

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 47

March 25, 2020

Tonight I am the producer, engineer and teacher all at the same time {during the COVID19 pandemic}. I decided to go ahead and start our class online, and I am already beginning to see people popping up. It's interesting to see all your names coming up. We may end up having a bigger class this way than we normally do. I told Brenda a few minutes ago that I needed to put some makeup on (there would be giggles if we had been there).

I feel pretty comfortable about our class and what we are going to do tonight. I'll probably hold our time down just a little bit less; to about half an hour, because no one will be able to make any comments. We're going to pick up where we left off a few weeks ago. I've been out of the country so we haven't been as consistent as we usually are.

Open your Bibles to Luke 4 and I want to pick up our context to what we've been studying. I want to begin in **Luke 4:14-21**. ¹⁴ And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread throughout all the surrounding districts. ¹⁵ And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.

¹⁶ And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."

²⁰ And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and He sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." We'll stop right there because we won't get that far in the message today.

Back in 2010, for those of you who are new to our class, I started a study of "The Mind of Christ" and it covered a seven-year period. Every morning I would get up and would study an hour or two on the Mind of Christ, and during that time I was journaling. If you could see it behind me, there are a number of books and there are some journals. There are 21 journals that make up the study I did on the mind of Christ. About a year ago we started a study on Wednesday nights on "The Mind of Christ", and we covered all of journal number 1, and now I am about a quarter of the way through journal number 2.

As you can see from what we just read, probably, this was the beginning of Jesus' ministry, so we're not really too far into his ministry in this study. There is so much to cover about Jesus. In fact, John said in **John 21:25**, "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." So Jesus lived a very full life in His three years of public ministry, and I wish, frankly, that there were more books. I would love to be able to study *more* about Jesus.

But what we have is enough to keep us busy for a lifetime. One day, I guess we will be able to hear the rest of the story and maybe God will show us other things Jesus taught and did.

I want to pick up here on the topic of the “release of the captives”. One of the reasons Jesus came into the world from *Isaiah 61* was that He came into the world to proclaim release for the captives. I began this, the last time we met, but I want to continue a little bit more on the subject of **the captives**.

The kind of release that Isaiah 61 speaks of has reference to the Jewish captives of war; those who were going into exile. The Jewish people, because of their sin were put into exile and became captives of war, and God did, through the prophets, proclaimed their release. It said that after 70 years, they would be able to return to their homeland. But the prophetic, *Messianic* meanings and application of this is much broader than just simply the release of the Jewish captives around 516 B. C.

It occurs to me that there is a **primary** and a **secondary** application to the release of the captives. The **primary** application is “*release from sin*”, and its power and its control. So, what is Jesus proclaiming in a **primary** sense? He is proclaiming release to those who are held *captive to sin*. And that is the most *serious* thing that we are held captive to ... it’s sin. We need release from that and that’s why Jesus had to go to the cross.

But there is a **secondary** release that He is also proclaiming and it is the problems in our life that we are associated with, or that is *caused by* the ‘sin in our lives’. You see, there is the *sin* in our life but then there are the **secondary** things that come because we are captive to sin, or because sin exists in this world because other people are sinners. Some of those things are *fear, addictions, anxiety*. All of these are kind of secondary symptoms, if you will, of the **primary** issue of sin itself. And we are often held captive to things like fear, and addiction and anxiety. There are more the **symptoms** of sin. They do have a pathology of their own, but the **secondary** cannot effectively be dealt with or defeated until the **primary** release takes place. In other words, even if you cured all the anxieties of life that you had or you won over addiction; if God doesn’t deal with your primary captivity to sin, then you are *still* not really free.

So, the word is used in different places in different ways.

In **Mark 1:4** it talks about this in regard to John’s preaching. The word used here for ‘release’ is the word ‘forgiveness’. The word forgiveness and the word for release are the same word in the Greek.

Jesus speaks of the sin of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit which will never be forgiven in **Mark 3:29**. It says, “...but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.” The word “forgiven” here is the word release.

In **Luke 4:18** it talks about this in regard to John’s preaching and the word that is used for the word release to the captives. {The word for release is “aphesis” or (αφεσις)}. The word for *release* **is** the word for *forgiveness*.

