of peace. Then, automatically, a sword was used to separate them from God and from life.

Point 42

The next point I would make is that **peacemaking** passages like **Acts 7:20-30** is helpful here. This is part of a sermon that Stephen had right before he was persecuted. In those passages you will find the story of Moses who tried to be a champion for the Israelite people against the Egyptians. Moses wanted to try to bring about the peaceful removal of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. However, in the process of doing that, he kind of presented himself as being a man of war, because Moses killed a soldier who was mistreating an Israelite.

He thought that would be seen as an act of peace with the Israelites but they saw it differently. They saw it as a way of getting them into deeper trouble with the Egyptians, so they didn't want to have anything to do with Moses at that point. But you can study that particular passage, **Acts 7:20-30** (going back to one of my previous broadcasts where I cover that; **Lesson 71** on **Sept. 11, 2020** and you can see the correlation about that.)

Point 43

This point is that *reception is a part of evangelism and peace is the indicator*. When a person goes out to evangelize, for instance in **Matthew 10:12-14**, Jesus says when you go into a place, and you're evangelizing, you are to put your 'peace' upon the house you find yourself in. So, you are to give them your 'peace'. You are to say that you are here "peacefully" and you want to "interact with them peacefully," and if they return "that peace" to you and say "okay, we can talk", then you will find a receptive home. So peace becomes an indicator of someone you can talk to about the gospel.

Point 44

This point is a *function* of peace is sometimes war. So, in order to have peace, sometimes you have to go to war. Basically, that's what Jesus did on our behalf. When He went to the cross, He was 'at war' with the *forces of evil*, with *sin*, with the *law*, with *things that would keep us from God*. He was victorious on the cross, and through the winning of the war, He is able to bring about peace for all men.

Point 45

The next point is that the non-Christian must understand that he is outnumbered by God before he will seek terms of peace. Now going back to **Luke 14** you will find there that it is only the person who recognizes that they are outnumbered, that they cannot possibly win

this war, they will seek **terms of peace** with the person who is stronger. The same is true with us, with our relationship with God. If we do not recognize that God is the stronger One and we cannot win against God, then we will never seek **peace** with Him.

If we go back to the entry that I wrote on August 2, 2011, (this is for my purposes), we will see that there are a number of ★ key concepts about **peacemaking**. I want to give you those concepts again. I've already given them to you one time but we're summarizing here and I want to repeat them because **repetition is the first law of learning**. So here are some ★ key concepts noted thus far.

1. A peacemaker brings stability or homeostasis into life. So, we're trying to bring an "okayness" into the lives of people.
2. A peacemaker promotes reconciliation between estranged parties. This is the job of the peacemaker.
3. A peacemaker has to work out terms of peace; God being the ultimate peacemaker and He did this through His Son.
4. A peacemaker's outcome may be a sword or more conflict when the necessary terms of peace are rejected.
5. A peacemaker's peace must conform to the truth, or it is no **peace** at all. In other words, if you are going to have true peace, there has to be **honesty**, there has to be truth, there has to be **reality**, or we don't really have a good **peace**. So, when our president or his ambassadors negotiate peace with our foreign enemies, it is essential that everybody try to be as honest as possible. Now, in the course of international relations today, that is very difficult to get at. To be able to know if the enemy is telling us the truth is hard because often the enemy will not. They will try to find favorable terms of peace for **them** by 'holding back' information. But if we are going to have **true peace**, there has to be truth.
6. A peacemaker will be ineffective when others do not accept his role as a peacemaker. So you can only be a peacemaker if people accept your role as a peacemaker.
7. A peacemaker always pursues peace but recognizes that he cannot always attain peace because it does not all depend on the peacemaker. You can do as much as you can, but it doesn't mean there is going to be peace.
8. A peacemaker seeks to bring the parties into agreement with God and not just with one another. You see, a true and lasting peace is when the estranged parties are at peace with God, and not just at peace with each other because if each one is at peace with God, then they **will be at peace** with one another.
9. The resulting state is to be undisturbed. What we are trying to get to in **peacemaking** is for the parties to be undisturbed.

10. **Relative peace** must exist between people for the gospel to be heard and accepted. So if we are going to have the ability for the gospel to go forward, there needs to be a certain amount of peace in order for that to happen.
11. Finally, **the battle for peace** is the battle between flesh and Spirit. Ultimately, if there is a lack of peace between two individuals or between an individual and God it is because there is a battle between the flesh and the Spirit that has not yet been won.

Those are just some summary statements of importance referring to peacemaking.

Now it says the sons of God outcome is one of “likeness”. ⁹ “**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.**” So, being peacemakers we will become **sons of God**. What does that mean?

It means that we will have the *likeness* of God. As peacemakers we identify with the True Peacemaker who **is** the Son of God. So, when you are a peacemaker, you prove yourself to be like your elder Brother, Jesus, who is the ultimate Peacemaker.

Point 46

Peace is *not* a **strategy**, **He** is a **person**. **He is Jesus**. Peace is not used “in order to get some advantage” over someone else. Peace is really “the individual, Jesus”. He is our peace. When we are both unified in body, soul and spirit with Him, **then** we are going to have true **peace** within ourselves, with others and with God.

