

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 81

November 20, 2020

Section 54 The Sermon on the Mount

A. T. Robertson's Harmony of the Gospels

Thank you for joining us again for The Mind of Christ. We are in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount and we will continue our discussion today with that. If you are joining us for the first time, you might want to go back into the archives and catch up a little bit, at least from the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. We've been doing this for a while so there are quite a few videos available, <https://www.centraisarasota.org/>.

We are going to pursue quite ambitiously today about ten verses and so I am going to have to get started pretty quickly here. I am going to read those verses to you now.

Matthew 5:38-48

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’³⁹ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.⁴⁰ If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.⁴¹ Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.⁴² Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’

⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?⁴⁷ If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?⁴⁸ Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

These are among some of the most challenging verses in the Sermon on the Mount, so let's dig in to this. It's not just difficult to understand what He said, but we scratch our heads and we wonder if He really meant it literally. If so, could I ever apply it to my life, or even *want* to apply it to my life?

It begins with the *law of retaliation*; an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. This seems ‘just’, but as someone has said, ‘the world will end up blind and toothless if we apply this’. In **Exodus 21:12-end**, Moses addresses personal injuries. Various situations are addressed and penalties are assessed. Among them are ‘life for life’, ‘tooth for tooth’, ‘hand for hand’, ‘foot for foot’, ‘burn for burn’, ‘wound for wound’, and ‘bruise for bruise’. So it **is taught** in the Old Testament. There are exceptions depending on who was injured, whether it was a slave or an unborn baby and what the circumstances are, but the general *law of retaliation* applies.

Leviticus 24:17-23 continues this. ‘Now if someone takes any human life, he must be put to death.¹⁸ But the one who takes the life of an animal shall make restitution, life for life.¹⁹ If someone injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so shall it be done to him:²⁰ fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he has injured a person, so shall it be inflicted on him.²¹ So the one who kills an animal shall make restitution, but the one who

kills a person shall be put to death. ²² There shall be only one standard for you; it shall be for the stranger as well as the native, for I am the Lord your God.” ²³ Then Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, and they brought the one who had cursed outside the camp, and stoned him with stones. So the sons of Israel did just as the Lord had commanded Moses. ***Just as he has done, so shall it be done to him.***

In **Deuteronomy 19:14-21** extends this “to intend to do harm”, as in a false witness who is trying by his testimony to do wrong to his neighbor. If found out what he intended, ***it will be done to him!*** What harm he intended to do to his neighbor must be done to him.

So an immediate difficulty is with ***Jesus’ examples of non-resistance*** ... a slap on the face and the taking away of a person’s shirt. These are relatively minor offenses, but what of someone who wants to take out your eye or break your arm, or your neck, or to take your house in a lawsuit? ***I might be able to endure a couple of slaps*** without retaliation, but ***what if someone harmed my wife?*** It may be that ‘going the extra mile’ might render sore feet, but still this is minor compared to the injuries and injustices often found in the world.

Also, Jesus turns the idea around. Instead of someone doing something **to me**, I simply decide not to do it to him. He says if someone does it to me, I let him do more, and even volunteer my other cheek or my cloak or go the extra mile. These two matters have to be taken into account in our consideration of ‘the mind of Christ’. What is Jesus thinking here? What is He really trying to get across in this passage? You are going to get here some of my ‘thought process’ too, as I thought through the issues involved here.

When we ‘pay back in kind’ we involve ourselves in ***personal justice*** which was meant to be divine. Just as man cannot be trusted with **oaths** because he doesn’t have the power to fulfill them (so we let God be true and every man a liar – **Romans 3:4**), man cannot be trusted personally to get **justice right** either. Now when this is in the hands of a group like in **1 Corinthians 6:1-8**, or the state in **Romans 13**, there is a better chance of justice, but even there Jesus tells us to settle matters quickly while we are on the way to the court. ***Only God can mete out perfect justice because only God is perfect.*** That’s why ***only Jesus*** as a perfect sacrifice could do that; could bring about ultimate justice.

