

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 53

May 6, 2020

It has been a blessing in my life to study the Mind of Christ to try to understand just how Jesus thinks. Of course, the material I have is based upon the life of Christ; the things that are recorded about Him, and the things He said, the things He did, the way He acted and what we can envision actually occurred during those years that Jesus was on the earth. I conducted that study in order to be able to understand better, not only how He thinks but how I can learn to think like Him and have the mind of Christ and be able to imitate Him in the way I live.

A couple of things I would inform you of is I am going to be using the New American Standard Bible and I will be reading some texts here in a moment. I use that version primarily because it's a good literal translation of the Bible. Not every lesson has been recorded as a video recording but those that are, are on a You Tube channel at Central Sarasota Church of Christ. The address is <https://www.centernalsarasota.org/media> to go to view them and subscribe. You can get to our website which is "<http://centernalsarasota.org/>" also where you will find links to all of those places.

I would also encourage you that if you are joining us and you have an interest in a personal one on one time to be able to be discipled in your life in order in order to be more like Jesus, then we would encourage you to go to our website where there is a place where you can E-mail us and we will respond to that E-mail as soon s possible. That is also on the Website.

So, for tonight our reading will come from three texts, and we will read **all** three because there are some variations in the text as to what actually was said and what was done; again – not contradictory but complementing each other.

Our reading is going to start in **Matthew 4:23-25**. "Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

²⁴ The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them. ²⁵ Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan."

When we go to **Mark 1:35-39**, you will see again some additional information given on this occasion. We read, "In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. ³⁶ Simon and his companions **hunted** for Him; ³⁷ and they found Him, and said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." ³⁸ He said to them, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for." ³⁹ And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons."

And then we have the account in Luke, Chapter 4:

Luke 4:42-44 says, “When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them. ⁴³ But He said to them, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.” ⁴⁴ So He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.”

We have the three accounts here and there are some things that we are going to have to work out in the accounts as we go along. We have to understand that on the previous day Jesus had had a very long day. He started out in Bethsaida, in the Synagogue where He was teaching and a person with a demon showed up, and Jesus exorcized the demon on that occasion. Then it says that He went so Simon’s house which was in Capernaum about two or three miles away on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. When He got there, it says that Simon’s mother-in-law was ill and Jesus healed her from her illness.

Then it says that *after the sun went down*, a number of people showed up at Simon’s door and they brought to Him people with various diseases and illnesses and even demon-possessed people and He healed them on that occasion. So Jesus was probably getting to bed late that night, and He’d had a very busy day. That was the Sabbath, so now the stage is set for what is going to happen today, very early on Sunday morning.

So **Mark 1:35** says, “In the early morning, **while it was still dark**, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.” **Luke 4:42** says that He got up “**When day came**” so, again, it was very early in the morning as the sun was coming up. Mark and Luke both indicate that Jesus went to a lonely place early on this Sunday morning. We do not know how far away, but he went to a place where He could be by Himself. We assume that He was staying in the home of Simon, got up early, went out of the house, and went to a lonely place and spent some time there.

The word ‘lonely’ means uninhabited; it can be a place that was somewhat abandoned, or it can be a place of solitude. But He got away by Himself. The question is ‘why did He do that’? Why did He go to this lonely place early in the morning? Did He go there just, simply, to think? Did He go there to pray? Did He go there to get some perspective, to meditate, to get more focused, to listen and inquire of God? All of these would certainly be admirable reasons to go to a lonely place.

So, why did God in the flesh need to do this? Doesn’t this type of thing come naturally to Him? Isn’t He always in that focused place on His own? Why does He need to go and spend some time alone; and that’s a very serious question because sometimes we assume that Jesus in the flesh, and Him still being, of course, fully God, would always be in the right place. Why does He need to go spend time alone? And it raises this issue as well: that if Jesus needed to spend time alone with God, His Father, then *how much more* do we need to do the same. I wonder if He decided when He woke up, ‘hey, I’m going to spend some time alone’ or did he plan that the night before when He went to bed? I don’t know. But what was the feeling that drove Him into this lonely place? Usually there is a reason why we say, ‘I need to get out of here’ or ‘I need to go somewhere and be by myself. There is usually something that drives us to do that. And the question is, ‘What was it?’

Well, contextually ... if we stay with the context, we might be able to determine a *possible* reason why He needed to do it. I think He had something going on in His heart and in His mind between these *two competing needs* that were presenting themselves. I think He had some resistance or conflict between the Heavenly Kingdom of God, and staying focused on that, versus the pull towards the earth and the needs of those people on the earth; the health needs that people had ... the illnesses, the sicknesses, and the other diseases that they had. This is going to be articulated also in Matthew 6, but we'll leave that for now. So, He separated Himself, temporarily, to allow Himself to focus on some divine priorities, I believe, and I think that the text will reveal that.

