

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 108

May 28, 2021

Welcome to another edition of The Mind of Christ. We are making our way through Section 64 of A. T. Robertson's Harmony of the Gospels ... the way he has done the chronological study of the life of Christ in the Gospels. He has divided it into sections and we are now at the end of Section 64. We are making our through, but don't get too excited; there's a long, long way to go.

We are in the middle of a group of parables that are found 'primarily' in Matt. 13, although there are some overlaps with Mark and Luke, and we'll bring those into the study as we go. So, let's go over to Matthew 13. I'm using the New American Standard Bible. The reason I use that is because it is the most literal translation that I know of (of the Bible), and so I like to use it as my "study" tool. We are going to take this through a number of different parables here. They're short parables so with all of them it may be a little bit of a long session today. Here's the Parable of the Mustard Seed. We'll start with **Matthew 13:31-32**

Matthew 13:31-35

He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; ³² and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

Mark also has a rendition of this so we'll turn to **Mark 4:30-32**

³⁰ And He said, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, ³² yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade." So, that's the way that Mark renders this particular parable.

Mark says 'how shall we picture the Kingdom of God or by what parable shall we present it?' He is looking for comparison and the word here is "picture". He's looking for a "word picture", but He uses it as He has explained so that "seeing", they will actually not see.

Mark 4:33-34 ³³ With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it; ³⁴ and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples. He explains everything privately to His disciples.

The parable is simple. The mustard seed is the smallest garden seed but becomes the largest garden plant. It provides shade for the birds. In the cross reference, several Old Testament verses are given as references for this particular idea of birds resting in the branches.

Ezekiel 17:22-24 for instance has this theme of taking something; a sprig of a lofty cedar, a young and tender one; to bring down the high tree exhausts the low tree; it dries up the green tree, it causes the dry tree to flourish. There's kind of a common theme here of something that a plant that grows, that flourishes, that becomes large and has something beneficial to, in this case, the birds. So it's a common theme with God to make it clear where the power or wisdom comes from.

Ezekiel 17:22-24

Thus says the Lord GOD, “I will also take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and set it out; I will pluck from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one and I will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³“On the high mountain of Israel I will plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit and become a stately cedar. And birds of every kind will nest under it; they will nest in the shade of its branches. ²⁴“All the trees of the field will know that I am the LORD; I bring down the high tree, exalt the low tree, dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will perform it.”

I would also give you 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 Corinthians 4. Behind these parables is a wisdom of God that may, at first glance, not seem true; it may not seem feasible. For instance, take a very, very small seed like a mustard seed and for it to become a very large plant where it begins to ‘benefit others’; *that may not seem right but in the wisdom of God, He is the God of ‘small things’. He is the God who can take something small and insignificant and turning it into something significant.*

Psalm 104:12 says that God provides for the birds. **Ezekiel 31:6** in speaking of the king of Egypt, he is reminded of a serious greatness like a mighty cedar where the birds nested, but how it was brought down because of its arrogance.

There is a sense in which the Kingdom of God versus the kingdoms of Men. The Kingdom of God starts out very small and grows into something very large, but the kingdoms of men grow to be something very large and then it’s brought back down.

In Daniel 4 in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a huge tree it is cut down and the birds nested in its branches; again Babylon’s protection of many people. But in the Kingdom of God it is increasing and the protection is permanent. In the kingdoms of the world, it may provide protection for a period of time but then it is brought down. Jesus is clearly comparing and contrasting His kingdom with the kingdoms of the world. We can even see **Daniel 2:44** and I encourage you to read that section of the four major kingdoms, and how out of a mountain, a little ‘stone’ it says, was cut and it grew into a large stone and knocked down all the kingdom’s of the world.

