

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 73

September 25, 2020

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

Absorbing the Principles

Session 1

Welcome to another edition of the Mind of Christ. We are making our way through the life of Christ. We're basing this on A. T. Robertson's Harmony of the Gospels and we are looking at each part of what Jesus did and said and we are in **The Sermon on the Mount**. We've have been on The Sermon on the Mount for a while, but we're just beginning.

I want to do something a little different today. I want to go back and summarize some of the *major points* that we have learned thus far from **The Sermon on the Mount**. I can tell you that the summary is really quite long itself but I'm going to try to make my way through it in this one session today, so I appreciate your staying with me on this. The reason I believe this is important is because often we are covering a lot of ground yet *we need to absorb some of these principles and truths into our spiritual systems so that we can take on the Mind of Christ and begin to think like He does*. Unless we take some time to review and summarize, I believe that we might just kind of caught up in the flow of what we're doing and we may miss some of the nuggets of information. As I was reviewing this, I realized there's quite a bit here and so it's possible I may turn this into two sessions just so we don't get overloaded a little bit in this summary.

We're really kind of in the middle of the beatitude that talks about 'blessed are those who are persecuted', and we're not really finished with that, but we will return to that after we do this summary.

I want to begin by reminding you of something we haven't really covered yet. It comes at the very end of a Sermon on the Mount and that is that **we must put into practice**. We are like the wise man who builds his house upon the rock and *we put into practice the words of Jesus*. And unless we do that, we're not going to realize the benefit of what Jesus has to say. *We cannot be merely 'hearers of the Word', we must be doers of the Word putting it into practice, James 1:22-25*. As we go along here, I hope, and I will try to do this as well, that you will check yourself to see if you are actually putting these truths into practice. That's one of the first things I want to remind you of as we do this summary.

Point 1

The first point I want to make, (and I just made some bullet points in my journal back in 2011), is how blessed the crowd was to be able to hear this great speech delivered. **This has been rightly proclaimed as being the greatest sermon that has ever been preached**. Jesus is the One who delivered it and those who were in the crowd that day were truly blessed to be able to hear this sermon delivered for the very first time. I would imagine they sat there in awe. I mean, I know that at the end of the story, at the end of Matthew 7, it said that the crowd was impressed that *Jesus spoke as One who had authority*.

Point 2

The second thing I want to point out is we need to compare a little bit, the **blessings** and the **cursings** that are found in the Old Testament to the Sermon on the Mount. You remember that the **blessings** and the **cursings** were delivered, first by Moses on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. There were two peaks there, and the children of Israel would gather between these two peaks, and one man would read the **blessings** *if you follow the will of God*, and then another would read the **cursings** and this is what happens *if you don't follow the will of God*.

So I would encourage us to see the **blessings** that are enumerated here in **Matthew 5** and later we'll get to some **cursings** or woes that are found in **Luke 6** that kind of correspond to this. So, I want you to get in your mind that this is the New Testament kind of **blessings** and **cursings** as opposed to the Old Testament version that were delivered to the Jews.

Point 3

The next point that I would make is about the word "blessed" itself. We've talked, some, in this series on the idea of homeostasis. Homeostasis, I would simply say is the "okayness" of those who are **in Christ**. Those who have identified with Christ are **okay ... it is well with their soul**. So the word '**blessed**' is one of those words that expresses the idea of homeostasis or okayness.

Point 4

Another point I want to make, returning to a little bit more on the blessings and the cursings, but in **Deuteronomy 28:47**, it connects joy to obedience as the Sermon on the Mount connects blessedness to obedience. There is a joy that accompanies the person who is being obedient to Christ just as there is a blessedness that occurs with those who are being obedient to Christ. One of the reasons I wanted to show you this is because this principle is not a New Testament Principle, per se; it is just a truth. It's a truth of how things work. If you are obedient to God, there is much more to be joyful about.

Point 5

I want to make the point that the curses that we read about in the Old Testament are the **absence of blessedness**. When you are not being blessed, the alternative, and the only alternative is to be cursed. It is kind of like darkness and light, if you will. If there is no light, there is automatically darkness because *darkness is the absence of light*. So darkness is the absence of light just as curses are the absence of blessedness. When you read through the Sermon on the Mount and you see the blessed things there, imagine that if these are **not** part of your life, *then the opposite will be true* ... you will be in darkness or you will be cursed.

Point 6

I want you to note the "distress of mind" associated with the cursings of **Deuteronomy 28**. You can read those cursings over there. I'm not going to take time to read them now, but I just want you to see that in the cursings it was not just about **physical** problems that people would have, but it was also about **mental** issues that they would have. There would be distress, there would be anxiety, there would be fear, there would be all these things that would just cause our lives to be somewhat miserable ... just a mental state of mind; an angst.