Zachariah's prophecy in **Luke 1:77** speaks of John the baptist's work as "giving to his people the knowledge of salvation by forgiveness of their sins." Again, the word forgiveness is the word release. When Jesus is proclaiming release to the captives; He is proclaiming forgiveness to the captives. Jesus tells his apostles that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed beginning in Jerusalem in **Luke 24:47**.

It is easier to tell a person that Jesus can release those from their **anxiety** than it is to tell them that He can release them from their **sins**. Jesus said a similar thing when he healed the crippled man who was let down through the roof in **Luke 5:23**. He said, "Is it easier to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up and walk'?" Is it easier to say your sins are forgiven or to heal him? Well, for Jesus it was easier to 'heal him' because then He wouldn't have to go to the cross to heal him; but to forgive his sins, He had to go to the cross. They **know** that they are anxious but they may not **admit** that they need forgiveness for their sins.

People who are held captive to their anxiety, like many people in our country are today, **they know** they are anxious, they feel anxious or they feel nervous, {COVID 19}; or a person who is addicted to some substance; they **know** they are addicted ... they **feel** it; they see the consequences of it in their lives.

But sometimes, people who are in sin don't have the same sense of needing to be forgiven or release from that captivity to sin. Release from anxiety only requires us to adopt perhaps, some of the teachings of Jesus to our lives, so if we learn how to worry less, if we learn how to even pray more, if we learn to think about positive things; we can do all those things and perhaps reduce our anxieties in this world, but that doesn't do **anything** to forgive us or release us from captivity to our sin.

Forgiveness of sin requires a complete surrender to Him as Lord. In the first instance, Jesus is a therapist. In other words, if He's just treating your anxiety He's like a therapist. But Jesus did not come to merely be a therapist. In the second work, He is Lord, He is Christ, He is saviour. So if He is going to transform the **whole** person, **body**, **soul** and **spirit**, then He is going to do that by sanctifying that person; but before He does the work of sanctification, making you holy, He first has to do the work of forgiveness...or the work of giving you new life in Christ.

The person, who is angry because of abuse, ultimately needs forgiveness in order to forgive the person who abused them. But in order to be able to forgive a person who has abused them, they **first** have to realize that **they** have been forgiven. The people who are best at forgiving other people are the people who **know** that **they** have been forgiven, and they are able to **give** the forgiveness that they have received from God.

So, all other captivities that we experience cannot be dealt with until we acknowledge our primary captivity to sin and to the devil. Having and experiencing a right relationship with God is **primary** to good **mental**, **social**, **emotional**, **economic** health in our lives. I cannot stress this enough: **the place to begin your life is to get right with God**. It is to make sure that you have been released from your captivity to **sin**, and that **that** frees you and frees God to be able to work and to transform your entire life.

It is like you have turned your life over to Him and that immediate response when you received the forgiveness of God, when you are baptized into Christ and you are raised to walk in newness of life (**Romans 6:4**). After that, you are handing your life over to God. You're admitting to God, "I am a mess. I need you to deal with my anxieties and my worries and my addictions and everything else that I have going on in my life." But you are doing it from a standpoint of being in a '*right relationship with Him*'.

How can it really be good in all areas of life, if it's not good in our relationship with the Father, the Son and with the Holy Spirit? And I feel that too many people come to Christ, and they get some of the externals of their life taken care of; they get some release from some of the things going on in their life that they feel deeply about, they may reconcile with someone, they may get rid of the anxieties that they have and they may praise God for that, but they still haven't dealt with the primary captivity in their life and that's **captivity to sin**.

So, in one sense, it's not a release of the captives, but in another way it's a transfer of the captive's from slavery to sin to slavery to God because ultimately we're not really freed in the sense that we have no obligation; we **now have an obligation to God**. Romans 6 makes this very clear (actually read all of Romans, chapters 5 through 8 and you'll see this.)

This uniting or yoking with Jesus is like being handcuffed to Him in a sense. Where **He** goes, **we** have to go. Becoming a slave of righteousness does not mean being a slave to "trying to save ourselves" or slaves to "being good". It means being *dependent* on Jesus for our righteousness; and through this faith-dependence, it characterizes a kind of friendship and intimacy that we have where He is trying to teach us; where He is able to help us avoid unrighteousness and pursue holiness.