Again, it’s the Kingdom of God versus the kingdoms of the world. A kingdom is small; it’s cut from a rock, but it grew to topple other kingdoms. The issue always seems to be arrogance, pride and self-exultation. Kingdoms of the earth exalt themselves, they are proud; and God brings them down. So, God takes the weak and the small and the dry and He uses them to accomplish His work in the earth. He brings down the mighty. Ask Nebuchadnezzar, he knows. From small to large is not an unusual theme in the teachings of God in Jesus but more on context here next.

Contextually, there are very large plants in the garden that have considerable influence ... for instance, the Roman Empire. We’re comparing this, again, to say that in our cultural garden there are many things that have influence that seem large. In this particular context, it was the *Romans Empire*, the *Greek culture*, the *Jewish culture*, the *worldly culture of sin*; all of these had profound influences, and if you will, these are ‘plants’ within the garden. These have intertwined to become a large tree overshadowing all people.

And *here comes Jesus*, born in Bethlehem, a Bethlehem stable, and raised in a backwater town called Nazareth. This Truth, this Power, this Person was to become the dominant influence of all time *doing what none of the other influences could do*. **Jesus knew we needed a picture** of the kingdom in our minds so that we could and would keep everything in perspective. Life is not as it seems. *The strong is weak and the weak is strong. The wise is foolish and the foolish is wise. We live in a world of paradox*. Jesus came to completely reinterpret our existence and to set our thinking straight. **He did so with a mustard seed**, among other pictures.

It is so important that we get these simple but profound truths in our head lest we get on the defensive instead of the offensive in the kingdom. And the kingdom is a kingdom that increases. The world decreases. How do we enter our world ... small but powerful, with potential. That's how we enter into *any* situation. We may seem small, but we're powerful and we have huge potential.

It says it **grows up**. The word here is "anabaino" (αναβαινω). It means to 'go up', to arise, to ascend, or to climb. In **John 3:13**, "No one has *ascended* into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man." It's the same word here ... the ascension here ... something that grows. In **John 6:62**, "What then if you see the Son of Man *ascending* to where He was before?" In **John 20:17** it says, "Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father;" So the idea of "*growing up*" is the same as the idea of *ascension*. The direction of the kingdom is *ascension*. It is *up*, and it's *spreading out*. The Kingdom is going "up" and it's going "out". In **Matthew 4:24** Jesus said, It's the idea of spreading the news ... spread. **Matthew 9:26, Matthew 9:31, Acts 4:17** they could not stop the *spread* of the gospel. In **Acts 6:7** the word kept *spreading*. In **Acts 13:49** the gospel *spread* through the whole region. So, again, the kingdom ascends; it goes up and it also *spreads* out. Death also was *spread* through one man according to **Romans 5:12**. **2 Corinthians 4:15** says that grace can *spread* more and more. **2 Thessalonians 3:1** says pray that the word will *spread* rapidly. **2 Timothy 2:17** says some false teaching will also *spread* like gangrene; so there are not only the gospel that can spread, but there are evil things that can spread as well and we are often in competition with those things. But it is simply painting a picture of the kingdom of God as being dynamic; it's not static. It is growing. The question is; are we, are the subjects of the kingdom growing?

One more thing on the mustard seed ... Man seems to need to have visual confirmation that they are part of the 'right thing'. Often, confirmation comes in the form of growth. When a person is a part of a growing church, it seems to make them feel excited and in the right place. But how often I have seen that this eventually crumbles and it is discovered that growth was more about marketing or personality cult and that decline is truly possible.

So, did Jesus tell the parable of the mustard seed to feed this idea of a 'growing church'? Should we be telling people that they can be a part of a real growing group, the real power group, a real happening group because this is what Jesus promised?

Plant your mustard seed and watch it grow, up and up, and no stopping until the tree fills the earth and birds are nesting throughout it.

How do we paint the picture today? How do we use the mustard seed parable to paint the picture? Isn't the faithful few more representative of God than the growing group is sometimes? *We need to be careful not to measure faithfulness and realness by numerical growth.*

Well, let's go to the next parable. So, we are in **Matthew 13:33**. "Jesus spoke another parable to them that the kingdom of Heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened". This parable is similar to the one of the mustard seed. This one is more about influence. This one is also about the kingdom of Heaven. The nature of the kingdom is influence within society. The three pecks of meal is **society**. The kingdom is the **leaven**, the means of change which is inserted into society and begins to interact with society where change then takes place.

