

Mind of Christ - Lesson 114

July 9, 2021

Welcome to another edition of The Mind of Christ. We are working our way through everything Jesus said and everything Jesus did. We are using A. T. Robertson's "A Harmony of the Gospels" as a guide to help us go through this chronologically. We are in Section 70 right now. It's a long section and we're not going to finish it today. I want to direct your attention to Matthew 10, and we are going to read a few verses out of this and we'll try to cover them today. But again, if you're joining us for the first time, you are in the flow of a very long series that we began over a year to a year and a half ago. We have a lot of recordings on this series and you're welcome to go back to check our website at <https://www.centalsarasota.org/> where you can find all the messages that are contained there and I warn you that there are many, many messages found there.

We're in Matthew chapter 10 and I'm going to start reading in verse 34 and I will read down through verse 39. I am reading from the New American Standard Bible. Let's see how far we get today.

Matthew 10:34-39

³⁴ "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶ and a man's enemies will be the members of his household.

³⁷ "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

We'll make an attempt to get through that many verses today. I am going back into my journals. I wrote 21 journals and we're on journal number 8 here, so you can see that we still have a lot to go here.

In **Matthew 10:34** Jesus continues to give us perception regarding *His mission intention*. It is another irony that the Prince of Peace when He came to make peace between all men, Jews and Gentiles by the cross, will actually become the One who divides even those in a household.

When Jesus is LORD and everyone else is not, He must have first place, and since there is only room for **one first place**, family members also have to take a back seat. Here is where our minds clash with the mind of Christ.

Jesus uses the phrase "*do not think*". Our own thinking can be so wrong and off-based that we do not even perceive how far off we are. Jesus doesn't mean that we are not **free** to think whatever we want. He is saying if we think His purpose was to "bring peace at any price" we will be wrong. He wants peace on His terms. He is not here to negotiate with us "terms of peace". We are the offenders; we are the enemy and there is only one path to peace; one price, and He must pay it all for us.

We have nothing to offer except **surrender** ... unconditionally. Eventually, all enemies will be put under His feet. He will conquer and rule with an iron scepter. We all will bow and confess that Jesus is LORD to the glory of God the Father, and we all will surrender either voluntarily or not.

“Peace” comes from the word 1515 “eirene” (εἰρηνη) from the more basic word “eiro” (εἶρω) which means “to join”. It is the opposite of war and dissension. **Luke 14:32** talks about “terms of peace”. “*Otherwise, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and requests terms of peace.*” In this particular passage Jesus is talking about the commitment that is made in discipleship. In discipleship, we have to realize that we have to count the cost of discipleship. So, if we see an army coming after us that has 20,000 men, and we only have 10,000 men, then it’s probably wise for us to realize that we’re not going to win that war. And so we have to **count the cost**. That was His point, but He mentions terms of peace in that passage. In **Acts 12:20** he uses the phrase “asking for peace” both referring to the settling of a war.

Moses tried to be a “*peacemaker*” between two Israelites. He tried to reconcile them in peace by appealing to them as brothers, but they had observed Moses killing an Egyptian. The reconciler was a murderer! In **Romans 14:19** we are to *pursue the things that make for peace and the building up of one another*. In **Hebrews 7:2** he mentions Melchizedek, who is the “king of Peace”, which is the word 4532 “salem” (σαλему) which is an Old Testament term as in **Jerusalem** (one of the bloodiest cities in history). It was known as “the City of Peace”.

Jesus did want peace. When He was born, remember the angel sang “peace on earth and good will towards men” in **Luke 2:14**. But because of the exclusive nature of His identity, His purpose and His message there was bound to be conflict with the “deniers”. Jesus says, “you are either for or against Me” but the nature of the conflict is determined by the enemies. Since Jesus told us to love our enemies, too bad our enemies do not believe in “loving your enemies”.

Jesus contrasts peace with a sword. A sword was the most popular weapon, and very personal. It always is used one on one; up close. Jesus’ sword is the **Word of God** (**Ephesians 6:17**). Ironically, the word divides and unites all at the same time. When Peter drew his sword and cut off an ear of the High Priest’s servant, Jesus rebuked him and said, “For all who draw the sword will die by the sword”.

Again, ironically, Jesus had drawn His own sword and He was going to die by another sword, the ‘sword of the state’ in **Matthew 26:52**. Mary was told that a sword would pierce her heart (or soul) in **Luke 2:35**. In this text we learn that Jesus will be the cause of many thoughts being revealed. “*And a sword will pierce your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.*”

It reminds me of **Hebrews 4:12** where it says, the word will divide the thoughts and the intentions of the heart. “*For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*”

In **1 Corinthians 14:24-25** where it speaks of the unbeliever, who comes into the assembly, and by the word will have his secrets of his heart disclosed. “But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; ²⁵ the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.”

