

## The Mind of Christ - Lesson 87

January 1, 2021

Section 54 The Sermon on the Mount

A. T. Robertson's Harmony of the Gospels

Welcome to the Mind of Christ. We are going to continue our study of the Sermon on the Mount and we are grateful that you are visiting with us today and taking in this message. If you would like to go back and hear some previous messages you can go to our website at <https://www.centralsarasota.org/>. We would be happy for you to view some of those. If you're just joining us, I'm Rod Myers and I began studying the mind of Christ back in 2010 in depth. I wrote 21 journals and we're making our way through those journals. I decided today that this may be just a little bit longer than normal; but I don't find a good breaking spot so I'm just going to persevere through, so I'm going to jump right into the subject.

We're actually going to be starting in **Matthew 6:16-24**. We'll start in verses 16 to 18 and then we'll read more. Jesus is talking a little bit about fasting and money and you'll see why we're including this in this section.

### Matthew 6:16-18

<sup>16</sup> “Now whenever you *fast*, do not make a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they distort their faces so that they will be noticed by people when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. <sup>17</sup> But as for you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> so that your fasting will not be noticed by people but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

The subject of *fasting* is one that has been hard to fit into *my* tradition. It did not ‘make’ one of the ‘acts of worship’ that I was familiar with in growing up. It has gone the way of foot-washing, if you will. So, what is *fasting* in the mind of Christ?

In this place, it seems He is focused on the *manner of fasting* just as He was in the manner of prayer. The “how” of ‘how one does it’, the motive of one’s heart is also His concern. The motive of “to be seen” is attacked by Jesus, the “fact of fasting” is a ‘given’ for Him because He assumes that we will fast. He expects His audience will do it; but *how* will they do it? He sets His sights on the outwardly religious who turn a ‘practice’ to be about **them**. Jesus is not merely regulating a legal requirement of the Law. He is revealing something about the “nature of man”... *we like to be seen. We like to be recognized, rewarded now*. This is the same point He made about prayer. But we ask, ‘does He require me to fast?’ Are we required to fast?

Well, He assumes that we will. For the Jew, that was an assumption within a tradition or historical context, but what of 21<sup>st</sup> Century America and some other kinds of cultures? Is this a ‘discipline’ that can bring us closer to God and further from the flesh? If so, then surely Jesus is commending it as He warns us of doing it with the right motives. The fact that God rewards one who does so in secret tells us that He approves of it. If we believe that He does not require it as a practice, at least we must conclude that He *allows* it and commends it if we do it.

I can't help but apply this to the instrumental music issue. Does God commend what He does not command but allows? I either have to conclude that fasting is a required practice for Christians or that it is just 'okay' if I choose it and blessed by God if I do not; but not really required. I hope you can see the parallel that I'm drawing there between the fasting matter and the matter of using musical instruments.

"Whenever you fast..." He says. That seems to imply that we will just as 'whenever you pray' or 'whenever you give'. It indicates that we will and we should, but we find fasting hard, and since not emphasized by our forefathers it is more suspect as a required practice. It's just an 'interpretation issue' sometimes, we say.

The word "fast" is *nesteuo* (νηστευω) means "to abstain from food religiously", not eating, so from a religious and legal approach, the fast, to be a **true** fast must be from **food**. He doesn't say 'from TV' or anything else. That's something we have substituted, but a true fast is **fasting from food**, perhaps like baptism which is used primarily to refer to 'dipping in water' unless otherwise specified. So when we come up with "TV media fast", are we adding or taking away from the Word of God?

Is there something about abstaining from food that is unlike any other fast? Other than air or water there's nothing so important to our existence. Could this be the key to 'why it must be a fast from food'? So we could read it correctly, "Whenever you fast from food". So what is so important about going without food? **It is life**. It is **what keeps us alive**. It is concrete, it's real, it brings on the hunger pangs relatively quickly, it gives us a sense of needs that grows throughout the fast, it allows us a state of disconnect from earthly desires after a point. Fasting creates an opportunity for a different kind of longing. The body genuinely needs food to live just as we need God to live, unlike TV which we do not need to live.