There would be an angst that we would carry with us because of the distress that is in our lives. That's what much of the "absence of the blessedness" on the Sermon on the Mount is. When you remove the blessedness from it, what remains is worry. In fact, Jesus even addresses that in Matthew 6, in the Sermon on the Mount itself. One of the reasons worry occurs in our lives is because we have lost the sense of blessedness. So going back and putting the 'blessed' statements into practice will go a long way in helping us to have this peace of mind or this lack of cursing in our minds.

Point 7

The next point I want to make is that the first beatitude is of the "poor" mentioned in Luke, and the "poor in spirit" as Matthew puts it. This is the first beatitude. In looking at the stories in the gospels, Jesus often included "the poor" in His themes. The idea of 'poverty', the idea of 'the poor' is often found in what Jesus speaks to us. Jesus was keenly aware of the people who lived in poverty. The poverty that He addresses on many occasions is the poverty of resources; *financial poverty* that people lived in. But that poverty often was a metaphor for the *poverty of spirit* that people also lived in!

Now **poverty of spirit** may be *a deep longing or a humility realizing one's utter dependence on God*. So, poverty is not just simply a 'lack of' something in our lives. Poverty may be a way of Jesus talking about *how dependent we really are on God Himself*. So the person who realizes that; a person who has that sense of dependence or poverty of spirit, will closely lean upon God **for all things** in his life. So when you hear the word poverty, it may seem like a negative word, and in some contexts it is, but *overall, it is a positive word, because it relates to the kind of dependence that we need to have on God*.

Point 8

The next point I want to make is "in our dependence", we also realize that **God is** our source of provision. We are not only dependent on God but we also know that *He can provide* what we need in our poverty. Dependence is one thing; the provision the comes from that dependence is another thing. So, we need to get *that* principle on straight.

Point 9

The next point I want to make is 'temptation' lies in thinking that we are sufficient, or in thinking that something besides God can meet our needs! If you think of 'the way of the world' if you will, the way the world tends to think about things; the world sees certain physical things or certain systems down here as being adequate to meet the needs that we have. However, that is merely a temptation that is put in the way of our lives to try to *get us to fulfill the deep need of poverty* in some way **other than** through **God and His provision**.

Point 10

So, intrinsic value is inherent within this idea of poverty as well. *Intrinsic value means that God recognizes our poverty, our lack, our being devoid of resources*. We can not even bring ourselves into the world. Without God's help, we can't provide for the things that we need. But in realizing that, and knowing that God **is** our provision, He is the **One who provides for us**, it also indicates to us that we have intrinsic value to God. God recognizes that we are important, that we are worthy of His provision, that He *wants* to take care of us because we are intrinsically valuable to Him.

Point 11

Also, this idea that I became acquainted with in graduate school is the idea of *necessary versus contingent*. God is the only **necessary** Being. In other words, He must exist because if He didn't exist, nothing would exist. All the rest of us, and all the things in this world are **contingent**, we're *contingent* upon Him and His existence, His power, His provision and His control. So, we're learning about that in this Sermon on the Mount; that this is how Jesus is thinking about things.

There's a quote that I used back on June 30, 2011, but I want to share that quote with you now. I'm quoting myself so I don't flatter myself too much, but here's the quote that I want to give you just as a summary quote for the things I was studying un that day. "***We exist at God's will and pleasure. Carrying this knowledge within us, and living accordingly, may be the single most important point of our relationship with God.***"

I want to read that one more time because I think it's significant that we understand that this is part of the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. "***We exist at God's will and pleasure. Carrying this knowledge within us, and living accordingly, may be the single most important point of our relationship with God.***" Knowing that the reason that we are even 'here', the reason we're having this conversation, the reason we're breathing right now is because God wanted to bring us into existence because of His will. He willed it to be so and it pleased Him to bring us into existence. If we would understand that, and if we would live according to that, we would be so much happier in this world. We would be so blessed in this world.

Point 12

The next point I want to make is that the outcome of poverty of spirit is participation in **His** power and authority. In other words, He says "***yours is the kingdom of heaven***". The word "kingdom" simply means His rule, His power and authority. So if we realize that we are poor in spirit, it brings us into the ability to participate in **His** power and authority because we have none of our own. We have, really, no means of participation in this world without entering into **His** power and authority and **poverty of spirit helps us to understand that**.

Back in July 2, I recognized the paradoxes that are given here in The Sermon on the Mount and I'm quoting a man named James Newby. He introduces us to four paradoxes and I want to summarize them. I want to give you those paradoxes, again, because I think they're very important for us to understand the **thinking of Jesus**, and I'll have a couple of things to say about paradox in general.

