

Mind of Christ - Lesson 117

July 30, 2021

Well, thank you for joining us for another edition of The Mind of Christ. We are making our way through the gospels and the story of Jesus so we can understand His mind better. We are looking at things He did and things He said so that we can into the inner workings of His mind. We're transitioning into a brand new section of A. T. Robertson's "A Harmony of the Gospels". In general, he calls this section, "The Special Training of the Twelve in Districts Around Galilee". Specifically, we're in Section 72 in this sequence. This is where Jesus is going to pull His disciples *away to a lonely place* so that they can have some time together, but He's interrupted by a large crowd which results in what we call "*the feeding of the five thousand*."

This is a particularly long section and so I am going to take it in some 'bites' so that we don't overtax ourselves in trying to cover the material. Let me give you the *texts* that are involved in this particular section even though we won't get through all this material. In Matthew it is **Matthew 14:13-21**, in Mark it is **Mark 6:30-44**, in Luke it is **Luke 9:10-17**, and in John it is **John 6:1-14**. We may get through half of that today; we'll see how far we go. Let me read from (at least part) of Mark and John in order to "get some flavor" for this section.

Mark 6:30-44

³⁰ The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while." (For there were many *people* coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) ³² They went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves.

³³ *The people* saw them going and many recognized *them* and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things. ³⁵ When it was already quite late, His disciples came to Him and said, "This place is desolate and it is already quite late; ³⁶ send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." ³⁷ But He answered them, "You give them *something* to eat!" And they said to Him, "Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them something to eat?"

John 6:1-13

¹ After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). ² A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. ³ Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples.

⁴ Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near. ⁵ Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?" ⁶ This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.

Let's dive into the section and see how much we can cover. This is a very large section; we'll be here for a while; not today but over the course of the next few weeks.

All four gospels are included; I've given you the texts already. The first thing that hits me is Jesus 'going away' after the death of John. Remember, that's what we have been talking about and so this is Jesus' going away. But, maybe that's not really as accurate as it seems because what we read in the previous section was actually a "retelling" of something that had previously happened. So, even though Jesus is going away into a lonely place came after the "story", it was the "retelling" of the story; it was not the actual event of John's death. So, we have to be careful about making sure we understand the conclusions that we're drawing about this.

It's so important to keep the sequence straight. The "coming away" was at the conclusion of the "limited commission" and all that happened while they were gone.

Now remember, Jesus had sent them away on the "limited commission" as found in Matthew 10. The Apostles were coming back to Him and they were reporting different things that were going on. I want to specifically look at 'the training of the twelve' beyond this point ... what and how and when and where it happened in Jesus' school.

One of the side points I would make to you here is that even though Jesus taught for three years, His most intense training of the twelve, the Apostles, occurred in the last year of His life. In fact, He didn't even appoint them as Apostles until well into His ministry! So, the training of the twelve, the most intense training of these men, came in the last year of Jesus' life.

This section begins with Jesus needing to be alone with His disciples, though it says "by Himself". Matthew says, "Now when Jesus heard about John, (meaning the death of John) He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself; and when the people heard of this, they followed Him on foot from the cities. This was the first physical casualty of the year of "the war against sin" started by Jesus. The seriousness of confronting sin could not be more vivid than in the death of "the Baptist". A head on a platter is a steep price for telling someone to repent in view of the Kingdom being at hand. And though Matthew says, "by Himself" in **Matthew 14:13**, in 14 and 15 the disciples are there. **Mark 6:30** says, "The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught." **Luke 9:10** says, "When the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done." In **John 6: 1** says, "After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee." **Luke 9:10** continues, "Taking them (the Apostles) with Him, He withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida." Of course none of this means that Jesus could not have had some "alone time" during this period.

Jesus traveled across the lake from south to north since Bethsaida was on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. John says Jesus went up into a mountain. There is certainly plenty of opportunity for this in this region. There would have been ample places He could have gone up into the hills or the mountain.

There seems to be two things going on as Jesus "retreats" with His apostles. First, is His need to be alone and process John's death or other events that were going on. Can we begin to understand how this affected Jesus?