Jesus said in His temptation period that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. He was fasting at the time. Notice how in this sermon, He speaks of **temptation** and then He follows it with **fasting**. Did you see that? Because we just got through reading or talking about the prayer of Jesus where He said, "Lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil", and right on the heels of that He begins to talk about **fasting**. It just seems to be kind of convenient since that's really what Jesus just went through in His temptation period.

God uses metaphors. One thing we can readily understand to illustrate the more 'difficult to grasp' truths is only made so because of the multitude of distractions that we have in our lives. Though food was made to be enjoyed and to create in us thankfulness, it was not meant to replace the deeper hunger of our souls. The temporary removal of ourselves from food forces us to do one of two things; to sink deeper into our desire for temporal things, or to rise above and notice a deeper longing in us.

Since the 'hypocrites' often "look the part of fasting" by neglecting their face, unwashed, un-anointed, then a fast must indicate some type of serious matter going on inside like grief, spiritual preparation or maintenance of a spiritual discipline. This inner focus could easily be reflected on the outside and become a source of pride or religious superiority.

It could be an opportunity to show others that ‘we’ are in some real distress or internal struggle. They would then think, “Wow, this person is “*super spiritual*” and praise us when the attention of the fast *should be* on seeking God’s face; not others seeking ours. These games are displeasing to the Father. He does not want His disciplines hijacked for our own purposes to get some cheap spiritual thrill at His expense.

Jesus says in **John 4:23**, “God seeks *true* worshippers”. He wants our sincere devotion. *Fasting is a means to a deeper relationship with God by focusing on the more important matters.*

**Matthew 9:14** says John’s disciples routinely fasted. So did Anna in **Luke 2:32**. So did the Pharisees also in **Matthew 9:14**. Cornelius fasted in **Acts 10:30** and he was a Gentile! And Paul, of course, fasted according to **2 Corinthians 6:5, 11:27**. There is a website called Bible Gateway and it gives a couple of lists of circumstances of fasting. It includes in the list: grief, war, sickness, sickness of another person, perhaps a difficult prophecy that was going to be delivered, the prevalence of sin sometimes brought on fasting, when someone was in a difficult place like, for instance, Daniel in the lion’s den, the confession of sins was often accompanied by fasting, or humiliation. So, there were many different circumstances in which people fasted.

What produces fasting in us today? Commonly, it is for health reasons. I don’t think that this was mentioned as a reason in the Bible. I recently heard a challenge to fast for our wives. Well, that might be important to do on occasions. I think the problem for me is that it has not become a natural part of my thinking. It always seems a little contrived. Getting the inside drive oriented or calibrated to fasting is the key, I think. Should we do this? Are we so far from ‘expected devotion’?

In other words, have we come so far in our modern day life that we don’t even understand the need for things like fasting? Have we become so superficial? The internal drive to fast should be closely akin to prayer. This too is not as strong as it should be in me, I will admit. Why? Is it that I am not dependent enough on God? I have to think about that. But my gut tells me that it's about something else. It’s not **just** that I’m not recognizing my dependence on God, but how do I develop this? How do I develop this discipline of fasting? How important is a matter that I would ‘not eat’? Should it be planned or should it be spontaneous? The Pharisees planned it according to **Luke 18:12**.

Here’s a side-note. When I looked up ‘fast’ in Bible Gateway, I found “fasten”, or “hold fast”, and “fast asleep”. The etymology of the word comes from “hold firmly” as in holding firmly to oneself ... “firm control”. So “fast”, at least in English is about *discipline*. It’s about ‘holding firmly’ to something.

It seems that the first mention of *fasting*, per se, is with Saul and Jonathan at their death in **1 Samuel 31:13**. The inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead did this in conjunction with the destruction of the bodies of Jonathan and Saul. The second occasion was when David’s son was sick in **2 Samuel 12:16-20**. He broke the *fast* when the child died seeing that there was nothing left to do. Then in **2 Chronicles 20:3** Jehoshaphat proclaimed a *fast* for all in Judah. Ezra also, in **Ezra 8:21**, in Nehemiah and Esther also have occasions for *fasting*.