Society is elevated and begins to look up. How do we go from being "Kingdom-minded" to being "society-influencers" so that the bread is no longer flat? It is rising to become a Temple in which God lives by His Spirit causing our world, our circumstances, and our experiences to be transformed by our presence within them is what God desires. We are not to leave anything the same! We are to affect change and growth and purity and righteousness.

The teaching about leaven goes back to the Passover. No leaven was to be used for seven days prior to the Passover. The feast of unleavened bread showed readiness to depart quickly; not waiting for the bread to rise. This was the bases for the Lord's Supper. See Exodus 12. In **Exodus 13:17** he even says that nothing with leaven shall be seen among you. And this goes back to **Exodus 13:7**.

In Leviticus some rituals used unleavened bread and others required leaven to be used. So it depended. Leaven was not forbidden in every sense but sometimes they were told to not use leaven.

In the New Testament, leaven is used to illustrate influence; negative or positive. In **Matthew 16:6** Jesus warns his disciples 'of the Pharisee's leaven' and the leaven of the Sadducees! And the disciples misunderstand what he is referring to here as to the influence and the teaching. They thought He was talking about bread. He adds Herod to the list as well. He says to beware of the Pharisees and the Sadducees and of Herod. The list in **Mark 8:15** needs to be looked at.

In **Luke 13:21** he uses it again in a parable as well and in **1 Corinthians 5:6** Paul uses it for the influence of immorality that can come into our lives. Paul says if the body of Christ was bread, it would be unleavened and they were to clean out the leaven. He compares the church to the Passover in **1 Corinthians 5:7**. Then he *connects leaven with malice and wickedness* and unleavened with sincerity and truth. In **Galatians 5:9** Paul here talks about the leaven being the teaching within the church. Sometimes this leaven can even get into the church and that leads people back to trying to be saved by the law or by circumcision. In **Galatians 5:8** Paul calls it *persuasion*. This is the essence of Leaven. It's *persuasion*. We are being *persuaded* to do something or believe something. Our power is in *persuasion*. **2 Corinthians 5:11** Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord we *persuade* men. By the way, leaven is also known as yeast.

It seems we have two views of leaven; *either the kingdom is going to change culture or the culture is going to change the kingdom.* What do we see happening? After the discussion I was in last night, (this is when I wrote this back on August 29, 2012, it seems clear that the people that I was talking to would say that the latter is happening. They would say that the culture is changing the church; or the Kingdom. But I have seen in organizations that I've been a part of like 'Believers Against the Abuse and Neglect of Kids', an organization that we started at Central; I have seen many opportunities there are to change or to transform culture by inserting Christian leaven into the system of the world. It's meant for good. It may be inadequate to win over all of sin and evil but it can certainly have an impact on sin and evil.

Did God give Government the role of transforming society or merely punishing it for wrongdoing? The Kingdom is transformational.

Matthew 13:34-35 gives an explanation regarding why Jesus is speaking to the multitudes in Parables, and so let's read that.

³⁴ "All these things Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable. ³⁵ This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet saying I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the World."

So this is an explanation that Jesus gives for speaking in these parables. Notice He exclusively spoke to the multitudes as opposed to the disciples in Parables. He illustrated all His teachings with these stories ... these similitudes. The way it is phrased we see just how much Jesus employed this method in His teaching. He did not speak to them without a parable, it says, so he must have used it quite often and there may have been many more parables that we do not have a record of.

It makes me wonder if the ones we have are all of them. Remember John's statement in **John 21:24-25** where he says that 'many other things Jesus said in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. Or, if everything that was written down about Jesus that could have been written down, the world could not contain all the books that could be written.'