We are entering into a new kind of relationship, and so, to be a **captive Christian** means that we now are held now in **captivity to Christ**. He now controls our life. He is the One who leads us. We go where He tells us to go; we do what He tells us to do. And so it is a transfer out of captivity to Satan who is a hard taskmaster. **Sin** is a hard taskmaster. It will ruin your life. It will cause you all kinds of trouble. But if we now become a slave of Christ, or a servant of Christ, He will lead us into a friendship kind of relationship with Him where He will *transform* your life. So these are some of the thoughts I had about captivity; being released from the captivity that we have to sin.

The next section is found in **Luke 4:18** where he says he also proclaims *recovery of sight to the blind*. This is a common theme along with being spiritually deaf. He doesn't talk about the deaf here, but he talks about the blind. Both are common themes in Jesus' ministry.

For instance, in **John 9:1-12** it provides us with one to the most in-depth treatments of this subject that you will find in the New Testament. The setting here is the healing of the man who was born blind. The assumption, by even the disciples of Jesus, was that *sin must have caused* this man's blindness, but Jesus corrects that notion and he says that the blindness is really an *opportunity for a display of the work of God in this man's life*. After he was healed, and it was very evident that he was healed – everyone knew him, the leaders of the people recognized it and began to question the man intently about how did you receive your sight; who was it that caused you to be able to see? They had a lot of questions for him.

2168 The man said, “I don’t know how to answer all their questions. The only thing I know is ‘I was blind; now I can see.’” Later in the story the blind man and Jesus had a conversation with each other, but during this time of questioning, they were trying to avoid just the plain fact that this man really **did** regain his sight. And the conclusion was that Jesus **must** have been from God if **He** had power to do this. So Jesus makes an indictment of these leaders.

Here is the indictment He makes in **John 9: 39**. He said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who **do not see may see**, and that *those who see may become blind*.” Now **this is a very telling statement**. This, again, tells us the intent that Jesus had when He came into this world. Jesus had more than one intention when He came into this world. He came to seek and save that which was lost. **This** is also a powerful statement of why Jesus came into the world. He came into the world so that those people who do not see, who are blind – Spiritually blind, may be **able** to see. But He also came into the world that those who see, or **think** they see, **may** understand their blindness. The Pharisees responded to that with this, “**We are not blind too, are we?**” (**John 9:40**) In other words, they were in denial.

It’s the same thing that is happening in John chapter 8 when Jesus talked about slavery to sin. And He used the word ‘slavery’ and they immediately said, “**We are Abraham’s** descendants; and **we have never been a slave to anyone**” **which was obviously a false statement**. But that’s the tendency that many people have ... even though they are slaves, they deny slavery; and even though they are blind, they deny that they are actually blind. So, Jesus says to them in **John 9:41**, “**If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin, but because you say you see, your sin remains.**”

In other words, just like with the slavery issue in John 8, Jesus ties it to their sin; He ties their blindness to their sin. So spiritual blindness is someone who is in sin and they don’t realize that they are **in** sin, they won’t **confess** their sins or they won’t **repent** of their sins and **therefore** they are spiritually blind. But those who recognize their blindness, are the ones like the blind man on the road who is calling out to Jesus, “**Son of David, have mercy on me**” and Jesus asks, “**What do you want Me to do for you?**” and the blind man says, “**I want to see**”. {Mark 10 and Luke 18} Well, why does he say that? Because he knows he is blind. The **spiritual** blindness that many people have is one of where that they **don’t believe** that they are really blind! They believe that they **can** see.

It seems that Jesus is saying that those who **know** they are blind and know that they **cannot cure** their blindness **recognize their need for healing or for forgiveness**. But those who **do not know** that they are blind will **not seek** healing and will remain self-sufficient. They will keep on bumping into things. They **think** that they can see perfectly but they are **stumbling** over things all the time. Other people see them stumbling over things and say, “What’s wrong with you? Why are you bumping into all of these things?” And they will say that ‘No. I’m not bumping into things’ because they are in denial. When they are self-sufficient, they are actually remaining in their sins. But the blind man allows Jesus to heal him and **rejoices** in that healing just like the blind man in the story of **John chapter 9**. But the leaders did not even recognize their need for healing because they didn’t recognize their blindness.