James was put to death by the sword in **Acts 12:2**. The Philippian jailer nearly took his own life by the sword in **Acts 16:27**. In **Romans 8:35** it declares that a sword cannot separate us from the love of Christ, and in **Romans 13:4** it says that the state does not bear the sword for *nothing*, or *in vain*. **Ephesians 6:17** says that the sword of the spirit is the Word of God. In **Hebrews 4:12** says “The word of God is sharper than any double-edged sword penetrating, dividing and judging. **Hebrews 11:34** says the faithful could escape the edge of the sword *or* they could be put to death by it in **Hebrews 11:37**. The Son of Man had a sharp double-edged sword coming out of His mouth in Revelation 1:16, 2:12, 16 and 19:21. Other swords are mentioned also in the book of Revelation.

This statement that Jesus made strikes at the heart of “postmodern” mind whose mantra is “*tolerance, acceptance, no conflict over anything*” except those who have convictions based on very specific and clear teachings of Jesus. This mindset is seen in our young adults, even those who attend church and profess a deep faith. The application of that faith is marked by several features. Let me give you a few:

First, those who have this kind of understanding of peace or tolerance often have a shallow understanding of Scripture and little personal Bible study experience.

Secondly, those who buy the postmodern philosophy often avoid anything that sounds like “*doctrine*”. Doctrine is a bad word to the postmodern mind.

Thirdly, there is a focus on worship that is “praise team-led”, professional and contemporary. Personal worship is more *spectator-centered* than it is God-centered. It is a performance, often, and it appeals to those who have a postmodern mind or thinking.

Fourthly, another feature of this postmodern thinking is that practical preaching is heavily laced with stories, few Scriptures and it does not attack the mindset of the postmodern person. So ‘that’ becomes their preferred sermon ... it’s one that doesn’t challenge them personally.

Fifth, young people seem to be interested in *Spiritual things* the same way they are about technology; it’s easily adopted *if* it’s “cool” and if it’s “useful” and if it’s stimulating. I would add one more point about the postmodern mind: There seems also to be a desire to serve within the community.

So, *we see young people living together, even while a part of a church, attending a small group because it provides social context for their life ... but it’s not transformational.* It’s just simply a part of “where it’s at” church; and that has a big stage in this world where people feel like they need to be. Now, I know I’m being critical of the postmodern mind but I believe that what I’ve outlined here in these five points are symptomatic of the postmodern thinking.

But Jesus is about peace **and** a sword. Not one, but both. His mission does both. It brings together and it also divides. It unites and it produces conflict. He builds and He tears down. His word can heal or inflict pain. Jesus does not “morph” to become what *we want Him to be*. He provides the means for us to become what He wants *us to be*. He changes us. He warns us about thinking that He is all about *peace*. He is a mighty warrior ... not just against Satan but in keeping those who profess His name “charging forward” and following His aggressive lead. Jesus is serious about being followed.

Jesus came, it says in the text, to set a man against his father; a daughter against her mother and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man’s enemies will be the members of his household! I’m seeing this in the world today, but I wonder if the conflict that I am seeing in homes is not *more about sin than it is about following Jesus*. In other words, I am seeing a lot of conflict in homes today but is it because some are choosing to follow Jesus and some are not; or is it simply because people are choosing to follow their own way and they come in conflict with each other because of that?

Jesus is often *not* at the center of the conflict unless it is the person in conflict with Him that brings the person into conflict with others. This is what is basically happening anyway, but not blatantly. I’m not sure people realize that this is what’s going on.

Jesus is the new person who steps into the middle of a family and changes everything. He walks in the front door and He makes Himself at home. He then begins to put the home in order according to His will and according to His truth. Our homes are under His management. So what are we willing to do to keep peace with other family members at the expense of peace with Jesus? Or what are we willing to do to keep peace with Jesus at the expense of peace with our family members? This is a quote that He is using here from **Micah 7:6**.

In context, Micah is bemoaning the fact that there is no righteous person among them. He compares it to a grape picker who has no good grape clusters to pick. There are no choice ripe figs to have. The best is like a briar.