This method was not just a whim on Jesus' part. It was the fulfillment of prophecy given by Asaph in **Psalms 78:2**. I'm going to ask you to go back there. This is where what Jesus is quoting in Matthew 13. Look at the context of this prophecy.

Asaph teaches that to avoid the failures of the people of God who came before, and he goes back to Egypt and the wilderness days, and he tells them the story of their rebellion. There must be diligent instruction given to the children if they are going to avoid going backwards and into rebellion again. **Psalm 78:8** summarizes the kind of heart they had. It was a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not prepare its hearts and whose spirit was not faithful to God. In order for the generation of Asaph and the generation of Jesus to produce a generation that would keep God's laws, they had to teach the Laws of God; they had to teach the will of God. They had to keep God's laws and in order for that to happen they had to teach them.

There are differences between **Psalm 78:2**, the passage that Jesus is referring to, and **Matthew 13:35**. In Psalms he says I will open my mouth in a parable. In Matthew He says I will open my mouth in Parables; more than one, obviously; single versus plural but no real difference. Psalms says ‘I will utter dark sayings of old’. Matthew says ‘I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world. Again: the same meaning. A dark saying, a “chiydah” (keedaw) in the Hebrew ... #2420 meaning a puzzle, a trick, a hard question, a proverb, a riddle. It is used in regard to Samson’s riddle in **Judges 14:12-19**. In **Proverbs 1:6** it’s contrasted with clear teaching or speaking. There is something to figure out instead of being direct. Matthew says ‘things hidden’. Something that’s hidden is concealed, it’s in secret. In **Matthew 5:14**, a city on a hill cannot be hidden. **John 19:38** Joseph of Arimathea was a ‘secret’ disciple or a ‘hidden’ disciple. Were they saying, ‘hidden’ or ‘dark’ to see how much they really wanted to know them? In other words, if someone says, “I have a secret.” How much do you want to pursue it? If something is hidden, how much do you want to search for it? Maybe that’s what Jesus was trying to see; how much they really wanted to know these things.

In **Matthew 13:36** it talks about things hidden. In **Matthew 6:4, 6** and **18** it’s what we do in *secret* that the Lord rewards. The Lord sees things in *secret* and He rewards them. In **Romans 2:16** God will judge the *secrets* of men through Jesus. In **1 Corinthians 14:25** the *secrets* of the heart are disclosed in the assembly when a person can understand the word of God. We might compare this with **1 Corinthians 2**; the deep things of God now revealed to us, or **Ephesians 3**, the mystery not made known in past generations but now revealed. For ages past this was hidden in God but now made known *the manifold wisdom of God* through the church, to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. If specifically, the hidden things are really about Jew-Gentile unity and who is in the kingdom. It fits well with the kingdom parables He is telling. What I am saying here is, when He’s talking about things that have been previously hidden, and how the parables are somehow revealing that to those who have ears to hear, He may be specifically talking about the same thing Paul was talking about in **Ephesians 3** about the hidden unity between Jew and Gentile, and you can see that in many of the parables that He gives to the people.

Back to Psalm 78; the Psalm is about listening and remembering their past, and the lessons they should have learned. We tell generations to come to the praises of the Lord or His strength and His wondrous works. It is the work of each generation to pass it on. The aim is: 1. **Put confidence in God** 2. **Not to forget the works of God.** 3. **Keep God’s commands** These are the things that are being emphasized in Psalm 78! Again, this is why Jesus quotes from this Psalm.

What follows is a rebuke and a warning for those of Asaph’s generation. Jesus was taking His audience back to Asaph’s words and applying them to His generation. Asaph ends his psalm with, “**So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them with his skillful hands.**” A *new* Shepherd was now among them, and He, too, had integrity of heart and skillful hands; but would they know His voice?