To be willing to be “taken advantage of” actually makes us ***like Jesus***. He turned the other cheek and more. He lost His shirt and cloak, and more. He was forced to walk His last mile and then He gave more. **He is not asking us to do what He was unwilling to do!** He did much more. I wonder if the Apostles connected these words when they observed what Jesus confronted in the passion or in the crucifixion.

Allowing someone to strike, or to take, or to force is difficult not only to do, but to apply. Does civil disobedience really capture this teaching? I understand not retaliating, but extending an injustice voluntarily is another matter. If I were locked up unjustly for 5 days, should I volunteer to stay 10 days? Does this teaching only apply to personal injustice? What if a person struck my six-month-old granddaughter on the right cheek? Should I allow them to hit the left one as well? Maybe the question is ‘how do I resist evil’ when I am weak and have no power to strike back. Does something happen in my mind or in the mind of the persecutor, the person who has power over me, when I volunteer for further abuse; something that convicts them and causes them to come to their senses? Perhaps this could

work in some cases, but when I read stories like the book “Unbroken” and even “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”, I don’t see this happen in most cases. I think when people are allowed to take advantage of you and they’re not resisted, they often continue to take advantage of you. So, Jesus, what are you saying? What are you teaching me about “what You think”?

The woman who is battered by her husband and takes it over and over many times ends up dead or the person in a mentally abusive relationship who endures day in and day out normally ends up mentally controlled needing years of counseling to escape, and when a bully gets his way he usually just keeps on bullying. Does the relatively “smallness of the matter” that Jesus addressed here make the difference in what Jesus is saying? A slap on the other cheek, losing one’s shirt or cloak, or walking an extra mile may not be a big deal for most people; unless the one who is struck is a frail 85-year-old woman, or the one who gives up his shirt on his back is left naked in the streets, or the person who goes two miles out of their way misses their daughter’s funeral. Do not ‘circumstances’ enter in here somewhere? The core of this teaching is, in Jesus’ words, “**Do not resist him who is evil.**” Now that’s kind of the core of the teaching of this passage. So, what does that mean?

It means, **do not oppose, do not resist, or do not stand out against someone.** It comes from two words, one meaning the opposite, instead of, or because of, or denoting contrast or acquittal or substitution or correspondence; and the other word means to stand. So, it means “to stand opposed to something”. When you stand you abide, you appoint, you continue, and it’s even the word that is used for a “covenant”. The word is generally used in a positive way in ‘taking a stand’ as opposed to ‘falling’. It means “to stand fast”, “to continue” or “to endure” it.

In **Ephesians 6:11, 13**, it says we must “**stand firm against the schemes of the devil**” and “**having done everything, to stand firm**”. So how does this square with Jesus’ saying we should not “resist” evil ... we **should not** stand in opposition to evil? Because in Ephesians 6 He says we **are** to take a stand against evil.

Could it be that Jesus is saying that there are times when resisting evil or some matter is a waste of time ... not worth our effort? Now, wisdom requires us to know the difference. Some offenses should be ignored or overlooked or put up with, and others demand us taking a stand against them. When Jesus was ‘not’ resisting evil by not calling down the angels in His defense, He was actually resisting a much bigger evil and defeating that evil on the cross. There are two tracks, and sometimes defeating the bigger evil demands that we allow the smaller evil to prevail, at least for now.

Paul develops this more in Romans 12 echoing and extending Jesus’ teaching there. Paul teaches a proactive approach as we see Jesus do in the verses that will follow. But in **Romans 12:14** he says, “we are to bless instead of curse” and in **verse 17** he said instead of paying back evil for evil we respect what is right in the sight of all men. In **verse 19** we don’t seek revenge, but rather, we give room for God’s wrath. In **verse 20** he says we are to feed our enemies and give them something to drink. In **verse 21** instead of allowing yourself to be overcome with evil, you overcome evil with good. He then goes into us all being under the power and the authority of the state which is the approved instrument of justice.