The only blind people that Jesus ever healed *came to Him* because they **knew** they were blind and needed what only He could give them. Jesus wasn't going around seeking blind people. The blind people were seeking out Jesus because they knew they were blind. And usually that's how it **works in the spiritual realm**. Who usually come to Jesus and asks for the recovery of spiritual sight? It's usually those who know that they are spiritually blind.

The words for "recovery of sight" in this verse (**Luke 4:18**) is a Greek word "anabelpsis" (αναβλεψις). {It is word # 308 in the concordance and means to recover sight, to look up, to receive sight}. It is made up of two words. The first is a preposition meaning "up". The second word means "to behold" or "to look", meaning "**to look up**".

Somebody can be blind not just because their eyes don't work. They *may* be blind because they're looking **down**, and they are running into things because they're looking in the wrong direction. That is a kind of blindness to and that's literally what the word means. To be able to see literally, a person has to be able to perceive. They have to be able to understand. They have to be able to discern things.

If you are walking and looking at your cell phone, or driving and texting, you are not observing. You're not physically blind, but you are blind to what you SHOULD BE looking at so you are not able to see. To "look up", means that a person must allow their focus to return. They must return to being focused on the right thing. Not merely does one need to see, but they need to see in the right way... to be looking toward the right thing; the right person or the right place. We might say that Jesus looked at the world as the blind and the sighted. In other words, the way Jesus divided people up in the world, it was usually an either / or kind of thing. He is telling people they are either **blind** or they have their *sight*. There was usually no middle ground. Now, we may have more distinction in that as one being partially blind or legally blind, farsighted or nearsighted, but Jesus tended not to think in these middle categories but of either you are able to "see" or you are not able to see.

Experience tells us that a person may be in a process of regaining sight or a process of losing their sight, but it's not often referred to this way by Jesus. We may look at somebody and we may say, "They're drifting away. Their focus is being taken off Christ. They're not looking in the right direction any more, or they're distracted." But Jesus usually didn't talk about it that way. For Him, it was usually either / or. It seemed to dominate Jesus' thinking when it comes to the condition of a person's soul. To Jesus, a person was either **lost** or he was **saved**. He wasn't almost lost or almost saved. He was usually either one or the other.

The phrase used in **Matthew 20:34** of the two blind men who were healed at the side of the road in Jericho, "**Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their *sight* and followed him.**" There are theological implications to what Jesus is saying about blindness and about sight. John Calvin, back in the 1500s would argue that those who were **reprobates** or those who were **not saved** were blind, they did not know it and there was nothing they could do to regain their sight. In our stories about blind people in the Bible, that's **not** true of them. They **did** know that they were blind and at least they had the ability to ask for the healing, and sometimes they were even told to 'go and do' a certain thing.

In **John 9:6-7** this blind man had Jesus make some mud from some spit and he applied it to the man's eyes and he told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. "When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, ⁷ and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came *back* seeing." So this man *participated* in his healing by going and washing in the pool of Siloam. So, he knew he was blind. The healing was done by Jesus but it was given in a way where he had to participate in the healing.

Jesus demonstrates that He could heal with a *touch* in **Matthew 20:29-34**. And He also did it with *spit* in **Mark 8:22-25**. But here in **John 9** he added not only used spit, but he added some dirt to that and made mud and then he instructed the man wash himself in the pool of Siloam. My point is that Jesus didn't heal everybody in just the same way. In our blindness, Jesus may have to deal with each one of us a little bit differently in *that* blindness; and we may have to cut into the process a little bit, and in different ways. In each case it is the same *healer* but there are different *means* that Jesus uses to heal. But did it really have any effect on the outcome?

In other words, did the spit and the mud really do anything, or did Jesus *use* that in just some way to bring the person into it to demonstrate their **faith in Him**?

But in John 9 there is no indication that the man asked for healing like the others did! In **John 9:1** it says, "As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth." Perhaps the "going" and "washing" was a way for Him to *demonstrate his faith* as I said.