The psalmist connects humbling oneself with *fasting* in **Psalm 35:13**. In **Psalm 109:24** an excessive *fast* is in mind. In **Isaiah 58:6** is about **true fasting** which he defines there. The true fast is to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free ... to break every yoke. It is often associated with sackcloth and ashes as in **Daniel 9:3**.

It seems to me, the risky fast is the one that is routine and ritualistic as opposed to the spontaneous or *heart-felt* one driven by some strong need or emotion. The ritual seems to tend toward self-righteousness. Fasting seems to be circumstantial. When this is the motive then *fasting* is intense and has an end in mind; to see something important happen; to give one a sense of partnership with God who will, perhaps, fulfill the aim of the *fast*. So, I would encourage you, if you want to really get in depth on this, one of the books I have studied is a book by John Piper called "God Hunger". It certainly has a lot to say about fasting.

In the life of the early church, there are only two specific occasions for *fasting*. **Acts 13:1** when Paul and Barnabas were selected for their missionary journey and then in **Acts 14:23** at the appointment of elders in the church. Remember Jesus stayed up all night in prayer before the selection of His apostles. So, what are we to make of this since Jesus said, "After the Bridegroom left, His disciples would fast." I'm not sure. Jesus is the One who taught us what we know about Christian *fasting*, not the apostles nor the church.

Jesus *fasted* 40 days at the beginning of His ministry and we might conclude that *fasting* should be related to ministry and to leadership as that seems to be the context in the New Testament. I'm not sure this is right, but at least there is an emphasis here.

Well, Jesus makes the same point with fasting that He made with prayer and giving. It should not be an occasion for showing off. It is personal between me and God, and God knows and He sees and He rewards.

To make it not obvious, Jesus said, anoint your head and wash your face. The anointing was a hygienic practice with olive oil. Again, legally we might make this a specific obligation, part of *fasting* which back then would be a normal practice, but today it might do what Jesus forbids us to do ... call attention to ourselves. If I smear olive oil all over my face and go out, that might call more attention to me than it should. But if I conclude that I can switch something else for olive oil, am I adding to it or taking away from the word?

I think this teaching on *fasting* poses a problem for modern-day church legalists just as foot washing does. Jesus' mind is that we should go to some lengths to hide acts of devotion from others and keep it simply between us and the Father.

There are some things that are private like sex between a husband and a wife. We don't share ... we keep it between the two of us. Is this a way to build intimacy? The payoff is just between me and God. Others are not part of it. Just the two of us know what goes on when I fast. It's secret. Don't we have this in our intimate relationships ... something that has meaning just to us?

I'm going to begin the next section here so I'm going to go back to read **Matthew 6:19-24**.

<sup>19</sup> “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; <sup>21</sup> for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

<sup>22</sup> “The eye is the lamp of the body; so if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. <sup>23</sup> But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. So if the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

<sup>24</sup> “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

In A. T. Robertson's “*A Harmony of the Gospels*” which we are following here in order to get our chronology of the life of Christ, he makes this the next section. This section is about single-hearted devotion to God as opposed to worldly aims and anxieties. It really goes down to verse 34 but we can read some more in a few moments.

The phraseology of this text is interesting. Where He says, Do not “lay up” and the “treasures” words are from the same root. When you talk about “do not lay up” and then you use the word “treasures”, both of the words come from the same root. The first word is a verb and the second is a noun. “Treasure” is a treasury, a store, a precious deposit, a receptacle in which precious articles are kept ... perhaps a casket or a storehouse. In **Matthew 2:11** the Magi fell down and worshipped opening their “treasures” they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. In **Matthew 12:35**, the good man, out of his good “treasures” brings forth what is good and the evil man, out of his evil “treasures” brings forth what is evil.

In both cases here, the treasury is being opened and emptied, it's being used and it's being shared. The verb ‘to collect’ and lay up stores of wealth; that's the verb. We've talked about the treasure but now the verb; lay up for yourself means “to collect” and lay up stores of wealth, to treasure up something, to heap up or accumulate, to reserve or to keep in store. In **Romans 2:5** Paul says, “Because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are *storing up* wrath for yourself in the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.” Then in **1 Corinthians 16:2**, “On the first day of every week, each of you is to *put aside* and save as he may prosper, so that no collections need to be made when I come.” They were *putting aside* or *storing up* for the poor saints in Jerusalem so they did not have to make a collection when Paul comes. Then, in **2 Peter 3:7** it uses this word. It says, “By the same word, the present heavens and earth *are reserved* for fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of the ungodly.”