Well, He introduced this idea of the foundation of the world. These things have been uttered from the foundation of the world. The phrase is used in **Matthew 25:34** to indicate that the kingdom was prepared from the foundation of the world. And **Luke 11:50** speaks of the blood that was shed since the foundation of the world. Jesus was loved by the Father

since the foundation of the world. In **Ephesians 1:4** Christians were chosen by him before the foundation of the world. In **Hebrews 4:3** His works were finished from the foundation of the world. In **Hebrews 9:26** it was necessary to suffice since the foundation of the world; but at the consummation of the. See also **1 Peter 1:20**, **Rev. 13:8**, and **Rev. 17:8**. These passages make it clear that kingdom secrets are linked with the cross; God's eternal purpose in saving man.

You might see N. T. Wright's book, "**When God Became King**". I am reminded of God's first question to Job (**Job 38:4-7**). God asked, "**Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.**" Of course none of us were there and yet God had already planned His work, the work of the Kingdom for us, and by then. **But we think and act like we are so smart and know so much about how to live our lives!** But it was God who had already planned all these things out before any of us ever existed.

Mark 4:33 adds a couple of things ... He says that the parables as they were able to hear it; they were not always able to hear what Jesus was teaching. **John 6** is a good example. Why are we not able to hear more of the word? Why do we get "full" so fast? Are we all ADD? Mark adds that He explains things privately to His own disciples. They had a greater capacity and hunger for His word. What must these private classes have been like? How great would it be to sit at Jesus' feet for hours to hear Him explain things?

Then we have another parable here; the Parable of the Lamp. This is found in **Luke 8:16-18**.

Luke 8:16-18

¹⁶"Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light. ¹⁷"For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that shall not be made known and come to light. ¹⁸"Therefore take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him shall more be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him."

This parable repeats things that Jesus has said before. Could anything be more common than a lamp on a stand? Every house used them. Think of the absurdity of covering a flame with a bowl without oxygen. The lamp is going to go out! The picture would be clear. A lamp goes on a lampstand which lifts it above things so the light can project out into the room.

The point of a lamp is to see the light; actually it is the light that illuminates all the things and people in the room that have no light in themselves. They simply reflect the light of the lamp. I encourage you to go to John 1. In verse 17 Jesus makes it clear that **He is the light** who will make what is hidden, evident; and what is secret, known. He makes things come to light. **He is the great revealer. He exegetes God**. Again, go to John chapter 1.

He takes us out of the darkness and puts us into the light. **He makes life clear. He** is the One who reveals. Jesus seemed to be saying that a day is coming when everything will come out. **Everyone will see and understand**. He means here, that all the sins of secret, although the secrets of men's heart or the **secrets of God's heart**. In other words, there may be two things that could be revealed one day; **not only the secrets of mens' hearts, but perhaps all of the secrets of God's heart**. Perhaps both will be revealed one day.

One day, all of God's secrets we do not yet know will be made clear to us. And all of our secrets which we work to keep hidden will come out. Even those washed in the blood of the Lamb? I wonder. Maybe not, maybe those things have been forgotten and they will not be revealed. That's a lot of secrets on both sides. How will all the disclosure happen? *Will every single person understand every single secret of God and every single secret of every other person who has ever lived?* Or will God do this between the individual and Himself? *I'm not sure I want to know everyone's secrets.*

Luke 8:17 says, "For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light." But contextually, this seems more about the secrets of the Kingdom, and Paul, through the Spirit among others, did make clear the mystery. Those listening and grasping in Jesus' day were a step ahead of those who came later. In **Luke 8:18**, "Therefore take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him" compares to **Matthew 13:12** "For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him." Only here, *Luke says what he thinks he has*. So, if a person thinks he has something; ... we can think we have grasped something and find we didn't really "get it", and we lose that too.