Jesus held John in high esteem and it's the work of Jesus and His Father that contributed to John's death. Jesus could have prevented John from being executed. ***Did the image of John being tied to a stump with his hands bound behind him and with the executioner's sword raised high burn into His mind***, and did this serve as a precursor for His own execution in a much slower and more painful manner?

Mark 6:30 says that the "**Apostles reported all they did and taught**". Remember, Jesus had sent them out on the limited commission. One strategy that Jesus used in the training of the twelve was "retreat". The occasion of this "retreat" (**Mark 6:31**) was, for there were many people coming and going and they did not even have time to eat.

The coming and the going of the people with their needs all pressing, all that must be solved now, was most complicated. How was Jesus able to walk away from life, even for a short period? Even as I am writing this, I am also filling out my "to-do" list. If we break down Jesus' words, one sentence we see is the elements of a 'retreat'. What is a 'retreat'? What do we learn about a 'retreat' from the words that we find here?

First of all, to be on retreat means to "**come away**". Retreat demands that we disengage from life as it is. There has to be a break. Notice, we call it a break 'from normal responsibilities'. "Coming away" is **active** and **moves in a direction**. It is a **deliberate** and **intentional** action.

So, the first thing about a retreat means "to come away". Secondly, it means to "come away by yourselves". Now this is plural in this case but notice in **Matthew 14:13** it says, "**Now when Jesus heard about John, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself; and when the people heard of this, they followed Him on foot from the cities.**" In **Luke 9:10**, "**Taking them with Him, He withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida.**" Retreat can be, and is effective, with others who are in retreat "by Himself". He did both. I wonder if Jesus set an agenda for His retreat ... up at 5:00, quiet time, breakfast at 6:00, group time at 7:00 For some reason, I can't see Him being so formal, though all these activities no doubt were part of His retreat. Well, I would think they would be part of His retreat.

Why "by yourself" or "by yourselves" or "by Himself". Why would you do that? Well, in a retreat **you need time to think** and **time to hear** and **time to process** and **time to purge out** the "den of life" so that the voice of God can penetrate. It is **time to reconnect with God** and others. It may be a time to cry since life does not afford that opportunity very much. Situations and people bring stress. We need time to de-stress from our distress! By oneself, it allows us to turn off other voices so we can hear two voices; ours and God's.

The third aspect of retreat is 'to a lonely place'. The place is important. What makes a place "lonely"? **It allows you to control being alone** without unnecessary distractions. It is easier today than ever to have contact with someone. There are a lot of options: texting, phone, email, tweets, chats, Skype and Facebook. This access is global. This morning I had an instant message from Kenya, a phone call from an assistant chief, an email from a battalion chief, text reminders and face to face all before 8:30 A. M. But I also, at 9:06, am sitting in a house alone, but only a click or a touch away from many folks; so am I really in a 'lonely place'?

For Jesus it was not so quiet but complicated. He needed to find a place “off the beaten trail” where access was difficult though not impossible. People would have to work a lot harder to find Him.

A lonely place may be rustic or modern, natural or unnatural. It might involve shutting off the phone and putting an “Out of Office” reply on your email. When I did my Sabbatical a few years ago, I did not know how to plan one, and I’m not sure I got the most out of it. I may have had too much alone time by myself, but ‘place’ is important. I love Myakka but hardly go. I wish I had a hiking partner to share it with.

Another aspect of ‘retreat’ is rest. **Resting** is important. Not just “sleeping” but a break from responsibilities and stress. “Rest” is a New Testament theme. In **Matthew 11:28-30** Jesus says ‘come to Me, and be yoked with me, and I will give you rest for your souls’. The word is #5590 for your “psuche” (ψυχη). Also see **Matthew 10:39**. (He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.) Rest is needed, of course, for life. We spend so much effort and time trying to save or hold onto our physical lives through work, and stress responses, we wear down physically ... emotionally. Well, more for the ‘rest for the soul’ at another time.

Regarding rest, consider that there are so many different places where rest is talked about. Of course, the **Matthew 11:28-29** context is knowing and revealing the Father and the Son. That depends on ‘coming’ or ‘taking a yoke’ and ‘learning’ and ‘finding’ the rest. Rest is a gift. It is a gift, but if we’re going to know God and know Christ, then we’re going to have to have some time to spend in that endeavor.

