

## The Mind of Christ - Lesson 91

January 29, 2021

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

Welcome to another edition of The Mind of Christ. I'm glad you're joining us and we are making our way through The Mind of Christ, and everything Jesus said and everything he ever did is being considered here. I am making my way through the Sermon on the Mount.

We are actually kind of into the latter part of the Sermon on the Mount and we have a little bit more to go.

I am glad that you have joined us today and I encourage you to have your Bibles ready. I am using the New American Standard Bible as the basis for our study because it's one of the most literal translations there is. You might want to have a Bible handy if you don't have that version and be ready to pause so that you can get in depth on this because this is a very in-depth study. This is not milk, this is meat, and again, we're just making our way through the Sermon on the Mount.

We are following A. T. Robertson's, "*A Harmony of the Gospels*" and he divides the life of Christ into different sections. This is section 54, and this is 'part number 7' if you are trying to keep up with A. T. Robertson you will know where we are. We are going to be talking about the "Golden Rule" today. We're in **Matthew 7:7-12** so let's read that text:

### **Matthew 7:7-12 Prayer and the Golden Rule**

<sup>7</sup>“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. <sup>9</sup>Or what person is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf of bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? <sup>11</sup>So if you, *despite* being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

<sup>12</sup>“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

We have three different sections here within this section. We are going to be talking first about asking, seeking and knocking. The second one in verses 9-11 is a family response to needs, and then in verse 12 is what we normally call "The Golden Rule".

In verses 7 and 8, how shall we understand ‘asking, seeking and knocking’? It seems so definite, insistence without qualification ... ‘*and it will be done*’. So if you insist, it will be done.

On the surface of things, this just cannot be right. God is not obligated to comply with all of our wishing and wanting and desiring. We also see many examples of God not granting requests in Scripture, yet Jesus says pray persistently. When this works out, it’s wonderful and it’s a joyous occasion and we all have had those experiences. But when God does *not give* or *help us find* or *open the door*, there is disappointment and dismay. But as with the Proverbs, there are principles in Scripture which generally work, though there are always exceptions. The person who is clear about what they want, they have checked this against *God’s will*, against his ‘revealed’ will, and who prays with the motive to *glorify God* and who is *persistent*; normally they will see their requests being granted ... the lost, found and doors, opened, but there are purposes and factors unknown to us that must prevent God from answering favorably at times. This might be harder to accept than the success when we pray. But this passage sounds so definite!

He says here, “For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.” We have the advantage of additional teaching on this subject and therefore we can see what *else* God says other than what is in these two or three verses. But what would someone think if they only had this or if they only heard this for the first time, and they had no context in which to evaluate this?

Contextually, there is a divide between the Pharisees and just the ‘common’ Jew. The Pharisees seemed to be privileged and have a more direct and open channel to God. Perhaps the key to understanding this section of Scripture is found, first, in the word ‘everyone’. There is no *privileged* class with God. The ‘common’ Jew hearing this would hear ‘access’.

No going through a priest or some religious class; *anyone* can ask, *anyone* can seek, and *anyone* can knock. So who has access? Well, Jesus says, “everyone”! No qualifications! “All” would include **gentiles!** I’m not sure they caught this, but the message becomes abundantly clear even in Jesus’ ministry and certainly in the ministry of the Apostles. Easy universal access would be revolutionary teaching to those Jews who were listening to Jesus.

They had years of believing the priesthood, and its related political system which attached itself to it, was the sole channel to God. The priesthood was never intended by God to limit access, but to foreshadow the work of Christ who opened the access for all. **Ephesians 2:18** teaches this. It says, “For through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” We are becoming, together with all the saints, a temple where God lives by His Spirit.

Speaking directly with God or as we often say, in response to the catholic system, the *priesthood of all believers* was a major shift of the Reformation in which they began to take on the “hierarchical system” that was embodied in the clergy and the laity.

I believe our *focus* in this section has been on whether or not I can get anything I want from God. It *should be* the amazing truth that I, and anyone else, have ‘unrestricted’ **access** to God. Jesus has torn the curtain. **Hebrews 10:19-22** says, “Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,<sup>20</sup> by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is His flesh,<sup>21</sup> and since we have a great High Priest over the house of God,<sup>22</sup> let us draw **near** with a sincere heart.”

Jesus reverses this in **Revelation 3:20** as He is the One who is doing the knocking on the door. But again, He says, “If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me”. We also have to give Him access into our lives.