Point 47

The next point is ... and we move here into some thoughts on persecution from beatitude 8, “**Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**” **Persecution** of the stronger over the weaker reveals our vulnerability and dependence. In *persecution*, there is always a **stronger** and a **weaker** party. The **persecution** of the **stronger** over the **weaker** party reveals **how vulnerable** and **how dependent** we really are. I guess all of us are in a state of vulnerability when it comes to **someone** else. There is always someone stronger, someone more powerful, someone richer, someone who can do more **to** us and **persecute** us and it just simply reveals our vulnerability.

Point 48

Also, persecution is to be “pursued”. That’s what the word persecution means. It means to pursue. It is pursue-ing something. It means to be chased. When you are chased by someone, you are being persecuted.

Point 49

The next point is “**how is homeostasis maintained while being pursued**”, and I would point you back to the Old Testament when David was being pursued by Saul for all those years. How did he maintain his “okayness” while he was being chased, literally, by Saul for several years before Saul died and David became king?

Point 50

This next point is *for the sake of maintaining our hunger and thirst for righteousness*, we must learn to manage our **persecution**. Let's see if we can 'get this'.

If we are going to *maintain our hunger and thirst for righteousness*, we are going to have to manage persecution. **Persecution cannot** become the dominant focus of our lives because if it does, then we're always going to be trying to 'get away' because we're being pursued, we're being chased, and that doesn't need to be the primary focus of our life. The **primary** focus should be *maintaining this hunger and thirst for righteousness*. That is the principle thing that we're after.

Point 51

This point is that the two ingredients of **persecution** are *ignorance* and *unbelief*. So why would a person persecute other people? Well, Paul reveals to us why **he** became a persecutor of Christians ... because of his *ignorance* and his *unbelief*. He simply did not know the truth and he acted in unbelief because he didn't believe in Jesus as Lord.

Point 52

The next point is that if you add the ingredient of 'fleshly confidence' to that, then you have a trifecta. You have *ignorance* and *unbelief*, and you add to that *fleshly confidence* and then you have the ingredients for all kinds of **persecution** to occur.

Point 53

The next summary point is the difference in Muslim and Christian martyrs. What is the difference, because Muslims sometimes see themselves as being persecuted and they may be martyred for their faith. But what's the difference between a Muslim martyr and a Christian martyr?

Well, **Islam** produces suicide bombers with a promise of seventy virgins. This becomes a transaction for them...that if I do this, (blow myself up), then I will *earn* these 70 virgins. So, this is a *works-based* kind of proposition for them.

However, **Christ** promises the Kingdom, not as an *enticement* to martyrdom, but as a *consequence* of faith that ends in death. There's a difference. We do not go out and seek death as Christians just so that we will inherit the Kingdom of God. What we do is we live a life of faith that may lead to our death because other people may **persecute** us and that is a big difference with the Muslim religion.

Point 54

The next point is that insult is a *reproach*. Jesus used this with the repentant cities. I'm just making the point that the word 'insult' means 'a reproach'.

Point 55

This point is that insult against us should be groundless. In other words, if somebody's going to insult us, it should be a groundless insult ... it should **not** be for cause. It should **not** be some something we have actually done!

Point 56

Truth is limited in what it can say is the next point. ***Lies are unlimited***... there is *no* restraint. But ***truth is limited to truth!*** Truth cannot say just ‘***anything***’. A person who is lying can say ‘***anything***’... ***anything they want*** to say, because a lie has no limits to it! But truth is always limited.

Point 57

The next point is that ***rejoicing is the Christian response to persecution*** just as it is to *any* suffering according to **James 1:2-3** “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.” We need to learn how to rejoice to the sufferings or the persecutions that come into our lives because we find *some reason* to rejoice that goes beyond simply the **persecution** itself.

Point 58

My next point is that ***you can tell what a person values*** as to the object of rejoicing. So, ***what*** you rejoice about; what ***causes*** you to rejoice before God ***shows*** what you really ***value***. What do you celebrate? Just think about it on a human level. What do we celebrate? ***We celebrate things we value***. We celebrate someone’s ***birthday***. We celebrate an ***anniversary***. We celebrate an ***award*** that someone receives. We’re celebrating things that are of ***value***. That’s what we rejoice in. That’s when we throw a party. We celebrate things we value like in Luke 15 ... the lost son, the lost coin, the lost sheep. Finding the things that are ***valuable*** cause us to be able to celebrate before God.

These are summary principles that we’ve covered thus far in the Sermon on the Mount. As you can see, we’ve covered quite a bit of ground already, and I just want to reiterate why I think it’s important to do this. It is because the mind of Christ ... we can rush through it, as in a museum. We stop and look at a statue or a painting and we move on to the next and the next and the next and the next, and we don’t tend to “***get the good***” out of it. We don’t tend to get the “full effect” of what we’re learning.

We need to slow down. We need to chew our food. We need to digest it to let it become a ***part of who we are***. ***That’s why I took the time to go back and do this brief summary***.

Next time we get together I’m going to pick up again ... we have some more to say about the persecution passages, we’re going to be back in **Matthew 5:12** and we’re going to continue our discussion on that occasion about some of the things that come next on the Sermon on the Mount. The rest of the Sermon will take a long time for us to get through it, so fasten your seat-belt and let’s hold on for the ride to enjoy together the greatest sermon that has ever been preached.

God bless you, and take care. If you need to find out anything about us, the Central Church of Christ, you can go to our website at <https://www centralsarasota.org/> and you’ll find just about anything you want to know about or including a way to contact us. So, God bless, take care and we’ll talk to you again next week.