In the Old Testament, the Jewish people under a Theocracy administered the punishment for evil. The church does not have this authority. In a sense Jesus tells us to push into the offense. Jesus tells us, don't run and don't fight, but maintain control of yourself. Lean into the matter without resistance and see the outcome the Lord may bring. As Paul says in verse 20, "Heaping coals of fire on their head". Many will be impressed by the non-resistance and will be ashamed and repent of their actions.

The idea in **Matthew 5:42**, "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you" ... the idea here is also very difficult to understand because He's talking about giving and lending. Whoever asks of you, give, and whoever wants to borrow, lend. In some ways, this opens us up to more abuse and loss. How could a person sustain such a life of freely giving to anyone who asked him? This would be endless...well, not endless because I would be broken soon. I would run out of anything to give you. If this is taken literally, it seems "I would be taken" literally. So, what must Jesus mean here? Is He merely trying to see that we would not be hard-nosed in this life, or insensitive to the needs of others? Is He addressing stinginess or hoarding? How do God and Jesus 'give' and 'lend' to us?

Well, not indiscriminately in all things but more in other things, like rain that falls on the 'just' and the 'unjust'. But even though grace is offered to all, it is given only to those who repent. And the means by which God gives to us is often by our being given a skill and an energy to work, so there is much to inform us as to how to give and how to lend because we need to use God and Jesus as our model for how to apply these verses.

The act of turning away (He says 'don't turn away 'someone') means to turn away, to turn back, or to bring back, or to pervert turning away from. It is two words. It is "apo" (απο) meaning 'from' and "strephe" (στρεφω) meaning 'turn'. It is used regarding 'turning from the truth', for instance in **2 Timothy 4:4**. It may be 'turning from iniquities' as in **Acts 3:26**. It may be used to 'incite rebellion' or 'inciting the people' to revolt in **Luke 23:14**. It may be 'to put away from' or 'removing' ungodliness as in **Romans 11:26**.

In the middle voice, it means 'to turn oneself away from something', like to forsake or to desert. In **2 Timothy 1:15** says that 'all of Asia turned' from Paul. It is 'to refuse' or 'reject'. In **Matthew 5:42**; it means to 'look away from him who wants to borrow from you'. In **Titus 1:14** it means 'turning from the truth'. In **Hebrews 12:25**, 'How shall we escape if we 'turn away' from Him who warns us from Heaven?'

Perhaps what we give to those who ask, or those who are inclined or wish to borrow from us, is not what they desire or think that they need. God does not give us *everything* that we ask for, but He does not ignore us or turn His back on us. He at least provides comfort, strength or encouragement in our situation. We *do* what is *in our power to do* and what is *in another's best interest*.

So, what is more difficult for me? Is it the mass appeals for help, or is it the case of the beggar on the street? These are difficult situations. Peter and John in Acts 3 with the beggar is a good example of this. "I do not have silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!"

In **2 Corinthians 8:12** tells us we are to **give according to what we have, not according to what we do not have**, but we are either inclined **to help** or **not help**. We have to check our attitude. Are we stingy, or closed-handed? Do we have a benevolent heart, a heart like God? Jesus went around “doing good” it says. He was besieged by needs daily, to the point of not even being able to eat. He dispensed healing for hours, but **at some point, He needed to retreat** in order to revive.

Then, regarding borrowing... What about expecting repayment, because He says you should lend to people and don't expect them to repay you? In **Luke 6:34-5** it says, **“If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. ³⁵ But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return...”** God is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

A theme that Jesus returns to that underlies many teachings is where the reward comes from. I can attest that it rarely comes from men. They are unreliable...an unreliable lot. Of course, the basic lesson is one of **dependence**. We've heard that one before in this sermon; about how **dependent** we really are on God. From whence do we get what we need? I guess He's still working on me in that regard because I'm still trying to learn that **everything I need really comes from God Himself**. In **Luke 6:30**, Jesus says, **“Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.”** It isn't just what you loan ... it is ‘what is taken from you’. It says **“you're not to demand it back”**. You are not to ask again. You're not to require it of the person.