Micah 7:1-6 says, ¹“Woe is me! For I am like the fruit pickers, like the grape gatherers. There is not a cluster of grapes to eat, or a first-ripe fig which I crave. ²The godly person has perished from the land, and there is no upright person among men. All of them lie in wait for bloodshed; each of them hunts the other with a net. ³Concerning evil, both hands do it well. The prince asks, also the judge, for a bribe, and a great man speaks the desire of his soul; so they weave it together.

⁴The best of them is like a briar, the most upright like a thorn hedge. The day when you post your watchmen, your punishment will come. Then their confusion will occur. ⁵Do not trust in a neighbor; do not have confidence in a friend. From her who lies in your bosom, guard your lips. ⁶For son treats father contemptuously, *daughter rises up against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own household*.

Micah 7:5 tells us not to trust in a neighbor, have confidence in a friend or even our spouse (her who lies in your bosom). We are to guard our lips. *How sad when there is no one to trust*. That’s the context of the statement that Jesus is referring to ... it’s based on Micah 7.

This is the scene that Jesus is painting for his Apostles. ***He knows that they cannot even fully trust one another.*** Must we live our lives not fully confident in a band of brothers? But our hearts long for such a band, such a friend, for such a friendship or such close relationships, but perhaps it is unattainable and we must live with a reservation knowing that it is impossible to completely attain in this life. (Note a very similar teaching is given in Luke 12: but in a seemingly different context. We'll follow that up later.)

The heart of discipleship is found in **Matthew 10:37-39**.
Jesus gives His "he who" statements ... "He who" statements.

The first statement is found where He says, "***He who*** loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." Jesus began this section talking about finding the worthy house. Think of the shift from loving a parent; especially a loving caring parent, who may not believe in Jesus; to loving Jesus more; even to the point of having to make extreme choices based on this superior love. How could Jesus demand such love from us? It's because of ***who He is; What only He can do for us.***

The second statement is, "***He who*** loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." This one seems more critical than the last. Of course, that decision would not have to be made with minor children, but it is. How often do we see parents make decisions to attend parties, ball games, classes, outings with their children ***so as to not disappoint them***, instead of attending church? ***This is subtle*** and hard to nail down. We don't want to be guilty of making rules where there are none, but we also show what we value by the choices that we make. Putting Jesus and the Church or the Kingdom ***first is fundamental*** to our following Him. Our children need to know that just like they should know that the husband-wife relationship comes before the parent-child relationship, because if mom and dad are not stable, then the children are not stable either. So ***our relationship with Jesus is primary*** to all stability in life. ***The choices we make show how we deny Jesus; by the choices that we actually make in our lives.***

In my opinion, there needs to be a hard look at the way families look at the role of children in the home. We seem to have some very different way of guiding choices that we make regarding our children, instead of what Jesus is teaching here.

In **Matthew 10:38**, Jesus talks of taking our cross and following Him, and making us worthy of Him. ***To follow Jesus, who was, in theory, already carrying the cross towards death, required His disciples to carry their own crosses to their own death.*** Jesus takes "following" quite literally... go where He is going. That's what He means. ★ He is going to die for us, so we go to die for Him, and of course, for one another.

Now in this section I want to give you some principles that are found.

1. **A disciple must first take his cross.** It is not simply imposed on Him without choice. Disciples choose crosses and death because of Jesus. ***Just as no man took Jesus' life, He laid it down freely, so we lay down our own lives for the sake of Jesus and the Gospel.*** It's like us picking out the gun that you want to be shot with or the knife that you want to be stabbed with! ***Let's go to the store and pick out our cross that we want to die on instead of the cross you wish to wear around your neck.***

2. ***The cross will be your cross.*** Jesus has one, His; and now it's time for us to have our cross ... a personal one. It reminds me of "The Mission" where the man drags all his stuff up the mountain. (The Mission was a great movie.) The cross is an instrument of death; our death ... my death. I can't carry your cross for you, not you for me, but many have trouble accepting the cross and owning it. ***Many are too 'afraid' to die; or too 'in control' to die, or too 'stubborn' to die,*** but death belongs to each of us and we must own it.

3. In following, we have a cross to drag along with us. Imagine Jesus on the Via Delarosa, 'the way of tears' dragging a heavy cross and stumbling under its weight. See His bloody knees, His skinned elbows; see the skin scraped off His shoulders and back from the rough cross. Imagine how awkward carrying a cross must be. Imagine how tired He became and the help He needed at times, and Simon coming alongside. Imagine your blood dripping on the stone streets of Jerusalem and your nail-pierced hands and feet. Drag it, own it, it's yours.