So, what is it that He is doing? Only Mark mentions that He went off to pray, so I wonder, what does it look like for Jesus to be alone in prayer? I'd love to be that fly on that wall watching Him pray. Did He talk out loud, did He pray out loud, was He silent in His prayer, did He bow down, did He lay on the ground, did He stand and lift up His head to the heavens? How did He do it? I don't know, but it's good to just try to imagine that.

Did He have a dialogue with the Father? Was God talking to Him either audibly or in His head? Did they carry on a conversation with each other? And what was the content of His prayer? What was He spending time focused on in that prayer time? Was it the fact that He had healed all these people, was He recounting them one by one and praying for them ... maybe not only for their healing but also for their salvation? Was He praying for His disciples? He had already chosen four disciples who were following Him now and did He pray for them that they would be learning what they needed to learn? Or did He pray for the day's activity that was going to be transpiring that day, recognizing that He was going to have another busy day ahead of Him?

Well, we *do* know that the news of His previous days' activity had gone out; it had spread far and wide. It says it went out to all Syria according to **Matthew 4:24**. And there were many provinces there. If you go North West of the Sea of Galilee, then you will find yourself in what is known as Galilee properly. And that is where He had just come from. That is where Nazareth is, where Cana is where He did the miracle of turning water into wine, and that's where He was staying in Capernaum. He had already spent time in that area and He was well known in the area. Then, South East of the Sea of Galilee was what is called "The Decapolis". 'Decca' means ten and 'polis' means city, so it was the 10-city area, and He has not been there yet. He is going to go there and He's going to do some miraculous things there. Then there is the North East section of the sea, and this is the province that belonged to Philip, the tetrarch, where Caesarea Philippi is and He is going to go to that area but He hasn't been there yet. Then, there are even areas beyond this North East corner of this region and that is what is called Syria. It is farther North East and it is also called Aram, and Damascus is the capital. Later on, this is where Paul is going to be going to when he is confronted with Jesus on the road to Damascus.

Perhaps it is the folks from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, and from Judea and beyond the Jordan; a very wide area according to **Mark 4:25**, that were attracted to Him. You can see even in places He had never been, that these people were looking for Him. And it says, when He got there, to Simon's house, and it must have still fairly early in the morning when they got there, they couldn't find Jesus; and that's who they came to find.

So because Jesus was in the ‘lonely place’, they were looking for Him. Then, it says the disciples of Jesus “hunted” for Him. The word “hunted” here is interesting because ... imagine you have all these people showing up at your door and they are expecting something to happen; they’re expecting to be healed; they’re expecting Jesus to show up and to do something for them, and Jesus is not anywhere to be found. So, the disciples were looking for Him frantically. The word means, “to follow hard, to track, to hunt down”; they seemed to be fairly desperate to do so.

You know a crowd can become a mob when they don’t get what they want, and these people were not able to get what they want or what they needed on that occasion. So, finding Jesus was like their 911 call; they were sending out the troops to look for Him. All these contagious diseases from miles around were showing up at Simon’s door, people were lining up for their healings, and there’s no Jesus. Think of the logistics of all of that happening. Think of what would happen if crowds of people showed up in your yard, at your front door. How would you take care of their needs ... if they needed a drink of water, or they needed to go to the bathroom or they needed some food? And it wasn’t unusual for people to show up and stay with them without bringing provisions with them. Remember, on a couple of occasions, Jesus had to actually feed them, and so we see all of this kind of happening here.

In **Matthew 4:24** it said that Jesus healed them, and then in **Mark 1:38** it said that Jesus tells his disciples that they need to go somewhere else to preach. In **Luke 4:43** it says that they are going to go to some other cities. Here is what I put together from all the evidence that we have on this occasion. First of all, it is likely that He healed *all* the people who were there. In other words, when He got back to the house, people were lined up and I believe that Jesus actually healed each one of them, and we don’t know exactly how long that took. But I believe also, that there were probably other people who had not yet arrived. Maybe they were from further away and they were making their way to Peter’s door, but they had not yet arrived there. And others, perhaps, may have been still at home packing up and making their preparations to travel there, so there could have been a whole host of people who were already there, some on their way, and some who were getting ready to come. But it says that after He healed the people who were at the door, He leaves and He goes back to preaching. In **Luke 4:42** it says that the crowds *tried to keep Him from leaving*. So, maybe He had healed the people and they wanted, maybe, to be around Him, to spend time with Him, and Jesus says, ‘no, I have to go’, and so He is ready to leave.