The task here is to understand the mind of Christ, to determine what the treasures actually are, and to determine what Jesus is actually prohibiting us from doing and authorizing. If taken in its more literal sense, there would be *no* bank accounts, *no* safe deposit boxes, *no* retirement plans or *any other such treasury* that can be stolen or contaminated! Hoarding wealth to spend it on our own desires versus making *heavenly deposits* are the competitors. Those are the things that are competing. This is a good subject to start the New Year on ... treasures. Man seeks treasures. So many movies are about this.

I am reminded of **Colossians 2:3** speaking of Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The word here is the same word that Jesus uses. Paul says that these treasures are *hidden*. It's used in **Matthew 11:25** regarding the judgment; that God has *hidden* these things from the wise and the intelligent and has revealed them to babies. The Son is the revealer. In **Matthew 25:18** the slothful servant hid his talent in the ground and lost it. Was he storing up treasures on earth instead of investing for the kingdom? Perhaps that is what we're talking about here.

In **Mark 4:22** Jesus says everything *hidden* is meant or intended to be revealed to come to light. In **Luke 8:17** He says it will become evident. *True treasures of wisdom and knowledge are 'in Christ'. These are to be sought, studied, understood, and put to use for the Kingdom of God.* In the parable of **Luke 16:1** and following of the unrighteous steward Jesus says there is a parallel of how we take care of 'unrighteous mammon' and 'true riches'. If we have not been faithful in the first then why should God entrust us with the latter? If unfaithful with another's money, why should we have our own? The aim must be beyond the money because we cannot serve two masters. To choose to serve God puts money *in its place*.

The story in **Luke 12:13** and following is to this point. Jesus warns against greed because a *man's life does not consist in the abundance of one's possessions*. This word "hupoarcho" means to begin or come into existence, to be, or to subsist. It is the foundation of our existence, our arch if you will; what holds the whole thing up. It is finding that on which our lives actually exist, or what do our lives depend on? What is the *true treasure*? The arch is what holds up the structure; the central part of the thing. It is not anything of this earth. It is, as Paul says, "in Christ".

The Challenger Deep quest is about finding the building blocks of this ark and to find the treasures that are hidden there. But putting one's heart somewhere is core to our relationship with Christ. Exposure to moths, rust and thieves puts our treasure at risk. Treasures on earth will be lost because it is the nature of things earthly; moths consume, rust erodes and corrupts and thieves remove what may be sentimentally valuable or something for which we have worked hard. All is lost and usually unrecoverable. Our things are rendered useless to us. "Stuff" is non-transferable. We call "stuff" consumables. We have dumps and recycling. We discard things. We take it to "Goodwill" and our "stuff" may become someone else's stuff.

Jesus says, "Laying up for *yourselves*"... whether the treasure of earth or heaven, our motive is for "*self*". We do it for "us". Jesus doesn't make it seem otherwise. Man has self-interest. He does what seems best for 'himself'. But the difference between earth and heaven is *profound*. When I invest in earthly things, I believe that these things, under my control and for my well-being here will somehow give me peace.

When I invest in heaven I release *my control* and turn the management over to Jesus to control and to use 'my stuff'... to use me for His self-interest which is really in my best interest or self-interest. It is for my *eternal* well-being. So the difference between the two is when I invest here on earth, I'm just saving up something for myself, but when I invest in heaven I am turning the investment over to Jesus and He manages it for our good.

My vision of what is best for me is clouded by sin, short-sightedness, greed and evil desire. Jesus has no impediments to “best”. His investments are driven by higher principles and strategies. We simply cannot secure our resources. Security does not belong to the earth. **He** is our fortress; our safe, if you will, where we store our treasures.