This is how learning takes place. We build on what we know. Understanding leads to more understanding. Stupidity leads to more stupidity. Wisdom leads to wisdom. Foolishness leads to foolishness. So, how can we be sure what we understand is true; ... is what Jesus intended? This is a serious threat to lose '*even what we think we have*', and how do we lose it? In other words, if God says we can lose '*even what we think we have*' is a serious threat. But how can we lose it? In the parable of the sower, the devil takes the word out if we do not understand it. In the parable of the talents, the master commands that the unused talent be taken away, but one thing is clear. We either "get it", and "use it", or we lose it. This is serious business. *Father, help me to "get it" and to "use it", in Jesus' name, Amen.*

Well, in this section there are three more parables: The Hidden Treasure, The Costly Pearl, and the Dragnet. Let's go back to Matthew 13 and we'll see those parables there. Let's read all of these.

Matthew 13:44-45 Hidden Treasure

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

And then He gives another parable, the Parable of the **Costly Pearl**. **Matthew 13:45-46**
⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, ⁴⁶ and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it."

And then there is **the Dragnet** in **Matthew 13:47-50**

⁴⁷ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; ⁴⁸ and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. ⁴⁹ "So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, ⁵⁰ and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Okay; the treasure is hidden. It's found, and it's hidden again. And then the field is bought. The obvious lesson is that the Kingdom of Heaven is valuable. It is worth:

- 1) It's worth Searching for
- 2) It's worth Finding
- 3) It's worth Protecting
- 4) It's worth Buying the field to get it

I think I get one through three but not 4). In the other parables, *the field is the world*. Why would I want to own the world to get the treasure? Why would I 'have to'? Jesus discouraged us from trying to gain the world (**Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36**). *But the context here is the difference.*

Here is a clear case of how context and intention is important and not to take the parable too far or try to make every point or detail mean something. We have to be careful not to do that with the parables.

In the days where banks were either not reliable or not safe or non-existent, treasure had to be kept safe in some other ways. In many cases it had to be buried. When we think of buried treasure we normally think of ill-gotten gain like from pirates; something that was pilfered or stolen ... stolen treasure, buried with a secret map in code to mark the spot with an "x" of course. The idea of a treasure is used often in Scripture.

Joseph put treasure in his brother's sack in **Genesis 43:23**. The Israelites were God's treasured possessions according to **Deuteronomy 26:18**. Issachar was to draw out the abundance of seas and the hidden treasures of the sand in **Deuteronomy 33:19**. Often the treasures of the Temple are mentioned, as in **1 Kings 14:26**. **Psalms 119:11** speaks of treasuring God's word in our hearts. **Proverbs 2:4** says wisdom must be sought as a hidden treasure. **Isaiah 33:6** says the fear of the Lord is a treasure. **Jeremiah 48:7** warns of trusting in our own treasures and achievements. And Jesus taught us not to store up treasures for ourselves on earth in Matthew 6:19. **Matthew 6:20** says, but rather to store up treasure in heaven. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also says **Matthew 6:21**. Treasures can be good or can be evil according to **Matthew 12:35**. And then we'll come back to the one in **Matthew 13:52**. He also says to see our possessions and give to the poor and have treasure in heaven in **Matthew 19:21**.

In **Matthew 13:52** Jesus says something I haven't noticed ... ⁵² "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old." Why a Scribe? A scribe is someone who is a writer or a secretary. Why a Scribe here?

In Greek life, a public officer is what is under consideration. In Jewish life, he is one skilled in Jewish law, an interpreter of scripture, a lawyer. They transcribed sacred books and interpreted difficult passages and decided cases of Jewish Law. They were called 'teachers' and 'experts in the Law', 'a scholar'. Paul asked in **1 Corinthians 1:20** "Where is the Scribe" indicating that they were few. Most thought of Jesus as a stumbling block. They sought signs. Maybe Jesus was thinking about Paul, a teacher of the Law. The Scribe would be a wonderful teacher once he saw Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament and the true teacher who could explain the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven.

He would have had the ability to know how valuable the treasure in the field is. He would open the box and see Old Testament and New Testament truths. Too bad not more of these men were able to hear and to see. *They were, for the most part, blind guides.* Jesus did say in **Matthew 23:34** that He would send to the Jews prophets, and wise men, and scribes; but they would be killed and crucified and scourged and chased from city to city.