*When He asks, does He receive?* When He asks for access into our life, does He receive it? When He seeks, does He find, and when He knocks, does the door open to Him? Now, He turns His attention to this idea that **even evil men can** and do produce good fruit. They can give ‘good gifts’ to their children. But Jesus says that evil and *bad trees* produce *bad fruit*; only *good trees* produce *good fruit*. So, what is this?

I think this is what confuses us. *All fruit is not equal*. Atheists may do ‘good’ to their fellow man for whatever good motive they have, but they still are atheists and they cannot produce the **kind of fruit** that God desires. Fruit can be tasteful but not beneficial. In the Garden, all the trees produced good fruit, and even the tree of knowledge of good and evil was pleasant to the *sight* and to the *taste*, but it produced the knowledge that made sin possible. “Where there is no law, there is no sin” (**Romans 4:15**). *What made this tree different than the others was the prohibition that God attached to it* ... don’t eat of it or you will die” (**Genesis 2:17**). In this way, the tree is the “first law”. The Law cannot save, but only make us aware of sin (**Galatians 3:24**) and that’s what happened with this tree. There is nothing inherently wrong with the law or with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil! It is just the fruit; it’s not able to save.

The evil man who does good to his children by giving them food instead of ‘stones’ or ‘snakes’ but cannot be saved by doing so. This is not the fruit God that is looking for. In **Matthew 3:8** it says He is looking for the fruit of repentance; a change of heart which includes our view of Jesus. It is ‘telling’ in **Matthew 21:43** that Jesus said, “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, *producing its fruit*.” In **John 4:36** He calls it the fruit for eternal life. **John 12:24** says it is fruit borne out of death, “... unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it

remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” According to **John 15:4-5**, it is fruit borne by abiding in the vine, ... “without which one can do nothing.”

**Romans 7:4** says when we are released from the law, we are now able to bear fruit in our new relationship with Jesus. The law only arouses passions that bear the fruit of death.

The fruit has nine characteristics according to **Galatians 5:22-24**. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> Now those who belong to Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” **Philippians 1:11** says it is the, “fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” This requires wisdom lest we are deceived.

Now, the “*how much more*” phrase found in **Matthew 7:11** is meant to contrast and compare God with us; and even evil men among us. “So if you, *despite* being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” If evil men know how to give good gifts to their children, ‘*how much more*’ will the Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him? We don’t usually play cruel jokes on our kids. We don’t give stones for bread or snakes for fish. This phrase is found throughout the Old Testament as well ... “*how much more*” phrase.

In **2 Samuel 4:11**, when one destroys the life of a righteous man lying on his bed, *how much more* should the life of the destroyer be destroyed?

In **2 Kings 5:13**, as the servant speaks to Naaman about his eagerness to do a hard thing to get well, *how much more* should he have done the easy thing. In **Proverbs 11:31** says, “If a righteous man is rewarded on the earth, *how much more* the wicked and the sinner?” In **Proverbs 15:11**, Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the Lord, *how much more* the hearts of men. In **Proverbs 21:27**, the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, *how much more* when he brings it with evil intent! So that phrase, *how much more* is found in many places of the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, in **Matthew 10:25** Jesus says it is enough for the disciple to become like his teacher and the slave like his master, but if they have called the ‘head of the house Beelzebub’, then *how much more* will they malign the members of his household. In **Luke 12:28**, but if God so clothed the grass of the field which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the fiery furnace, *how much more* will He clothe you? Also in **Luke 12:24**, about feeding the ravens, there is a similar passage. In **Romans 11: 12**, if the transgression of the Jews is riches for the Gentiles (or the world), *how much more* will their fulfillment be? See also **Romans 11:24**. So, He uses this phrase quite often.

In **1 Corinthians 6:3** He says, “Do you not know that we will judge angels? *How much more* then, should we judge the matters of this life when there are disputes between brothers.” Then in Philemon, verse 16 the phrase is used. Onesimus was worth *how much more* to Philemon after his conversion? If he was something to Philemon as a slave, then *how much more* now that he is a Christian brother! **Hebrews 9:14** says *how much more* {than the blood of bulls and goats} will the blood of Christ cleanse our consciences? It is used quite often.

But notice **Luke 11:13**. If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more* will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? God, as Father, is eager to give us, not just bread and fish, which Jesus did in feeding the 4,000 and the 5,000, but *how much more* giving us the Holy Spirit if we ask Him? This is according to **John 4:10-14**, the living water. So *how much more* is an indicator of our being created in the image of God? We are able to understand and imitate acts similar to God but on a much more limited basis ... our incompleteness compared to His fullness. We find benevolence in our hearts and know that there is infinite benevolence in the heart of God.