Later, Jesus in John 10 will talk of the one who enters the sheep pen to kill, steal and destroy. The ‘evil one’ wants to *take away* our lives. Jesus wants to *take away* the corrupting influences of our lives ... our sins; and to preserve us. Satan wants to increase the corrupting influence by giving us things that will destroy us. It’s *the Savior versus the destroyer*. That is what we have here. We get to choose which process we will participate in. Our hearts are at stake in what we choose.

This passage has been mostly applied to money. This certainly is part of it but certainly not all. Jesus says in **Matthew 6:21**, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” This encompasses many aspects of life. To ask someone, “where is your heart” provides interesting responses. Good responses require some thought.

A sister on Facebook was railing against \$5 tap water in a cardboard cup at a movie theater. She is on a crusade! *Why?* Where is her heart? Of course, it’s not right; it’s price gouging. It’s easy to protest this ... don’t buy it! But does the offense run deeper ... affect deeper sensitivities? *Do we know why* we invest our time or life in something? **We create. and then we try to sustain what we have created!** But on earth, this is a losing battle. The answer is our heart is where our treasure is, and our treasure is what we seek and where we look. If we know where all the **treasures of wisdom and knowledge** are found in Jesus, then why do we not look for them? The proof is in our actions.

*This is why Jesus is clear about seeking first the Kingdom and His righteousness. Could Jesus have made it any clearer?* God speaks in metaphors. Jesus compares the *heart* with the *eye*. Just as the eye lets in light, someone’s heart lets in what is important. Clear eyes can see. Trying to focus when there is something else in our eye which blocks the light is like trying to take a picture with the lens cap on! Light cannot come in. *It really is an amazing process of how light waves are turned into images*, either in our brain or in the camera. Technology produces clearer and clearer images; HD, 3D, blu-ray etc. We *want* to see what we *want* to see in high definition these days...the hair in the nose on the quarter-back. We don’t want to *miss* anything. Those like me who have the old technology don’t know what we’re missing, *but where is the rush to see Jesus more clearly; to know Him more purely, to stamp His image on our hearts?*

The word clear here in the text (for the eye) is “haplous” (απλούς) from a word that means folded together ... it is folded together, single, simple, sound, perfect. Jesus uses this in **Luke 11:34**, “Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness;” also in verses 33-36. Here he speaks of deliberately hiding our light in a cellar or under a peck measure. *Light is on a stand so people can see.* He adds, “Then watch out that the light in you may not be darkness. Therefore if your whole body is full of light, without any dark part in it, it will be wholly illuminated, as when the lamp illuminates you with its rays.”

Putting two things together, light is obstructed either by external means of hiding it, or internal means by something being in your eye. Jesus uses this in Matthew 7 regarding judgment. How can I remove a speck from my brother's eye if I have a log in mine? To help someone else and not to be hypocritical, I have to first remove the log from my own eye.

Now this word "haplous" means singleness; it is sincerity, it's without dissimulation or self-seeking. Generosity is also how this word can be translated. **Ephesians 6:5** says that slaves are to serve their masters with sincerity of heart, as they would Christ. Also, **Colossians 3:22**, adds 'as opposed to external service that is meant to please men, but fearing the Lord' he says. **Romans 12:8** says we must be giving with liberality or generosity; doing it with sincerity. In **2 Corinthians 8:2** Paul said their giving overflowed in the wealth of liberality. All of these are words that are found in this text. **2 Cor. 9:11, 13** also has this idea of liberality.

In **2 Cor. 11:3** he said, "But I was afraid lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your mind should be led astray the **simplicity** and purity of devotion to Christ." This word "simplicity" is the word that is used here of singleness; we need to have a simplicity and a singleness within our lives. This captures the type of obstruction our eyes go through so light cannot come in. The leading astray idea is caused by deception. We take our eyes off the prize. **We are distracted**. This is a common trick of magicians and tricksters. Our attention is diverted to other things. "I want to show you something", someone says. Then we are off and onto lesser things. We need simple, single, sincere focus on Jesus. Paul's fear was that we would not retain Jesus in our primary vision. Our *mind* is used here for our *eye*. Jesus is supposed to be what is in our eye; in our vision; single-mindedness.