The Jewish leaders were particularly singled out as being blind. In **Matthew 23:16, 17, 19,** and **23-24** they are called **blind guides, blind fools and blind men!** In Matthew 23: notice all the verses:

In Matthew 23:16 they are called blind guides. **Woe to you blind guides!**

In verse ¹⁷ Jesus said, "You **blind fools!** Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred?"

In verse ¹⁹ they are called, "You **blind men!** Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred?"

In verse ²³ it says, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you *hypocrites!*

In verse ²⁴ Jesus again calls them, "You **blind guides!** You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

In verse ²⁵ we read, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you *hypocrites!* You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

In verse they're called, ²⁶ **Blind Pharisee!** First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean."

In verse ³⁴ they are called a **brood of vipers** again
All of these are designations used for these people.

Jesus seems angry at them for at least, very frustrated, indicating to me that either they have some 'power' over their blindness or they *could have* at least *known if they would!* If they knew they were blind, they would just recognize it and would cry for mercy and healing.

In other words, the reason I think Jesus was frustrated with them was because of the whole idea that “*nobody is as blind as those who will not see!*” Sometimes we’re blind because we’re just plain **stubborn!** We won’t **look** at the evidence! We won’t **consider** it. It’s not because we *can’t*, but because we just *won’t!* It is because we do not have a humble, submissive, attitude or heart.

They did not *cause* this blindness, nor could they *fix* it, but they have to participate with the healer in the cure for it. We don’t normally get angry with people who are blind because they have a disability and they can’t help being blind. But Jesus put a responsibility upon those who were blind *spiritually*.

So, Jesus has the responsibility:

#1 Jesus has the responsibility to **disclose that person’s blindness**; whether spiritual or mental blindness. **We have the same responsibility here!** If one is blind, we have the responsibility of pointing it out just as others have the responsibility of pointing it out to us.

#2 Jesus also has the responsibility to offer a person a light in their darkness so they could see what they had not been seeing or able to see up to that point. **What do we do?** We bring **light** into the situation so people can see in the midst of the darkness.

In one sense, spiritual blindness is more about a distraction, I believe, than about total blindness. If you are blind to spiritual realities, it’s just that you are *too focused* on something **else**. I really think spiritual blindness is more a *distraction* ... it’s more that we’re just looking at something else and we just can’t see.

In the parable of the sower, for instance, in **Matthew 13:19-23** describes those who do not understand because their hearts are too focused on the “routines of life”.

When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ²² The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, **but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.** ²³ But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it.

They are so focused on the worries of life, the deceitfulness of wealth; they are so focused on these things that they can’t see what is *real*. **Fixation on something other than Jesus, according to Hebrews 12, causes blindness to spiritual realities simply because we are looking at something else.** I’m reminded that when Jesus came and presented Himself, one of the things that John the Baptist said on a couple of occasions was, “**Behold** the Lamb of God”. In other words, “**Look at Him.**” God said something very similar when He spoke from Heaven on two occasions. In **Luke 9:35** He said, “This is my Son. **Listen to Him**”; and in **Matthew 17:5** he said, “**While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!**” In other words, getting people to focus on Jesus is a way to get them out of their blindness because **He is the light.**

Demands abound, telling us where to look, so as to not become blind or distracted.

Colossians 3:1-2 tells us to “Seek things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” What happens when you walk and you have your head down? You run into things. But when you look up, you can see everything, and therefore you won’t bump into things.

Hebrews 12:1-2 tells us we are to run the race; but we are to run the race fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² **fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.** For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

If we run the race and we are looking all around us or behind us, we will stumble and fall. We have to keep our eyes on *what is directly ahead of us*. Blindness does not **seem** like blindness because people are focused on too many things; including religious things! That is why we need someone to proclaim *recovery of sight* to us. And that’s a very important point about spiritual blindness.

Sometimes people just need to say, “Hey, **look. Look** at Jesus. **Look** at the truth. Look at the evidence for Jesus. In other words, they are looking at so many different things in their life that it is *hard* for them to focus on what is most important in their life. That is why **recovery of sight** needs to be proclaimed to those who are spiritually blind.

That is what Jesus came to do, and that is the mandate that He gave to us as well.

We will stop here tonight and get into the next part next week. I really want to thank you for joining us.