In the midst of this teaching is what we call “the Golden Rule”. **Luke 6:31** says, **“And just as you want people to treat you, you treat them in the same way.”** In **Matthew 7:12** Jesus says it this way. **“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”** **The standard for treatment of others is ‘how we want to be treated’**. So I want to be **responsible** when I take something that is not mine and I want to repay it. I want to hold **you** accountable as well. But Jesus says not to do this. Jesus says on what do I base how **I** want to be treated. I know **I** want to be responsible. If you give me something or loan me something, I want to repay it. But He says don't require that of people.

When Jesus talks about how you want to be treated, what is He talking about? What is the basis for that? There's a difference between how I view this in my flesh and how I view this in my spirit. In the spirit we are held to a higher standard. In our fleshly nature we do what kind of seems natural or right.

There's a difference in treating people the way **they** want to be treated and the way **you** want to be treated. The words are difficult to apply, but they are summary teachings since Jesus says that they are “the Law and the Prophets”. In other words, since all the Law and the Prophets are summed up in these words of the **Golden Rule**, then they must be foundational teachings because they sum out so much. Boiling down God's Law to a few principles like **loving God** and **loving our neighbor**, and the so-called Golden Rule is extremely challenging. Is there something in these words that relates to God's treatment of **us**? Does **He** treat us the way **He** wants to be treated ... with respect, with value, with care, with provision?

The difference is that our value, for instance, is validated by His treatment of us, but His value is not validated by our treatment of Him. God is *self-validated*, so there is some important difference here in the way God might look at this.

Jesus' teaching transitions seamlessly into talking about the treatment of our enemies. He calls to mind what they have heard said, to love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

Leviticus 19:18 warns against holding grudges and taking vengeance, but rather 'love your neighbor as yourself'. The reference for hate your enemy *may be Deuteronomy 23:3-6* which bars the Amorite and Moabite from the assembly of the Lord because they did not aid the Israelites on the way. Is this an example of the Israelites interpreting a passage to mean something based on *not what it said*, but what it *did not say*?

We have done that with **Ephesians 5:19** and **Colossians 3:16** where it says 'sing', not 'play'. "Play is sinful", we say. Well, this passage in **Leviticus 19:18** says, "**Love your neighbor, not your enemies.**" Loving enemies, we would conclude, would be sinful. Well, Jesus did not see it this way. Even the ban on Amorites and Moabites did not mean that they were to be hated or unloved. Jesus redefined "neighbor" in the story of the Good Samaritan and here, He directs us to love even our enemy!

I hope you got the point here about my comparing **Ephesians 5:19** and **Colossians 3:16** with **Leviticus 19:18** because I'm trying to show here that sometimes we misinterpret Scripture when we say, "Ephesians 5 says to sing, but it doesn't say to play" and we add something to that. In the same way, in **Leviticus 19:18** the Jews added something to the idea of their treatment of their enemies. It says that *they are to love their neighbors but it doesn't imply that they are to hate their enemies*. So there is a parallel there I believe.

By the force of His authority Jesus commands us to love our enemies. What makes someone an enemy? Is it 'anyone who seeks to do me harm' or 'someone I do not like'? Is it 'anyone with whom I disagree'? Who is my enemy? Someone asked the question, "Who is my neighbor" but who is my enemy?