In **Matthew 12:43** the unclean spirit is in ‘waterless places’ seeking rest but does not find it. In **Romans 15:32** the context here is persecution and Paul is trying to find refreshing rest in the company of someone else. In **2 Corinthians 2:13** speaks about not finding Titus; Paul had no rest in his spirit because he wanted to see his brother in Christ. In **Hebrews 3:11** God makes an oath that they shall never enter His rest. Well, due to hardness of heart, provoking God, going astray in their hearts, not knowing His ways, due to disobedience and unbelief, the word was not **united with faith**. This whole idea of **rest** in Hebrews 3 and 4 was tied to God’s resting on the seventh day. The crossing into Canaan was not the “**rest**” that God ultimately had promised His people but it was only a ‘foreshadowing’ of that **rest**. The “**rest**” is a resting from work in this text, and it says that we are to give diligence to enter that rest. Any “**rest**” here is temporary and anticipates the final resting place of the soul.

Is soul, in **Matthew 11:29** “psuche”? Yes, it is **rest** for the life force within us which is restless, and ***is the link between body and spirit***. **Spirit must become dominant so that the soul will calm down and be content.**

In **2 Corinthians 2:13**, Paul is seeking “**rest**” in his spirit. I am thinking that the key to “rest” is found in the domination of Spirit over soul, and that soul is connected with flesh, which is also connected with the body. And since the body is animated and made alive by the soul, holding onto the soul becomes the focal point of life. The soul is made to feel more alive through the gratification of the flesh which in turn causes the soul to lust for more and more to feel even more alive! Give it a sense of security and a comfort that life is okay.

This is seeking “homeostasis” through the flesh which will never work since it is in our spirit that we must be “okay”.

And again, I hope you followed that because this is about the deepest thing I’m going to talk about today because it is so important that when we find rest for our souls, the way we do that is to allow the “spirit within us” to become dominate over the soul! So much of life we’re living in is in the ‘soul’ part of life ... of where we’re just trying to make it through things. So, we need a time where we are “resting”, we’re away from the demands of life so that the spirit can come *to the forefront* and we can focus on that aspect of our lives.

Based on the previous Scriptures it seems that “rest” involves these different things:

1. Being known and knowing

In **Matthew 11:25-30** The theme is that Jesus and the Father know one another, and that this is an exclusive club until the Son begins revealing the Father to others; those who are seeking “rest” for their souls ... the weary and the heavy laden. The process of finding “rest” involves being yoked to Jesus as a learner or a disciple or a student.

This yoke or partnership is *light* because Jesus is gentle and humble in heart. As we are fully engaged in the process of knowing Jesus and the Father, which is the essence of eternal life, something quiets in our souls. Paul calls it “contentment” in Philippians 4 and Jesus calls it joy in John 17.

The alternative to “knowing Jesus and the Father” is ‘self-knowledge’ and ‘worldly knowledge’ which feeds the flesh and in turn, keeps the soul in drama and turmoil. There is a competition between what your soul desires and craves and what it actually needs. Somehow, all this is made real in our bodies which feed on food, sex and things excessively.

In **Luke 12:15-16** Jesus warns about greed in every form. “Then He said to them, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.” ¹⁶ And He told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man was very productive.” Your life does not consist in getting more and more and more. I did work on this phrase but I can’t remember the Greek word here. It seems like it was “hold together”. Possessions do not hold life together.

2. “Rest” is a gift. That’s another aspect of learning ‘how to’ rest. It can’t be earned and a life that tries to secure rest as a ‘right’ or a ‘payoff’ doesn’t work. Jesus secures our “rest” with His work. Jesus makes sure if we seek for rest, it is there to be found. Jesus shows us through knowing Him where it is and then calls us to come follow Him. “Rest” is not a wage to be paid like a ‘day off for service’. “Rest” is not something we can self-produce, but it is merely to be received like Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus. While Martha rushes around, Mary chooses the “better part”.

3. Another aspect of this retreat or “rest” is *we have to do it for a while*. Retreat is always for “a while”, it’s not forever. There is a duration to it. It’s like 1 Corinthians 7; the temporary mutually agreed upon separation between a husband and a wife for the purpose of prayer and fasting. Otherwise separation becomes permanent and harmful and a way of disengaging from the world.