Then, in verse **44** of **Luke 4**, I get thrown a *curve ball*. Every now and then, when I am studying the Bible, or studying the life of Christ, a curve ball comes at me from the text, and I don’t know exactly what to do with it. It’s hard to hit the ball.

In **Luke 4:44**, it puts Jesus back in the Synagogue in Judea. It says, “[So He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.](#)” Well, where did that come from ... because He’s in Galilee; He’s in the Northern regions. Jesus is not near Judea at that point in time. So, I’m not sure where that came from; **however**, if you look at the fine print, you will see that “some manuscripts” ... and I do not know how to evaluate which ones are more accurate than the others. I do know that in the New American Standard Bible, and most translations, they put ‘Judea’ and not ‘Galilee’ because *some manuscripts* say, ‘Galilee’ instead of ‘Judea’. That would make more sense to me, but what do I do with the curve ball?

Anyway, that's what the text says.

In **Mark 1:38** it says that He went back to the synagogues of Galilee and He was *teaching* and was *casting out demons*. “And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons.” So we know He did that, but in **Luke 4:43**; and this is probably the **key ★ verse** in this section on the life of Christ. So in this **verse**, here is what Jesus said. He said to them, “I must *preach the kingdom of God* to the other cities also, for I was *sent for this purpose*.”

Now, again, this is a key ★ verse because it helps me understand, perhaps, **why** Jesus went to this lonely place to pray. The word “must”, (because He says ‘I must preach the Kingdom of God in these other cities), the word “must” is a word meaning that it is *necessary*; it is “*binding on Me*”, it is “*proper for Me*” to do this.

Here is a key ★ thing for us to keep in mind when we are trying to understand the “**Mind of Christ**”: Jesus had **priorities** in His mind. He didn't just wake up every day and say, ‘Okay, what are some of the good things I can do today?’ No, He had priorities in His mind. He knew what He was trying to accomplish based upon the will of His Father. So, the purpose for which He had been sent was “to preach the Kingdom of God”. You remember when Jesus came preaching, when He started His ministry, just like John the Baptist, their primary message was, “*Repent; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*.”

The Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God theme is throughout the Gospels and even after the resurrection He is still talking about “*The Kingdom of God*” and how the *rule* of God needs to come into the lives of the people who He was reaching. So, Jesus is **bound**, if you will, *by this purpose* for which He was sent.

Now, the “sending” of Jesus really occurred **before the foundation** of the world! *God decided what needed to be done in order to save man before the foundation of the world*. So, the **purposes** of God regarding the **Kingdom** of God were in the **mind** of God before He even created the heavens and the Earth! So this is not just some new purpose; it's not just some purpose that Jesus said, “This is my goal for today” or “This is what my priority is for today.” No, this is **an eternal purpose** because the Kingdom is an eternal Kingdom! And therefore, Jesus understood that, He understood that he needed to be focused on that and He understood that there were some things that were beginning to get a little bit in the way of that. And this is one of the most important things that we're going to say in this lesson tonight.

The mission for Jesus is clear...and it is precise. You know; when a person has a mission, when they know *why* they're here, then they can live their life with *intentionality*. They can get up every day and they can say, “This is my main purpose for being here.” Now, if **we** are going to adopt the mind of Christ; if we're going to think like He does; then **we** have to wake up with the same **purpose** in *our* mind that **He** had when He woke up in the morning. When He went off to that lonely place to pray, it was a time for Him to **refocus** on *His purpose*. He did not want the focus to shift.

There are things that are called “*mission creep*”. {It’s a gradual shift in objectives during the course of a military campaign, often resulting in an unplanned long-term commitment}. It’s when somebody has a mission or a vision, sometimes things can get into that vision or mission and they can forget WHY they are doing what they are doing because they may get sidetracked by other things; things that aren’t important to fulfilling their mission. That is ‘*mission creep*’, and you’re always having to be pulled back to ‘what is your true mission’?

I have been on the board for the last six years of the Sarasota Medical Pregnancy Center. At every meeting, just about, that we have, sometimes we forget, we would read our ‘Mission Statement’ so that we would be reminded of why we are in this meeting, what our focus is and what our mission is. It’s very important. The mission that we have written for the Central Church of Christ is this: “*It is the mission of the Central Church of Christ to lead people to have an authentic and growing relationship with God the Father, through Jesus Christ.*” That is our mission.