In **Matthew 10:36** Jesus a man's enemies will be members of his own household. In this case, if a person becomes a Christian and his family opposes him, makes life difficult for him or treats him unkindly because of his Christian faith, they are considered to be enemies. In **Matthew 10:35** it defines enemy as one who is against another person. Ironically, Jesus, during His trial caused Herod and Pilate to become friends where enmity had existed before. **Galatians 5:20** says enmities are a work of the flesh. **Ephesians 2:15** makes it clear that the enmity that had existed between Jew and Gentile throughout history was dealt with on the cross by the Prince of Peace. **Romans 8:7** defines enmity as hostility toward God; unwilling and unable to submit to God's laws. The reconciling of man to God was supposed to be to bring about peace "inside" and "peace with others".

I've been reading "The History of the English Speaking People" by Churchill. This was back in 2011. The history of England, as with most parts of the world is filled with brutality and war and even the 'imposed peace' that is often accompanied by the sword; and sometimes even in the name of Jesus. It seems that Christ's followers have not read His teachings when all of this happens.

Jesus' enemies are persecutors as we previously saw; it means to pursue, to give no rest, to be after a person. This love that Jesus commands is truly amazing. Love is manifested in prayer, and it is a prayer **for** the enemies; not to call down curses on them. The point of lovingly praying for enemies is to prove that we are sons of our Father. He goes to the point of blessing His enemies with rain to make the crops grow, and to be able to feed themselves and their families and perhaps even their armies. God is often indiscriminate in His blessings of the righteous and the unrighteous. But this is not *always* true. He sometimes blesses or rewards the righteous and He curses the unrighteous, but God is wise in His choices and He is the one with the authority to mete out judgment, not us.

Jesus wants His people to stand out in this world, as Paul said, like lights in a dark universe. Pagans have a type of love for those who love them. They often have very heroic efforts for their comrades while showing brutality to their enemies. The Geneva Convention was designed to bring civility to the theater of war and POW camps. Humane treatment is taught by Jesus.

The strength of a great nation is how we treat our enemies when we have advantage over them. This illustrates how human existence is elevated by the teachings of Jesus. How much **worse** would the world be without it? Surely, as hard as it may be for us to apply these teachings, in less intense situations, the value cannot be hard to see.

It's interesting that Jesus says in **Matthew 5:45** that the Father causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good. It is "His sun". I want you to notice that! He made it; He sustains it; He designed it, and He alone uses it to minister to the earth. These subtle, yet profound insights into the **mind of Christ** indicate His thought patterns. Regarding the designation of being sons of our Father if we pursue peace, Jesus has taught us this in **Matthew 5:9**, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." Here is where peacemakers are called sons of God (in lesson 71, Sept. 11, 2020). Clearly the designation intends to be "**like** the Father; **like** the Son".

Jesus picks out two groups detestable to the Jews. He picks out *tax collectors* and *Gentiles* to goad them. In other words, He says we're to do "good" to them! Even these people are able to love people who are like them who have the same experiences. Even tax collectors love tax collectors and even Gentiles love the Gentiles. Greeting someone 'like you' is not difficult, but *extending your hand to someone who is different* is **Christ-like**. Jesus clearly wants His followers to excel beyond others of this world. Jesus sets the bar **high** for us. He wants us "to do more than others"; not just to "*outdo*" them or to *appear* 'more righteous', but to prove that we value people – even enemies, as our Father does! We are *offspring* who must reflect our **true parentage**.

Matthew 5:48 has caused much anxiety because it says, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Now Jesus has already put this in a context of 'doing good' to your enemies, showing a completeness that mirrors our Father. If this is taken literally, no matter how "perfect" is defined; it would be an impossible command. There is hardly any way in which a human can approach the perfection of God. Any claim to this is a mere illusion. But this does not mean that we are incapable of imitation. We can imperfectly *mimic* a perfect God by choices we make in human relationships.

This requires consciously deciding to make the effort to respond to others out of **God's love** in our heart and His strength through His Spirit. We are designed to be 'like our designer'.

The word "perfect" is the word from which we get "teleios" (τελειος). This is a rich word in the New Testament. It means to accomplish, to complete, to consummate, to consecrate, to finish, to fulfill something, to make it or to perfect it. It also carries the idea of *maturity*. There is an intended goal to which we are brought.