A paradox is something that ***doesn't seem to be true***. It seems to be counter intuitive, but it is true.

The **first** paradox, according to James Newby in an article that he wrote entitled "Dancing with Paradox" is ***the Paradox of growth***. The more you grow spiritually the further from Spiritual perfection you realize that you are. This "paradox of growth" simply means that the stronger I get, the weaker I know I am and ***I realize how much I need God***. I may start out my spiritual life thinking that I'm doing pretty well by myself, but the more I understand, the less I feel secure in my own self and ***the more secure I feel in God***.

The *second* is the *paradox of spiritual enlightenment*. The more enlightened you become as an adult, the more childlike you will be in your wisdom. In other words, the smarter you get, the more knowledge that you gain in Christ, the more you will tend to become simple in your thinking like a child. You will realize that not only are you over your head when it comes to understanding God, and that He is really ‘watering it down’, He is really giving us milk most of the time, but the more I understand that, the more I can live in the simplicity of a child in relationship to my Father.

The *third* paradox is the *paradox of knowing and mystery*. If you are to **know** the living God, you must be comfortable with mystery. It is a paradox because the more I get to know God, the more I realize how mysterious God is...how unknowable He is. But I *know* Him better than I first knew Him. But there’s so much more to know. The deeper I go into the understanding of the Mind of Christ, the more mysterious the mind of Christ becomes. It’s a paradox.

The *fourth* paradox is the *paradox of love*. The more love you want to experience, the more love you must give away. In other words, the paradox is that the more love I get, if I want more love I have to give it away. I can’t hold onto it and think I’m going to understand love or get more love. *I have to give it away as quickly as I get it, in order to get more.* It’s a paradox and these are the four paradoxes that James Newby gives us.

Point 13

So I’m going to ask a question. This is my next point. *Is God paradoxical in nature, or does He use paradox to cut through our paradoxical nature?* That’s a very philosophical question. You may want to write that one down and contemplate on that. But is God a paradoxical God? Is He someone who seems to be one way but the more we get to know Him, the more we understand that we don’t understand? OR, is God a God who uses paradox to cut through our paradoxical nature because He can show us that we’re not as smart as we think we are; we’re not as strong as we think we are.

I really think it’s probably the latter. I think that God is using paradox to teach us things about Himself other than being a paradoxical God. But I wanted to raise the question for you.

Point 14

The next point I want to make is ‘the challenge is to believe that *poverty leads to the throne*. It’s interesting that in the earthly realm we talk about people who are kings and queens who sit on thrones and usually they are descendants of people who are kings and queens. But occasionally you have someone who was born in abject poverty coming to the throne.

The question is; do we believe that if we embrace our poverty, that that is the way to reign with Christ? *The more I try to reign with Christ, the more I want to sit at His right hand or His left hand, the further I get from actually reigning with Him; yet, the more I serve and the more I realize how poverty-stricken I am, the closer I get to the throne of God, if you will.*

Point 15

The next point I want to make is about the **second beatitude** where it talks about '*blessed are those who mourn*'. If we're going to mourn, we need to face the facts of a situation. We need to show proper response to it instead of denial or merely feeling sorry for oneself. Mourning is not simply a pity party. Mourning is more of an acceptance of facts of a situation, and having the appropriate response to the reality of the situation.

So, if we lose a loved one, we have to accept the fact that that loved one has passed; that loved one is gone, and we properly mourn that. It's not a denial. It's not merely feeling sorry for ourselves; it's just simply embracing the reality of the situation.

The second thing about mourning is that *crying helps release the impact of the crisis on stress*. Crying is a good thing. **Mourning** is a good thing because we reduce the impact of the stress or the crisis through crying. There's a release that takes place.

Point 16

The next point is that rational, reality-based **mourning can lead to comfort if accompanied by faith**. Rational 'reality-based mourning' can lead to comfort if accompanied by faith. So, our faith is very, very important for us in this process of mourning.

Point 17

The next point I want to make in regard to this is *could mourning be about grieving the loss of our independence and our wealth?* When we see the word mourning, we often think in terms of grieving over something we've lost like a *loved one*, or *some 'thing'* that we have lost. But could mourning actually be a grieving about the loss of our *independence*?

In other words, it is related to the discussion about '*poverty of spirit*'. *Once I realize that I really don't have anything in and of myself*, then, I **mourn** the loss of my independence before I can **celebrate** the *gaining of my dependence on God*.

Point 18

Now, another point on this is *in mourning, God draws us alongside either personally, or through the people that He gives us to comfort us*. So, mourning is a process of *bringing us to the side of God and to the side of other people who are representatives of God*. It brings us into closer relationship with God and with others.