The simple word "**follow**", in many ways, defines our appropriate response to Jesus. The word is very simple to understand. To follow someone, first, ***you have to pay attention*** to them; second, you have to ***do so constantly*** or you will lose them; and three, you have to ***stay behind them*** ... you can't follow from the lead; and fourth, you ***do what they do*** and ***go where they go.*** You turn when they turn and say what they say. Literally, it means to be in the same way with, to accompany, to be an attendant, to be together, to be in the way with someone. The general senses in which this word is used are many.

I want to give you a few passages that you can research on your own: In the **general sense**, in **Matthew 8:1** the multitudes followed Him. In **Matthew 9:19** Jesus followed the Synagogue official. In **John 11:31** Jesus followed Mary. Those are general ways in which the word is used but **specifically**, to follow a teacher or to be a disciple, here are some ways it is used: First of all, ***to personally follow him;*** to follow Him where? In **Matthew 4:20** Peter and Andrew left their nets and followed. In **Matthew 4:22** James and John left their boat and they followed. In **Matthew 4:25** great multitudes followed. In **Matthew 9:9** Matthew rose from his tax collector's booth and followed Jesus. In **Matthew 19:27-28**, Peter says, "***We have left everything and followed you.***" Those who have followed, He says, "***will sit on thrones.***" In **Matthew 27:55** there were women there who followed Jesus.

Now there are also some very **specific** ways in which this word is used of a **disciple**. In **Matthew 10:38** this is our verse where we follow Jesus, "***And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.***" In **Matthew 16:24** Jesus said, "***If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.***" In **Mark 8:34** we have the same statement and in **Luke 9:23** we have the same statement. In **John 8:12** Jesus says, "***Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.***" In **John 12:26** Jesus says, "***If anyone serves me, let him follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.***"

Now these six verses comprise the crux of our relationship with Jesus as disciples. We have a great obligation. To be a follower means first we are to deny self, and to do so daily. Second, we are to take up our cross daily. Third, we are to follow, fourth we are to walk in the light and fifth we are to serve. All of these come out of those passages that talk about how a disciple is committed to following Jesus. So really, ***am I a follower?***

I certainly walk into situations that are difficult and trying, but why do I do that? ***Did Jesus lead me there*** or ***did I go, and then ask Him to join me***, or ***get me out of it?*** How does anyone really know this? Even when the disciples awoke each morning and physically followed Jesus to this place or that place, were they simply following by “being there”?

It seems that ***so much of their time there was watching Him ‘do things’***. They watched Him teach, they watched Him preach, and they watched Him heal, and what does it really look like? This “following Jesus” ... what does it look like? There are certainly things I tacitly say “no” to when I could possibly say “yes”, but is it because I just “can’t do it” or is it selfishness?

For instance, I have looked forward to three days off ... most do, but should I be off? Even in “off” I have plans to have folks over and participate in fund raising and do other things. So, what does it mean to follow Jesus? It just sometimes seems fuzzy and leaves much judgment to us as to what it means; judgment that gets turned to others about whether ***they*** are true followers or not because we tend to compare ourselves. We say, “I’m following Jesus because I do this, this and this”; and sometimes we say or think about others, “Well, they’re not following Jesus because they don’t do this, this and this.”

Jesus says that unless we take up our cross and follow we are not worthy of Him. Who could ***be*** even worthy of Jesus? As I have seen throughout this study, Jesus points out appropriate and inappropriate responses people have to Him. The insincere, dismissive responses show that people do not “get it”. The person who ‘sells all he has, to have Jesus’ “gets it”. ***They see Jesus for who He is*** and know that the only right response is to embrace Him fully by denial of self! Confession of Jesus is appropriate. Praise, worship, service, sacrifice, joy, reception etcetera are appropriate, so follow! ***Do I? Have I? Will I?*** If not, what must I do to be a follower?

I know some things that nag at me to change. Other things, I wonder if I’m doing the most important things. God give me wisdom to know if I am following You and Your Son to the best of my ability. ***I desire to do so*** because I love you.

Well, this business of following Jesus, and knowing what it means to follow Jesus, is a very difficult concept when we apply it practically to our lives. And I’m just saying today that I think we all need to sit back and take some stock of our lives and ask some very fundamental questions about “what does it mean to follow Jesus”, going back and looking at specifically what ***He*** says it means to be a disciple of Jesus, because we, again, can be so **religious** and we can even love God. We can attend church. We can be a part of many different things that are “spiritual” in nature, and still not really consider if we’re following Jesus ***the way He meant for us to follow Him***.

Well, thank you for joining us today.

We’ll try to finish this section next time we get together, but again, God bless you and take care, and we’ll talk to you later.