A concrete example of this is in **Luke 13:22** as Jesus proceeded on his way to a goal. In **John 4:34** Jesus says His food is to do the will of the Father and to accomplish his work. We might say, in our present text, to accomplish what He taught 'just as the Father does'. In **John 5:36**, Jesus' works, which were accomplishing or fulfilling were a testimony to His *identity*. In **John 17:4** Jesus says He was glorified on earth by accomplishing the work given to Him to do. Then, in **Acts 20:24** Paul speaks of finishing his course and ministry which he received from the Lord. In **Philippians 3:12** Paul acknowledges that he is not already made perfect but he presses on to lay hold of what he was laid hold of by Christ. **John 19:28** speaks of Jesus knowing that the Scriptures should be and must be fulfilled and He said that He was thirsty. In other words, He was completing things. He was bringing them to the appropriate end.

Jesus, as we have previously noted in this study of the Sermon on the Mount hammers the point of His teaching becoming *reality*. What good is knowing something and not putting it into action or into effect so that it might accomplish what it was intended by the Sovereign God? In **John 17:23** in talking of the work of unity, Jesus' intent was that His disciples would be perfected in unity giving further testimony that Jesus has been sent. The means by which we are perfected may seem strange. **2 Corinthians 12:9** says Paul said his power is perfected in weakness. Our dependence is clearly seen when we allow our weakness to be displayed. Life is not about 'proving' our *independence*, but on acknowledging our dependence on our Father and on one another. This is how we are perfected!

James 2:22 clearly teaches that Abraham was made righteous by faith; but this faith was in combination with his work and his action which made his faith *completed* or *accomplished*. It *matured* it. It *perfected* it. **1 John 2:4-5** explains the teaching about knowing God, and the true knowledge of God demands keeping His commandments and His Word. It is *through* this that the love of God has truly been perfected in us. This perfection that Jesus speaks of only comes by putting the Word into action!

So when Jesus says "to be perfect" even as our Father in Heaven is perfect, He is talking about putting the Word of God into action. Jesus will conclude the sermon with this. This is how Jesus honored the Law...**by fulfilling it**; by actually **putting it into action**. But an important distinction must be made here.

Love is not perfected and we are not made perfect by our perfectly keeping the law. Rather, God perfects us as we apply His word to our lives in practice, as *imperfect* as this practice might be. It seems strange here; but to whatever degree we apply the law of God or the will of God to our lives, we're going to apply it imperfectly; but in that attempt to apply it as perfectly as we can, *God perfects us!*

John continues in **1 John 4:12** where we love one another even imperfectly, **God lives in us** and **He perfects His love in us**. It is *the God within*; the *Holy Spirit* who perfects love or brings love to “**maturity**” in us in **1 John 4:17-18**. As love is perfected in us, evidence of His work in our lives gives us confidence in the Day of Judgment.

This perfected love drives out fear, because a state of fear does not allow love to be perfected. Hebrews speaks of this perfection as it relates to the Law. In **Hebrews 7:19**, the Law made nothing perfect. Mere Law-keeping does not *perfect* or *mature* a person because maturity must include the *heart*, the *motives*, the ‘softer side’ which must be reprogrammed and can only do so by the Spirit acting upon a willing and obedient heart.

Just as the Law could not perfect the person, so gifts and sacrifices also will not perfect the person ... because the place needing perfection ... the place that has been corrupted by sin is the **conscience** and *sacrifices cannot perfect the conscience*.

Hebrews 10:1 says the same thing, “For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the form of those things itself, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually every year, make those who approach perfect.” It is not the frequency of the sacrifices that will perfect the conscience. In **Hebrews 10:14** makes this clear, that our perfection is made possible by one offering for all time. “For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.” It is for those engaged in the sanctifying work of the Spirit and the word. Being perfect as God is perfect does involve our obedience, but there is much more to make this possible.

