

TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
IHOP BIBLE STUDY  
September 2003

Topic: John 6:1 to 6:24 "Affirmations by the disciples and the people"

I. Read through the assignment in one reading.

II. Miracles always are a struggle. As in previous studies in John's gospel, the struggle is between the supernatural and the irrational. From one point of view these two stories are supernatural occasions: miracles do occur; something takes place that is difficult to rationally understand; something happens that is beyond scientific analysis.

When we use this point of view we are thinking in terms of the supernatural, and we are using "head trip analysis." We are rationalizing. How else can you explain the division of a small amount of food to feed five thousand? How else can you explain a man defying gravity to walk on water?

This approach makes it difficult to know what the Good News is.

However, there is another way to explain these things that does not make a lie of God's gift of scientific understanding. Also, when this approach is used the Good News is experienced as GOOD NEWS. This approach uses "Gut trip analysis."

"Gut trip analysis" understands these episodes as irrational events and not as supernatural events. Irrational things are experienced all the time: Why do bad things happen to good people? Or, why do good things happen to bad people? There is no answer. Things just happen! They are THE WAY LIFE IS (TWLI).

How can we push through the irrational to find the Good News?

First, go back to review John 3: 6: "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." It is helpful to remember that Jesus is the open door to the world of the spirit, and the exit door to this world.

Any attempt to understand these stories from the world's point of view is doomed to failure. It gives a lie to the scientific worldview. Now, go with Jesus through the open door of the spirit! Ah-h-h-, a breath of fresh wind blows through these events.

Note that John writes of these events not to prove Jesus is miraculous in terms of the world. John writes of these events to prove that Jesus is the Christ in terms of the spirit. It is irrelevant how much bread there was to feed the people: they are not being feed the bread of this world, but rather the bread of the spirit! It is irrelevant to argue how Jesus defies gravity to walk on the water because the experience has nothing to do with gravity which is a quality of this world. Rather, Jesus walking on the water illuminates a truth about living in the spirit where everything is possible.

Our situation is never our problem. Our problem is in the relationship we take to the situation. For instance:

1) We are given a job to do only to discover insufficient resources to get the job done. What to do? The reality of this world is to fall into despair. However, the reality of the spirit world is to rejoice that now we can invent new ways of solving the problem, or even rejoice that the problem can't be solved!!

Do you hear the Good News here? Christians are those who are the hopeful in the midst of hopelessness. **NOTHING CAN DEFEAT US THAT IS OF THIS WORLD! WE DO NOT DEPEND ON THIS WORLD.**

III. Now, in light of this material, take your study time to answer the following questions. Please use your "gut" and not your "head" to do your work:

1. Tell about a time when you were asked to do the impossible.

What made it impossible? What did you do?

2. Now, approach this from Jesus' point of view? What does it mean to rejoice in your defeat?

As you struggle to secure the answer to this question, remember that through your struggle you are opening the door to the world of the spirit. You are beginning to feed the 5,000. You are beginning to walk on water.

3. How is this Good News?

Journey well! (Happy trails) Pastor Bill