We can understand who He is and what He expects of us, at least to some extent because we know how to do very similar things. We can do good; so we can understand the good that God does because it is something we can imitate, but this also connects us with the others.

Here is where the golden rule comes in. This ‘so called’ rule is not unique to Jesus, by the way. It is called the “ethic of reciprocity”.

Confucius says, “Never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself.” From ancient Egypt, they had a saying, “That which you hate to be done to you, do not do to another.” The ancient Greeks had this saying, “Do not to your neighbor what you would take ill from him.” *The declaration toward a global ethic written in the parliament of the world’s religions proclaimed this the common principle for many religions.*

Even in our day, people recognize what we call “The Golden Rule” to be one of the most universally applicable rules, if you will, or sayings, in any religion of the world. It is one of the things that we have in common with even people who are not Christians. Rather than distress us that others spoke this principle, it is a testimony to its truth, a truth that can be universally recognized across the years in cultures as valid! This is so, because truth can be found in the heart. It is as we say, it “rings true”. Some truths are self-evident. And now, the application of this and other truths may be more difficult and let’s see where we go with this:

How do I want to be treated? *How do I want to be treated?* Ideally, within my better nature, with respect, with love, with truth, with faithfulness, with care; those are *all* ways

I want to be treated. These are adjunct to the content of one's beliefs or situations or choices. We do not treat others according to 'how they treat us'. This would be Lex talionis ... the law of retaliation. "Do unto others as they have done to us." That's not the Golden Rule. This is vengeance. It is "getting back", it's trying to "get even", but we treat others as we would like to be treated regardless of how they have treated us. It takes much more discipline and wisdom.

Contextually the Golden Rule could be applied to us **and to God**. We could say, "Treat God the way you want Him to treat you." What if God did that; if we set the standard minute by minute, day by day. What would that look like? If we did the same with people, this would be an even messier world than it is now. There would be little consistency in the world. It would be "*reactive morality*"; "*popcorn behavior*". One moment I'm being nice to someone who was nice to me, and the next moment I'm being nasty to someone who was nasty to me. It reminds me of my brother, Willie, who was predictable in some ways ... those who were nice to him, he was nice to them. Those he thought were *not* nice to him, he was *not* nice to them; and there is no 'order' in this. Eventually this will result in a complete breakdown of society like in a nuclear reactor! It will be a meltdown!

If practiced as intended to truly treat everyone as we want or we need to be treated, what would that do? It would elevate society to a higher level. People would be dragged upward if we actually followed the Golden Rule.

But then Jesus says, "*This is the Law and the prophets*". This phrase needs to be compared with **Matthew 22:40** regarding the two greatest commands; *to love God* and *to love others*.

In this one, Jesus says 'On these two commandments "depend" the whole law and the prophets. "The Golden Rule" is the Law and the prophets; the two greatest commands is the basis of the Law and the prophets. So, get the picture.

The foundation of the Law is "love for God", and "love for others" making the Golden Rule the operational system of the Law. It is the *system* of how it operates. So the principle, the basis is "love God", "love others" but how does that work? The "operation system" is the Golden Rule. **Love is the foundation** or basis upon which everything rests. The practical application is to treat others as we want to be treated. Could this be because we understand love best on the level of self-love? We love ourselves, and know how we want and need to be treated. When we treat others this way, we actually **need less rules and penalties** in this world. The Law is internalized and is not used as a legal code to punish us. This is deep.

There have been many people who have tried to unpack this. Perhaps this is why it is said that under the New Covenant, the Law is written on the heart, **Hebrews 8:8-12** and **Jeremiah 31:31-37**. This commitment to operate out of this "rule" is absolutely necessary in not becoming like the world.

Look more closely at the rule. Literally, if we were looking at it literally in an *interlinear New Testament* in the Greek, here's what it would say, "**All things therefore, as many so ever as you wish...**" How would we unravel that? Let's look at some of the phrases here.

"How many and how often do you wish to be treated well by others?" Or, we might say, "How much and how often do you wish to be treated well by others?" About 50% of the time? Well; maybe more, but certainly probably not less. At certain times of the day, when the pressure get to you, when you are carefree, just in certain areas of importance to you, or in the little things, too? The orientation is "**as we wish**". This is the question we must answer if we are to capture the essence of this "rule".