Are there other good things that we could be doing? Absolutely, but those things are *underneath* the true mission of the church, and that is to bring people into a real, authentic relationship with God the Father through His son, Jesus; and that that relationship will be a *growing* relationship. In other words, in regard to the Mind of Christ, we are to grow in our ability to have the mind of Christ. We are disciples of Jesus and we need to *think* like Jesus so that we can *act* like Jesus.

So Jesus has gone from this opportunity, or these *healing* opportunities, or driving out demons or doing one miracle at a time; He has *done* some of that, but now it is beginning to turn into a whole different thing. *Crowds* of people are showing up; it’s not just one person who is demon possessed but it there may be a whole bunch of folks who are demon possessed. It’s not just one person who is sick; it’s a whole bunch of people who are sick. He could be spending all His time healing sick people and casting out demons and feeding those who are hungry; He could be devoting **all** of His attention to that.

You know, He could launch a new campaign. Imagine His new campaign could be “**No Sick Folks in Israel**”. Was that why He came? Was that the purpose for which God sent Him? God could certainly have accomplished that from Heaven without ever sending His Son to the Earth. Or maybe His campaign would switch from “The Kingdom of Heaven” is at hand, to “Eradicate Disease in the Promise Land”. Was that His mission? Was that why Jesus was sent – primarily to eradicate all diseases on the face of the Earth? He could have done that quite easily. He could have simply spoken the words and He could have turned things around. But that wasn’t why He was sent. That was not His primary mission or His purpose. Healing was temporary, and healing had a purpose within the bigger purpose. Its purpose was helping people to be led to faith. Remember what was said *about* Jesus by John the Apostle in **John 20:30-31**? Now I will probably be quoting this from the King James Version because that is how I memorize it, “[Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book, but these are written that you might believe, and that by believing you might have life in His name.](#)”

What was the purpose of the miracles that Jesus did during His day? The purpose was to lead people to faith! It was to lead people to understand the rule and the Kingdom of God.

Jesus *did have* sovereignty over disease. He *did have* sovereignty over demons. He *did have* sovereignty over everything on the face of the earth. He did say to the winds and the waves, “Be still” but He did not come down here to deal with climate control! He didn’t come down here to deal with all the diseases that are down here. He didn’t come down here in order to cast out all the demons that were roaming the earth. *He came down here to seek and to save those who were lost* and to call them into a Kingdom relationship with Himself. He called them to have an *authentic* relationship with His Father, and *growing* relationship with His Father. That’s why Jesus came. **He** is the One who is “sent”.

You know that when you are *sent* by someone... *when you are sent*, you *have* to carry out the will of the One who sent you. You will find this throughout Jesus’ ministry. He will continually be saying, “I only do what I see the Father doing.” “I came here to do the will of the Father.” Jesus knew that He had been sent for a specific purpose.

Now for me, the opportunities to do good expand over and over again. I can be very distracted about ‘what my job is’. There are so many good things that we can do. There are so many things that present themselves to us every day. And many of those good things can be brought into service for the Kingdom of God or for the expansion of the Kingdom of God. But it is very easy for us to take our eye off of what our **real mission** is. Our **real mission** is to bring people under the Kingdom rule of Christ. HE IS LORD. He is the One who is the head over everything. And we are trying to play *our* part in bringing people under the headship of Jesus. So **that** is our mission; that is what we are here to accomplish. And this is what this story is telling us about today.

Remember that Jesus was a person who was sent with a mission and that His main mission is to proclaim the rule of God in His Kingdom. That is His job. And that’s why Jesus said what He said in **Luke 4:43**, “I must preach the Kingdom of God to other cities also, **for I was sent for this purpose.**”

Now, what is your purpose? Why were you sent? Why is God sending you out into the world? If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, *you are being sent* as well. Read the prayer that Jesus prayed in **John 17:18** “As *You* have sent *Me* into the world, Father, *I* have sent *them* into the world.”

He is sending all of us into the world, but for what purpose? Why are we being sent? What is our mission? Well, of course, it **has** to be the same one as Jesus had. It is so we can proclaim, we can preach, we can share, we can teach, we can help bring people into contact with the Kingdom Rule of God. **That’s** what people need today. Now, does God care about their illnesses ... does He care about their hunger ... does He care about their thirst? Absolutely, and we are busy doing things that will help people in their physical needs, but those are not an end in themselves. They are there to help us to *also* be able to introduce people to the person who *gives* His command to love each other, and to *take care* of each other’s needs. Why ... so that we can bring people into the Kingdom of God.

Now, to *think* like Jesus means to *focus on what is most important*. It is the preaching of the Kingdom of God. And that, in a nutshell is what this section of Scripture is about; to help us better understand how to think like Christ.