Point 19

Next, *learning when to laugh and when to cry is part of being a Jesus-follower*. There is a time to mourn and there's a time to laugh as we learn in the Old Testament in the book of **Ecclesiastes 3:4**. So the Christian must learn that there's a time to cry; there's a time to mourn and a time to grieve; but there's also a time to laugh and to enjoy our lives.

Mourning is not to be a permanent state. It is not to be the condition that we live in 24/7. These are just some of the things we need to understand about this idea of mourning. Laughter is expected of Christians. We should rejoice and we should be glad and we should have joy in our lives.

Point 20

The third beatitude is the beatitude of *being gentle or meek... the meek shall inherit the earth*. Meekness is Jesus on a donkey or a Christian woman **not** dressing in a *flashy way*. That is meekness. Meekness is *quiet* because it is *dependent*.

Do you see how all these things tend to go back to this idea of **dependence**? *Dependence is again, core, core teaching and understanding of Jesus, His life, and what He came to give us*. Then, the *persecuted* are **meek** as well. We talked about Jesus on the Donkey or the Christian woman who doesn't dress in a flashy way, but also *the persecuted are meek because they have quiet strength* when they go through the persecutions.

Point 21

In **the third beatitude**, the idea of inheriting the earth is difficult. In talking about this I went through the Sermon on the Mount and looked at all the places where the word 'earth' is found and how it is used contextually in the Sermon on the Mount in order to understand what does it mean to "inherit the earth"? My conclusions were that "earth" equals number 1; a sphere of *influence*. It is a place of *influence*. Number 2, it is a place of *permanency*. Number 3, it is a place of *authority*. Number 4, it is a place where *God's will is carried out*. Number 5, it is a place *devoid of superficial value*.

Now, if we put those together, what am I inheriting when I inherit the earth? I am inheriting a place of *influence*, a place of *permanency*, a place of *authority*, a place where *God's will is being carried out*, and a place that is *devoid of superficial value*.

Point 22

In the fourth beatitude, the idea of hungering and thirsting as a spiritual process is comparable to the physical process. Just as food must be burned up by activity or it is stored as fat, so the Word must be used, practiced or it merely produces fat. Now, I kind of like that analogy; ... that we want to burn our food and not have it stored in our bodies. The same is true when hungering and thirsting after righteousness. The *object of our hunger and thirst* is **righteousness**, which *exceeds*, or **should exceed** the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees. It must also be quietly 'put into practice' and it is our highest priority. All of these are taught in the Sermon on the Mount.

If you have a *poisoned righteousness*, then it is self-justification. When you try to **produce** righteousness, when you become self-righteous, then you have a *poisoned righteousness*. It's like drinking salt water ... it will kill you.

Our souls long for *God-justification*. That's what we're looking for; that's what we're hungering and thirsting after, it is for God to justify us. *We don't attempt to live the Christian life to the fullest because we are 'afraid to fail'*. Often, that's the reason we don't live the Christian life to the fullest ... because we're afraid that we're going to fail at what we do. But God has freed us up in Christ through the sacrifice in order for us to live life to the fullest. *Satisfaction, as a concept, is deep*. It's deep. We must understand ... *there is something inside of us that seeks satisfaction*. Again, it's comparable to the idea of homeostasis. We seek okayness. It drives us, and we often seek it in the wrong places.

I think we're going to stop right here because I don't want to go too long. We'll finish this summary next time and maybe if it's not too long we may get a little bit more into the idea of persecution. But I think this is enough for today and we'll pick up at his point next time.

Again, the reason I'm doing these summaries is because I want to assist all of us in this digestive process. I want us to digest the "food" of the Sermon on the Mount so that it begins to get incorporated into our being. So I'm being, obviously, a little repetitious and going back over material that I've already covered, but it just seems too good not to "chew" a little bit longer *so that we can get all the good out of it*.

Thank you for joining us today. If you are interested in going back in time and listening to some of the previous teachings on The Mind of Christ, you can find those teachings on our website <https://www.centraisarasota.org/> and you will also find other teaching there. We have The Christian Mindset in a Culture of Chaos.

There is a new teaching that is going to be starting a new class on September 30 called, "A World of Hurt". We'll be talking about how to handle the hurts in life.

Then there are the Sunday morning messages and along with some old messages that we've thrown in there for good measure. We have a lot of things on our Website that you will find and we encourage you to go there and be a part of all that we are doing. "Like" these things; "share" these things, "subscribe" to our You-tube channel; do and all the things that will help us get the message out that Jesus, and the mind of Christ, is the most important thing that you could add to *your* thinking and to *my* thinking so that I can be like the greatest man who ever lived.

God bless you and we'll see you next time.