Jesus trained and gifted His own and He sent them out. *Imagine what a Scribe would know; the lights that would go off in his head as he began to see the connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament!* **Colossians 2:3** says that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were hidden in Jesus. In **2 Timothy 1:14** Timothy was entrusted with the treasures of the Kingdom of God. **2 Corinthians 4:7** says this treasure is in earthen vessels. And Jesus says it is worth *selling everything* to get it. It is interesting that Jesus calls this Scribe a 'disciple of the Kingdom of Heaven'.

We are students of the Kingdom of Heaven, sitting at the feet of Jesus, who explains to us the secrets of the Kingdom making us among the few who *actually understand.*

In **Matthew 13:45-46** we have the **costly Pearl.**

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, ⁴⁶ and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold everything that he had and bought it.” It’s a similar message. It is about the Kingdom of Heaven and its value. This is a merchant. Actually, it is a tradesman or a merchant. It’s an “Emporos”, similar to “Emporium” which is a marketplace. He was a wholesaler who travels and searches for deals; things to sell at a profit, someone trained to see what is valuable, and what price can be put on something.

In this case, he is looking for fine pearls. I must have had an epiphany here. I see “Emporos” is partly “anthropos” so the word merchant here is actually a merchant “man”. In the Old Testament the merchants or the traders was a way Israel prostituted herself with the nations! See **Ezekiel 16:29**. “You also multiplied your obscene practice with the land of merchants, Chaldea; yet even with this you were not satisfied.” Tyre took pride in its trade (**Ezekiel 27:3**). “Say to Tyre, who sits at the entrance to the sea, merchant of the peoples to many coastlands, ‘This is what the Lord God says: “Tyre, you have said, ‘I am perfect in beauty.’” Hosea condemns merchants with false balances in **Hosea 12:7**.

Revelation 18:3 and **11** has great rebuke for Rome’s trade; *the richness of the world’s merchants*, and he mourns when Rome has fallen. *One downfall of man is the pride generated by possessing fine, nice or exotic or hard-to-get things* from around the earth, and what had to be done to acquire these things. Often we are insatiable and unethical; and that many times is what characterizes the trade industry of the world.

We are self-sufficient ... and do not need anything from God! We can supply our own needs! What one will do to find the right “buy”. Fine pearls. The word for “fine” here is “kalos” (καλος). It means “beautiful, good, or valuable”. It is “of quality”. Oysters in the Persian Gulf produced pearls! Considered a talisman of power, it is something lucky, something that could give you power. People would want to **die** with a pearl in their hand. A necklace, 3 strands, has been found all the way back to 650 BC in city of Susa.

Pearls can dry out and deteriorate. **Greeks and Romans thought pearls were the tears of the water nips or angels.** Caesar gave a pearl valued at perhaps \$1,000,000 in today's money to a lady named Sevilia, who was Brutus' mother. In **100 B. C. a 3-pearled earring was a fashion necessity.** A recent New York Times article says pearl production is back in the Persian Gulf. Pearls are the only gems produced from a living organism, also found in the Red Sea. The attraction: it's rare the way it's produced, and the beauty of it makes it desirable.

I want to go deeper into the Challenger Deep. I want to know Jesus in a deeper way! Lord, through my daily walk, through His life and words, connect me with Jesus in oneness. I don't exactly know how, but I trust You. I sit at His feet for transformation, not information.

This was something that came to my mind as I was studying this idea of pearls. Maybe if I were a pearl collector or a merchant, and I saw how I could turn a good quick profit on one pearl, I might sell off something to get it. I'm not sure about "everything". But what am I willing to sacrifice **for the Kingdom? What is really expected in order to 'get it'?** Is it not property or membership? That's free.

Is it what I'm willing to 'let go of' in order to put the kingdom first in my life? The things that are valuable to me like autonomy, a feeling, the enjoyment of something, even values like faithfulness and loyalty, and the resentments I hold onto when deserted; do these hinder kingdom business? **What am I willing to lay at His feet in exchange for the pearl?** What more, what else? Tell me, Jesus. Show me.