So back in **Luke 11:36** the word illuminate is "photizo" (φωτιζω) meaning 'to shed rays, to shine, to brighten up, to enlighten, to illuminate, to make one able to see'. I had to reset a little light this morning that shines on my Bible so I could read it well. Light reflecting off a white page with black words is a good combination to illuminate what I read. My nook, I was using a nook back then, I don't use it very much; I use my phone, but my nook has a back light that lights up the page. **Revelation 18:1** speaks of the earth being illuminated by the glory of an angel. Then, in **John 1:9**, *Jesus is the true light* which is coming into the world and *enlightening every man* or *illuminating every man*. In both cases, whether it is the angel in Revelation or Jesus they have a light and the capability of illuminating other people.

Paul prays in **Ephesians 1:18**, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of His calling." What are the riches of the glory of the inheritance in the saints? An enlightened heart gives us the possibility of knowing the glory in our calling or in our purpose. So, the more we are enlightened in our hearts, the more we are going to understand our purpose in Christ.

**Hebrews 6:4** speaks of those 'once been enlightened and then they fell away' and then the impossibility of being renewed to repentance. He couples this with 'tasting the heavenly gift and being a partaker of the Holy Spirit and tasting the good word of God and the powers of the coming age'.

Later in **Hebrews 10:32** he reminds them of ‘the days of their first enlightenment when they endured great conflict of suffering.’ In **Ephesians 3:9** in speaking of the mystery of Jew and Gentile being one, Paul says he was used **to bring to light** what would have been hidden for ages. This reminds us of the hidden riches of Christ in **Colossians 2:6**. In **1 Cor. 4:9** Paul tells us that *the hidden things of darkness will be brought to light* or illuminated, *even the motives of men’s hearts will be disclosed*. **1 Timothy 1:10** is a profound look at the work of Jesus who *abolished death and brought life and immortality to light* through the gospel. *The gospel is the illuminating source* so we can experience life ... our coming immortality to the fullness. In other words, we’re going to be bathed in light so that we don’t miss anything in this coming age. We cannot experience this in the darkness.

Jesus continues this idea of singleness of devotion in **Matthew 6:24**. “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” What about the two masters? “Masters” is the word “kurios”, a rich and often used word in the New Testament. It means supreme authority or controller; it might even be a word for mister. It is certainly a designation of God, or lord, or master or owner. In the general sense it is used to describe an owner of property or an earthly ruler like the Roman Emperor, and an honorary title. There are numerous references to God and Jesus as kurios.

As people we seek control of many things; other people, organizations, wealth, situations, and then we live life long enough to know that we are not really in control of very much. Our lordship is minor. At best, we are an influencer but hardly a controller.

Jesus, in this passage is not even considering us as ‘masters’. There are two, He says; God or mammon. Mammon here is exactly what it sounds like. We would transliterate it mammona. It is a word of Chaldean origin and really means *confidence*; figuratively of wealth because wealth usually gives people confidence. So when you think of mammon it’s referring to money or wealth, but the idea of confidence is there. In **Luke 16:9-13** in the story of the unrighteous servant who saw he was going to be fired; he made deals with his master’s debtors to reduce their debt. In doing so, he made friends and a way to be taken care of. He did not think by means of mammon of unrighteousness. He learned to manage what controlled him to maintain his security and confidence. What is the lesson here? The context here is **true riches**.

Mammon is a false god or lord, an imposter to be manipulated like a false prophet manipulates in idol to control people, but it seems God wants us to entrust to us true riches and to make them our own. Since we really own them, we are not manipulating others to get what we want. Why do I need to scheme for what is already mine? If I have *true* riches then I don’t have to try to manipulate someone else to get riches.

Mammon cannot really be owned or possessed. It always possesses us and controls us. But another reason it cannot be possessed is because it is not secure. It can be stolen, wasted or depleted. But true riches cannot. They are eternal; the bond is real and everlasting.

Jesus contrasts our response to the two masters and two couplets. He talks about hate and love and then He talks about holding and to, and despising.

The word hate is “miseo” (μισέω) and was used of **Matthew 5:43** about *hating enemies*. It is also used in **Matthew 10:22** when it’s used to describe the reaction of others to the early believers. In **Matthew 24:9-10** it says, “because of my Name you will be hated.”