How well do I wish to be treated, and how often do I wish to be treated this way? How would this one rule transform the behavior of the world? *A better world certainly begins with me.* If this is truly the ground of all the Law and the prophets, then how important is it to apply it?

Well, time does not permit to review "the Law and the prophets" statement about what that means along with also, **the third division**, the Psalms on the Old Testament which includes history and poetry. But if we were to look at the teachings there in light of this rule, we would find the *ethic* there. So, if you read the Law and the prophets, the Old Testament, you will find the *ethic* of the Golden Rule embedded within it! This is not unique to Jesus. He is just validating it by including it in His sermon.

An easy way to see this is in the treatment of the widows and the orphans and the aliens particularly as it talks about them in the Old Testament. *They are vulnerable and easily taken advantage of.* It would be easy to mistreat or neglect them, but is that what we would want if we were in their shoes? How would we want to be treated is we were a widow or if we were an orphan or an alien ... *to leave the edges of the field un-harvested or not?*

*Which one would we want?* Should we heal on the Sabbath day as Jesus did? Remember what Jesus said in **Matthew 9:13**, "Go and learn what this means. 'I desire mercy, rather than sacrifice,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

You know, **even then He is hinting at the Golden Rule.** What would *you* want if you were sick on the Sabbath Day? Would you want to be healed? Would you want mercy? This rule deserves to be tried in earnest to see what happens. I bet some would receive it and benefit and others will take advantage of our efforts to treat them as we want to be treated.

I recognize that I probably didn't give all of that section as much attention as it probably deserves, but I want to move into the next section here. We're still in Section 54 but it's

#8 in A. T. Roberson's outline. This brings us into the conclusion of the Sermon, but don't get excited, as the conclusion is pretty long.

I want to give attention to just a little bit of the conclusion. We'll talk about the **narrow** and the **wide** gates, so I want to read **Matthew 7:13-14**:

### **Matthew 7:13-14**

<sup>13</sup> "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. <sup>14</sup> For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Let's move into this section a little bit ... the **narrow** and the **wide** gate. Jesus often describes our choices as "either / or", or "black and white". Here is the "**narrow**" gate; here is the "**wide**" gate. Narrow is the word "stenos" (στενος); stenosis. **Luke 13:24** uses this word when he says, "Strive when you try to enter through the "**narrow**" door, for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."

A similar word, "stenochoria" (στενοχωρία) is found in **Romans 2:9** and is translated as "**distress**". It's the "narrow place". Stenosis of the spine is the "**narrowing**" of the spine. **Romans 8:35** is also "**distress**". **2 Corinthians 6:4** Paul commended himself in "**distresses**", in the "**narrow**" places of life. **2 Corinthians 12:10** Paul learned to be content with "**distresses**", in the "**narrow**" points of life because it was an opportunity to learn to lean on Christ and His strength. Another word, "stenochoreo" (στενοχωρεω) is used in

**2 Corinthians 4:8**, "We are afflicted in every way, but not "**crushed**", perplexed but not despairing". Then in **2 Corinthians 6:12**, "you are not "**restrained**" by us but we are "**restrained**" in your own affections." We are "**narrowed in**" to your affections, although he says you're not "**narrowed in**"; you are too broad with your affections, but we are narrowed into having affections for you.

All of these are examples of various contexts of a "**narrowing**" or a "**tight place**". Jesus speaks of a "**narrow**" gate or a "**narrow**" way. The word "**gate**" is "pule" (πυλη) used by Jesus in **Matthew 16:18** to refer to the "**gates**" of Hell or Hades which will not prevail against His church. It is used in **Hebrews 13:12**, Jesus suffered outside the "**gate**" of Jerusalem. I doubt too much should be made of the word "**gate**"; merely the obvious. "**Gates**" are passageways to a road, a room or a space. These are attached to a fence which obstructs access into a place. The "**gate**" is the only legitimate access. See John 10 about entering into the sheep pen by the "**gate**" or by the "**door**". But some "**gates**" are very "**narrow**" and difficult to get through.

Remember Jesus spoke of the difficulty of a rich man getting into the Kingdom of Heaven; like a camel passing through the eye of a needle. *Now that's a narrow passage!* We pick our **gates**. The other one is wider and easy to transverse. The word for "wide place" is the Greek word "plateia" (πλατεια) similar to plateau, a "wide place", perhaps

as compared to a “narrow mountain pass”. There is a broad plain that is easier to pass through, but may not be the best route to your destination. The mountain pass, though hard, may be the better choice to getting to your destination. That may be what Jesus has in mind, at least to some extent. In this is the broad plain, like the plain of Megiddo was a place of battle. So, some of the places that might be the more direct route to a particular area might also be the narrow passes through the mountains.