I think first I must be sure of what I am really seeking ... just 'knowledge of pearls' or the real thing? Will I know the pearl of great value when I see it?

A very important book of Mormonism is called, "The Pearl of Great Price". It was written in 1851. It was canonized by the Latter-day Saints in 1880. The material found within it is purported to be from many sources like The Book of Moses, Joseph Smith's Bible translation portions, the book of Abraham et cetera. Could this be the pearl Jesus spoke of?

The secret of the kingdom is the unity of the Jews and the Gentiles in the body of Christ. The defragmentation of mankind and putting us back together in unity with the father and unity with one another; then how valuable is THAT to me?

By the way, when I was mentioning The Pearl of the Great Price book by the Mormons, I don't think that that's what Jesus was talking about. But could it be the **Unity of the world?** Could that be the pearl and is Jesus saying to us when we find the key to the unity of the world that we should sell everything in order to have that? What am **I** willing to sell to get it?

How valuable was this to Jesus and what did "He sell" to get it. He sold out to provide it; to break the wall; to nail the debt to the cross, to establish the church ... His body. If I want to really know Jesus, then I must "sell all" I have and dedicate myself to what He dedicated Himself to. **That's Kingdom-minded.**

In **Matthew 13:47-50** is the last parable. It is the parable of the dragnet. We've already read this. ⁴⁷ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; ⁴⁸ and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. ⁴⁹ "So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, ⁵⁰ and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This parable is similar to the wheat and the tares. A foundational question is whether this is about the end of the world, or the destruction of Jerusalem, or perhaps both; one being primary, the other being secondary. I'm leaning to the destruction of Jerusalem, the world as it existed between A. D. 33 and A. D. 70.; a sifting out of who is actually in the kingdom, instead of 'look-alikes'. Is the kingdom a new branding of the Jewish religion, or is it brand new? Is it the fulfillment of the work of God through the Jews but now reaching both introduction and consummation in the present Messiah, the Christ, the King? What is clear from the parable is that the net is cast to include anyone. Like the seed sown in the field (which is the world), the net is cast into the sea (also the world). A net is **indiscriminate; it captures anything in the way**. It gathers everything in the net; hauls it in. Just as the tares have to be separated from the wheat, so the bad fish, those that are inedible from those that are commercially sound and good to eat. They did this when the net was full, just as they did the separation of the wheat and the tares when they were grown and began to bear grain.

A lot hinges on "the end of the age". How do we interpret "the end of the age"? But as we have seen, similar language is used in Matthew 24 and similar actions of distinguishing between the people of God and those who are not, (the wicked taken out from among the righteous). The same term "righteous" is also being used, (**Matthew 13:43, 13:49** and also see **Matthew 13:17**). The same fate awaits the bad fish as did the tares; a furnace of fire, weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus is using a different image to appeal to fisherman as He did to appeal to those involved in agriculture. These were two very basic industries of His day. So what do we make of this?

In verse 51 He asked, "Have you understood all these things?" Was this to the crowd or just His disciples? Whoever, they answered, "yes", and though clearly the deeper meaning escaped them. So we have learned if we are to "get it" we must enroll and be disciples and then we will get the "professor's notes".

Well, I want the professor's notes. I want the inside track. I want the things that the professor knows. I want the private conversation with the professor; not just what He presents in class. I want to sit with Jesus. I want to understand Him, to know Him. I want Him to explain these things to me so that I have a clear understanding of them. And I want to have the heart that pursues the treasure, pursues the pearl, who will not stop at anything and be willing to sell everything in order to have it.

So today we complete Section 64 and we'll begin Section 65 next week. Thank you for joining us. Go to <https://www.centraisarasota.org/> to find a lot of resources that pertain to The Mind of Christ as well as other subjects that we have tackled over the last year or so.

Until next time, God bless you and thank you for joining us.