Jesus was a doctor who needed to be with people. He was the Shepherd of the sheep; He was the Teacher who had students to train. He needed rest but He didn't need to be away too long. It reminds me of the monastery in Haiti devoted to seclusion, while down below in the valley the Haitians are living in poverty and hunger. Perpetual retreat is not healthy. We must be *in the battle* and advance. It is right to keep this in perspective. Jesus' retreats were often interrupted by the press of people who would find Him. I wonder if He ever really got sufficient rest out of this retreat.

This is the anatomy of a retreat in Jesus' own words; a primer on getting away productively. I have a bed and breakfast coming up. I think it will pitch it to Brenda as a retreat and try to apply these principles.

Mark says the occasion for the retreat was the coming and going of many people interrupting even Jesus' eating. The coming and going of people leave us worn and used. We see it visibly in our lives or in our homes. We see the crumbs, we see the spills, the broken things, those things that are 'out of place' ... perhaps missing things. Supplies are used up, trash, and sinks full of dishes.

But people also bring spiritual and emotional messes to us and cause us to be worn on the inside. They tell stories, they share needs, and they have criticism. There are anticipations of them leaving. There's praise, there's questions, arguments and stresses and all the like that people bring into our lives, and each of these have some impact on us. All of these are taking and producing the need for retreat. There are some good insights here, I believe.

Matthew says that He made His departure by boat and the crowds followed on foot. It doesn't seem to allow for retreat. Mark says they went by boat to a lonely place but the crowds got there ahead of them. As He went ashore He felt compassion for all of these shepherd-less sheep. Luke says that the crowd caught up with Him in Bethsaida and that He welcomed them.

John indicates that Jesus went up into a mountain and sat with His disciples and then saw the crowds coming to Him. However, perhaps John is really saying that after a day of healing, and as He sat on a hillside with His Apostles, the crowds approached and this was the opportunity for the feeding. I don't think Jesus at this point got to have His retreat. The people were too persistent. So, here is a Man in desperate need of rest being pressured by people who will walk when He starts preaching. They came for the healing and the meal, but not for discipleship.

Matthew says that when He came ashore he felt compassion for the crowds and He healed their sick. This seems to have lasted most of the day because the feeding took place in the late afternoon.

Mark says it was a great multitude and He felt compassion because "they were like sheep without a shepherd", and He taught them many things. Again, it was getting quite late when the feeding began. What are sheep without a shepherd like ... vulnerable, unsupervised, leaderless, subject to predators, unable to find adequate provision? As a good shepherd, Jesus' heart is revealed here. The crowds needed Jesus in ways that they did not understand.

The crowds needed physical healing and He gave it. They needed bread and He provided it. They needed to hear about the Kingdom and He taught them. They needed to know Him and He revealed Himself to them. They needed more than they thought they did, but many did not follow because they did not recognize the Shepherd's voice.

Matthew describes the place as desolate, and so does Mark, and Luke who adds that they need to be sent to surrounding villages to find lodging or something to eat. This indicates that though Jesus came ashore at Bethsaida, He headed off on His retreat into the surrounding hills, but the crowds followed Him. His retreat is interrupted and He spends time preaching and healing.

John mentions that the Passover was at hand. Robertson notes that this is likely the Passover before the crucifixion. ***We are entering, actually the last year of Jesus' life.*** He also notes four separate withdrawals, and this is in Sections 72, 78, 79 and 81. So we're just in the first one in Section 72. There are at least three more "withdrawals" for retreat during this coming year.

It seems Jesus spent some special 'alone times' with His Apostles during this last year of His life. This is important to show that ***in Jesus' thinking, what was important to do during this precious and limited time on earth.*** Training and retreat go hand in hand it seems. I have not valued this enough to implement it often enough in my ministry.

It was nearing evening, late in the day, and the time had already passed; simply meaning "It's getting late".

Jesus decided to use this opportunity to teach His disciples a lesson. Specifically He targeted Philip. And we're going to stop right here because now we're going to enter into the feeding of the five thousand and we've covered enough material for today.

Thank you for joining us.

I hope that you will check out our website at <https://www.centraisarasota.org/> and you'll find other materials there on "The Mind of Christ" as well as other recordings that we've made. God bless you. Take care. Until next time