The word “hate” has always seemed harsh in contrast to “love”. Jesus speaks in these extremes. John, in **1 John 2:11** compares hating one’s brothers as “being in the darkness” ... a darkness that has blinded his eyes and causes him not to know where he’s going. He also says, “The one who hates his brother is a murderer without eternal life in him” in **1 John 3:15**. He adds that if a person is a **true lover** of God, he cannot be a **hater** of his brother, **1 John 4:20**. These are stark contrasts with no shades of gray. You either “love” or you “hate”.

Most objects of “hate” are persons, or it can even mean “hating yourself”. Here’s mammon, an associated idea in **Romans 7:17**, “Doing the things I hate” he talks about. **Hebrews 1:9** speaks of Jesus “hating” lawlessness. **Jude 23** speaks of hating even the garments polluted by the flesh. In **Revelation 2:6** Jesus He hates the deeds of the Nicolaitans, but it seems to me that loving and hating wealth in Luke 16:13 is a special class of ‘*hating*’. It is the mere physical wealth; gold, silver, money etc. or *loving the feeling* or *mindset* that it gives; the power and security. In other words, is it simply ‘loving the money, the gold or the silver’; or is it something about the ‘*feeling* that is given’ ... the ‘feeling that comes from having this money’?

Mammon can be intoxicating. The idea of “holding onto”; the word here means “to hold oneself opposite to, to adhere to”, by extension “to care for” or “cleave to”. In **Titus 1:9**, it says, “holding fast the faithful word”. In **1 Thessalonians 5:14** Paul says, “help the weak”. In other words, “hold on to the weak”. To “hold on” is to *adhere to God*; or you are going to *adhere to mammon*. It is our choice. ‘To keep oneself directly opposite to anyone’ sounds like a dance; dance with God or dance with money. It’s an interesting idea ... giving another our undivided attention.

And then, there is the idea of “despised”. The word despised means to show contempt for, to disrespect, to think little of or nothing of. It is used in **Matthew 18:10** concerning little children. The reason Jesus gives is “their angels in heaven continually see the face of the Father who is in heaven”. That is why we should not despise them. God shows respect to children by 1) assigning them an angel, and 2) allowing these angels to continually see His face. I’m not sure I completely understand this but it sounds pretty important to me.

In **Romans 2:4** Paul asked if we are showing contempt, thinking lightly of the riches of His kindness and patience by not letting these lead us to repentance. In **1 Corinthians 11:22** the way people in Corinth were treating the Lord’s Supper was equal to ‘despising the church of God’. In **1 Timothy 4:12** Paul tells Timothy to ‘let no one look down on his youthfulness’. The counter to this is to ‘set an example’. In **1 Timothy 6:2** slaves should not despise their believing masters because they are brethren, but they should serve them all the more.

**Hebrews 12:2** says that Jesus despised or thought little of the shame of the cross because of the joy that was set before Him. **2 Peter 2:10** speaks of those who ‘indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires’ and ‘despise authority’. He calls them daring and self-willed; not trembling when they revile angelic majesties.

Remember He has talked of “treasures in Heaven”; true riches which should be sought first. To allow lesser things or lesser gods control our agenda is to despise God; to think little of Him; the opposite of godliness, which is a consciousness of God.

To “hold to” is to face someone as ‘to give them your attention’. To “turn away” is “to despise.” God deserves and desires our full attention ... not to be shared with other lovers or with lesser things. It is impossible to serve two masters when the masters have such radically different agendas. Jesus speaks in black and white because *this is* black and white.

The word used here for “serve” is “douleuo” ... from where we get the word slave. It means to serve, to obey and to submit. It is only used here in **Matthew 6:24** and in **Luke 16:13** in the same teaching. In **Luke 15:29**, in the story of the prodigal, the older brother complained that he had been serving for many years without a celebration. In **John 8:33** the Jews protest that *they have never been enslaved* to anyone; and then, in **Acts 7:7** it is used when Stephen speaks of God delivering the Jews from *bondage* so they could serve Him. In **Acts 20:19** Paul reminds the Ephesian elders how he has *served* the Lord with humility, and tears and trials. The word is found seven times in Romans.