The whole idea of being made **narrow** is “to press hard upon” something; like on grapes ... a compressed way, a narrow way, a straightened way, a contracted way. In **Mark 3:9** the crowd was “crowding” Him or pressing in on Him. In **2 Corinthians 1:6**, we are afflicted for other’s comfort and salvation. In other words, we are pressed in, in order for other people to have more comfort. So, I will take a limited space so that you can have a broader space. **2 Corinthians 4:8** says, “... but not crushed”; or we are not constricted to the point of being crushed. In **2 Corinthians 7:5** “afflicted on every side; conflicts without and fears within” all have this idea of the **narrowing** or the **constricting**. Paul warns these new converts that they would suffer affliction. In **2 Thessalonians 1:6-7** affliction repaid is repaid with affliction. **1 Timothy 5:10** speaks of the widow who has assisted those who are in **distress** or those who are in **narrow ways**. The faithful of **Hebrews 11:37** were among other things, “**afflicted**”. That’s our word ... the **narrow way**.

Life is made “narrow”. We get “hemmed in” with *responsibilities*. We have *concerns* and *cares* and *obligations* and *fears* and *dangers* and *conflicts* and *difficulties* and *stuff* that tends to crush us into a very **narrow** place. Many will not accept this narrow place. They want to keep their ‘options open’. They want freedom to choose their own way. They want to be flexible because *obligations restrict life*. “Let’s not get too **narrow** in our *beliefs*, and our *commitments*! Let’s not allow others to impose too much on us! Have an escape plan! Resist distress caused by commitments to God and others! Life is made narrow by God who calls us into situations that compress us” and ironically, *free us to be who we really are ... conformed to the image of Jesus!*

This is one of Jesus’ ironies. We are *compressed* so that we can *expand*! We are *contained* so that we can experience *freedom*! The wide gate broad and leads to destruction. “Wide” is as in a street, and again it is akin to the word *platus*. Do we get the words “duck-billed platypus” from this ... because I suppose the bill is broad? So you see where we get a lot of these words.

In **Matthew 6:5**, hypocrites love to stand and pray in the *street*. They love to pray in the *wide way* in order to be seen, as opposed to Jesus in **Matthew 12:19**, “His voice will not be heard in the *wide way* or in the *street*; although in **Luke 13:26** it does say that Jesus taught in their streets.

Now this is where the master sets his slaves to find people to fill the house. ‘Go at once into the *streets*, (into the wide areas) and find people to come into my house.’ In **Acts**

**5:15** the sick were carried into the *streets* to be healed by Peter. We should not make too much of these uses of the word.

I'd like to use **2 Corinthians 6:11, 13** where Paul instructs us to *open wide our hearts*. This makes an interesting picture. Instead of walking the "broad" path to destruction, we "open our hearts wide" to receive and give the love and affection that we were designed to give.

Now the word "**destruction**" which is at the end of the wide way is "apoleia" (απολεία) which means "ruin" or "loss", it means "to die", it means "perdition", something that's wasted, to destroy fully, or exclusion from the eternal Kingdom. **Matthew 26:8** uses the word for the waste; the perfume that was poured on Jesus' feet. You know it was destroyed.

In **John 17:12** Judas is called 'the son of perdition' ... he's the 'son of destruction'. In **Romans 9:22**, the vessels of wrath are 'prepared for destruction'. In **Philippians 1:28** Paul tells them not to be alarmed by their opponents, the lack of alarm will be the sign of their coming 'destruction'. Why fear what is being destroyed and can't hurt us? And then in **Philippians 3:19** it says, 'their end is destruction'. In **2 Thessalonians 2:3** the man of lawlessness is called 'the son of destruction' like Judas was 'the son of perdition'. Paul warns us in **1 Timothy 6:9** 'but those who want to get rich fall into a trap or temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunged them into 'ruin' and 'destruction'. Then in **Hebrews 10:39** it says, 'we do not shrink back to destruction; we are those who have faith to the persevering of our souls.' In **2 Peter 2:1** false prophets bring 'destruction' on themselves. **2 Peter 2:3** it says, 'their destruction has not been sleeping'. The word is found in **2 Peter 3:7** the world is being preserved or reserved for fire kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men. It is used in verse **2 Peter 3:16** where men distort scriptures to their own destruction. Then in **Revelation 17:8** the beast is going to destruction. You find the same word in verse 11.