In **Matthew 5:48**, “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect,” what it says is “be mature in your dealings with your enemies, even as your heavenly Father is mature in His dealings with His enemies. That’s the context! Contextually, Jesus has spoken about God’s blessing on the just and the unjust equally, and teaching us to show more maturity than the tax collectors and the Gentiles who typically greet ‘their own’. Our desire should be one of imitation of our Father who not only “teaches us” but “models for us” this extraordinary character.

This first chapter, as I know, will be about connecting what is inside with what is outside and vice versa; that a person who is a true Christian or Christ follower must be consistently connected ... real and authentic in both actions and heart; and all motivated out of a sincere relationship with the Father.

The essence of salvation involves the **true integration** of self; a cessation of inner conflict, a peace that comes from one totally conquered by Jesus; with all aspects of life revolving around the One who died for us so that we could truly live. This complete integration cannot exist until we also integrate as much as we can; all other relationships to this; even to the extent of reconciliation with those who have something against us.

This is what makes Jesus such a beautiful Person. He was One. He was **fully connected with the Father** and was connected **with others** as they allowed Him to be. If there was some discord with others, it was *completely their doing*. This is our model of Spiritual and mental health.

Today it seems that so many are held together by drugs and alcohol; by drama and shallow social relationships and the like. These are *either inherently destructive* or *completely inadequate* to bring the fulfillment that we seek. Nothing else suffices. Jesus and His way is the **only** way to a life of joy and peace, and contentment and love. This is what “**The Sermon on the Mount**” is about, and it is giving us a picture of Jesus’ mind ... life on a variety of interconnected topics, and He is showing us how all of these things fit together so that we can be “perfect”.

I want to go to **Luke 6:36**. Jesus is reported to have said, “**Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.**” This is instead of “**Be perfect, just as your Father is perfect**” in **Matthew 5:48**. The word that Luke uses is “compassion”. It means to exercise *grace* and *favor* towards someone.

In **Romans 9:15**, God says to Moses, “**I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy, and I will show compassion to whom I show compassion.**” In Paul’s list in **Philippians 2:1** including encouragement, love, fellowship, and affection; compassion is also listed; all of these characteristics provide a basis for complete joy. In **Colossians 3:12** compassion is one of the traits to put on ... including kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Here he says a heart of compassion. This makes it possible to forgive, to bear with one another.

Verses 12-14

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of **compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience**; ¹³ **bearing** with one another, and **forgiving** each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so must you do also. ¹⁴ In addition to all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

In **Romans 12:1** Paul appeals to the mercies of God as a basis for presenting our bodies as *living sacrifices*. God is called “the Father of mercies” and “the God of all comfort” in **2 Corinthians 1:3-5**. In **James 5:11**, speaking of the endurance of those who suffered, James mentions the outcome of the Lord’s dealings with people. These outcomes are based on the Lord’s compassion and His mercy.

If we combine the idea of perfection and the idea of compassion, we get a rich blend. If perfection were taken in isolation, it might tend toward legalism; but if compassion were to be taken in isolation, it might tend to liberalism. But coupled together we get the right blend to keep us centered in the will of God. We aim at both because *both express the character of God; both are who He is, and the goal we strive to attain*. God seeks maturity; compassionate people who can carry out God’s will in a balanced way.

On reflection, **Matthew 5:48** was emphasized much more than the **Luke 6:36** during my days of growing up. Could such choices be a key ★ to understanding our culture; that is the text that we choose to emphasize? But no mistake be made; exercising *the compassion of God* in the face of suffering and unjust treatment is no less demanding than to exercise the perfection of God, and perhaps they really are the same. Until next time, you may want to meditate on these things because this is my working through trying to explore the mind of Christ. Until next time, if you need to find anything, go to <https://www.centraisarasota.org/> and you will find all kinds of information there. Thank you for joining us today.