In **Romans 6:6** it speaks of the old self being crucified so that sin would be done away with. The outcome is ‘no longer being *a slave* to sin’. **Romans 7:6** speaks of our being released from the law so that we can ‘*serve* in newness of the Spirit’. In **Romans 7:25**, after describing the struggle of the flesh with the Spirit, in my mind ‘serving the law of God’ but in my flesh ‘serving the law of sin’. Then in **Romans 9:12** regarding the choices that God made in election; the older, Esau, will serve the younger, Jacob. And then in **Romans 12:11** in Paul’s “one-liners” he adds, ‘serving the Lord’. In **Romans 14:18** it speaks of ‘serving in a certain way’ that is in righteousness and in peace and in joy in the Holy Spirit. The one who does this is accepted by God and approved by men. Paul warns in **Romans 16:18** of those who are *slaves* to their own appetites, which may go back to our teaching on fasting where we began today.

In **Galatians 4:8-9**, before knowing God we were *slaves* to that which was ‘no god’, so don’t turn back to being enslaved all over again. Using Hagar as the slave-woman who represents the old law, she is *in slavery* with her children. This is what is being talked about. In **Galatians 5:13** our freedom is to *serve* one another through love. In **Ephesians 6:7** we are to *render service* with good will to God and not to men. In **Phil. 2:22** Epaphroditus *served* with Paul in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving with his father. In **Colossians 3:24** it is the Lord Christ who you *serve*. **1 Thess. 1:9** says “turned from idols to *serve* the Lord”. **1 Timothy 6:2** talks about slaves *servicing* Christian masters. **Titus 3:3** speaks of those who are *enslaved* by different lusts.

The reason I give you so many passages here is because you need to see how these words are used in other context so that you can get a good grasp on what Jesus means when He uses these words in His teaching.

Other than serving God, these passages say that we can *serve* sin, the Law, the law of sin, our appetites, and those things that are no gods. We can serve men, we can serve idols, and we can serve lust, but our passage uses the term “*mammon*” ... that we can serve *mammon*.

Each of these is an aspect of the same thing. Sin is personified, but there is a power principle within sin. Sin is enslaving. When we choose to serve sin, we set ourselves up for enslavement. The old saying, “give an inch; take a mile” applies to sin. ***Sin will take you further than you want to go and keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you can pay.*** And when you “work for the man” ***you owe your soul to the company store, another day older and deeper in debt.***

The Law is also addictive. If I think I can gain freedom from sin **by** it; ***if I can just work harder and do a little more***, I can be “okay”. The idea that obedience cancels sin-debt is an illusion! The harder I work the further behind I get is more like it. This is the “law of sin” principle ... a harsh task-master like a hamster on a wheel ... it is a lot of work but going nowhere, unless work is a response of what was given to me by grace.

Our own appetites and lusts go together. Our desires can be so strong in spite of one decision. These are usually a combination of physical and emotional drives. They convince us that we ***must have*** the physical “thing”; food, sex, possessions or whatever it may be in order to have the “emotional well-being” that we desire.

It seems no matter how much we tell ourselves that “Jesus is all we really need”, we still chase other lovers, idols, and false things that come in many forms. The ***common denominator*** is we make them, we empower them, and control them as a way to feel in control of our own lives! We self-deceive!

Then, there are men who are in slavery to others as if ***they can make us happy*** or bring us fulfillment. We give them power and control, and leave them when we think they have failed to provide. All of these are **traps**.

Well, I know we have covered quite a bit of material here and there’s so much more to cover ... and we will cover more here in the future.

I know that this has been a little longer, but I hope that you will know that as you study this, it’s very easy just to pause the tape and take down the notes.

This is the most in-depth study that I do on any recording. I go quickly; I understand that; but this is for your in-depth study of the mind of Christ. I hope you will take it that way and use the material.

These are also being transcribed and you may find those transcripts if you go to our website at <https://www.centralsarasota.org/> we will provide you with links to all the transcripts and you can have them in printed form. It might be a little bit easier to study that way.

Anyway, thank you for joining us today. I look forward to being with you again in the near future. God bless.