The opposite of "**destruction**" is "**life**". So, at the end of the narrow gate is "**life**". This is Zoe (ζοε), a very common word for "**life**". In **Matthew 18:8-9** Jesus speaks of cutting off limbs and plucking out eyes. It's better to enter "**life**" maimed, than for the entire body to be thrown into eternal fire. In **Matthew 19:16-17** the rich young ruler is asking 'how to have eternal '**life**' ... that's Zoe. To enter '**life**', he says, "*keep the commandments*". In **Matthew 19:29**, the one leaving property and family for His name's sake will receive many times as much and will inherit "eternal life". In **Matthew 25:46** 'There are ones who will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal **life**'. In **Luke 12:15**, '**life**' does not consist in the abundance of possessions. The gospel of John has at least thirty-two references to '**life**'... the New Testament primer on what '**life**' really is.

I'll just give you an overview of this:

- Jesus is the source of **life**

- Belief in Jesus is essential to having **life**
- Disobedience causes us to miss **life**
- Spiritual water or the Holy Spirit becomes a spring of eternal **life** in us
- The worker reaps fruit of eternal **life**
- There will be a resurrection of **life**
- The life of Jesus becomes **life** in us
- The Spirit, through words, gives us **life**
- To love **life** is to lose it, and to lose it is to save it
- The definition of **life** is to know the Father and know the Son

The narrow way opens up for us a whole world of meaning about true *life*. The choice becomes clearly contrasted. Few find *life*. That's a sad statement.

Do we really know what and how to look for it? The previous list sure is a good start to understanding *life*. We go back into the book of John and study *life*. Just in that book is a good place to start.

In my Jeremiah Class, back in 2012, there was a statement that captured my attention.

God says to Jeremiah in **Jeremiah 15:19**,

“If you return then I will restore you.

Before me, you will stand.

And if you extract the precious from the worthless,  
you will become my spokesman.

They, for their part, may turn to you,

but as for you, you must not turn to them.” New American Standard Bible.

The NIV says:

“If you repent, I will restore you

that you may serve me;

if you utter worthy, not worthless, words,

you will be my spokesman.

Let this people turn to you,

but you must not turn to them.

The New American Standard Bible was more literal, certainly. These people were engaged in much *worthless chatter*, and to find the truly worthy words among the chatter would set Jeremiah apart from the people. But to do this, Jeremiah would have to “pan for gold”. It sounds a little bit like our day. There are a lot of words being spoken, but if we're going to find any *true words to keep*, we're going to have to pan for those words like gold.

**Life is like this.** So much is meaningless and vanity as Solomon wrote in **Ecclesiastes 1:2**. Searching for life that is truly life often gets sidetracked into exciting yet ultimately worthless pursuits. Jesus recognized that most would just not ‘get it’. Life would first

and foremost be found **in Him** and He alone could give meaning and purpose to our other pursuits in life.

The Author, “M. Scott Peck” made an attempt to explain this in “The Road Less Traveled”. But life is not first, a *lifestyle*, it is a **Person**. It is a life that is on the moral high ground or filled with “love” or with “non-violence” or with “world peace” or “justice” or some other principle; or even “those reflecting the heart and character of God” without true belief in **Jesus**, are hollow shells; noble and helpful in this life but empty of the **real power** and connection, because those who do these things are not knowing **Jesus** and the **Father** who is the primary pursuit of our lives. **He is life. He is the formula for life. He alone** can infuse life into us in mysterious ways. **Jesus** must be first. He is not ‘garnish’ on the plate. **He** is the ground of life.

The gate is so narrow to find Him. Who will attempt to squeeze through the gate? I just noticed that Jesus depicts the gate as being wide and small and the way on the other side as being broad and narrow. Why do so few find the small and the narrow? Is it that they do not **find** it; or merely do not **recognize** it and **choose** it? Some are **blind** and simply cannot **see** the gate. Others **see** it, but **do not think it is a valid path**. They think it’s a dead end and they think it is unfulfilling, but it is, in fact, **the path that leads to life**.

Thank you again for joining us today. You can find all of our materials on our website – <https://www.centalsarasota.org/>. I hope you will go there and avail yourself to other studies and sermons we have done and archived there. Thank you for joining us and God bless.