

FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE TIME TO DO "THE STUDY PAGE," it is recommended that you take 5 minutes to read this "COMMENTARY" page. This observation came out of a recent conversation with one of our subscribers. In this way, you'll get the benefit of this study without having to study! Enjoy the following. WS.

WS: My comments are written in Comic Sans MS 10t.

WS: LET'S REVIEW — Holding phrases for the four Gospels. Memorize the following four statements! These hold the key to understanding the four Gospels.

MATTHEW: Jesus' Teaching Manual for living the deeply satisfied life;

MARK: Our mission is to awaken those spiritually asleep;

LUKE: Jesus and Jesus' message is the same;

JOHN: The meaning of our baptismal experience.

TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IHOP BIBLE STUDY

14 Topic: "Hard Sayings" -- A study page

NOTE: According to the Luke Chart, there are 8 hard saying in this theme. My plan is to take them in 4 sessions, and this is session # 2. Today's scriptures are:

Luke 12: 54 – 59: "Interpreting The Times; Luke 14: 25 – 27: "The Cost of Being A Disciple."

The purpose of the Gospel of Luke is told in the opening verses in the first chapter, ". . . it seemed good to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught." It is this "orderly account" that provides the organization of our study material. **This is lesson number 14 of 29.** (This is a new change in the total number of sessions from 31 to 29.)

New observation: Bible Gateway titles the material Luke 9: 51 to 19: 44 as **"The Journey to Jerusalem."** Bible Gateway writes, "Many of the events and teaching described in this section, especially parabolic material, are unique to Luke. In fact, almost a third of the material in this part of Luke is unique. Here teaching is emphasized over miracle, in contrast to previous section where they were fairly evenly distributed. The section's first few chapters reveal the deepening rift between Jesus and the Jewish leadership. In addition, this section indicates how Jesus instructed the disciples on spiritual matters. His teaching made it clear that their approach to spiritual would differ from that of the Jesus leadership."

WS: There are two brief observations to make. First, it is a reach to name this material "The Journey to Jerusalem." This is an artificial title. Our thematic treatment of this section is more appropriate to Luke and to the material itself. Second, this traditional understanding is a Head Trip Analysis. Such an approach seeks to objectify what Luke intended. Instead, when a Gut Trip Analysis approach is made by observing the experiences and relationships, the material is far more clear and relevant.

Read the assigned THEME at one time.

NOTE: In each of the eight scriptures in these "Hard Sayings" the underlying theme is "Judgment." For many Christians, the judgment of God is not easily understood, if at all. Consequently, it is first helpful not to make the topic something to study. Instead, think of it in terms of relationships.

WS: "To study" Judgment means to consider the act of judgment as an object: "God does something to us!"

To consider Judgment as "A Relationship" is to experience judgment: "Our grief illuminates God's grief for us." God is grieves when we are neither humane nor human!

Second, it is helpful to apply the axiom "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself." An illustration is helpful. When we do things that please others as well as ourselves, the reward for our deeds is the experience of deep satisfaction and a sense of peace. Conversely, when we do things that hurt, and drive others away, the reward for our deed is the experience of people are hurt and are separated from us.

WS: Archbishop Desmond Tutu, writing in his book, *God Has A Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time,* explains the African concept of *ubuntu*. "It is the essence of being human. It speaks of the fact that my humanity is caught up and inextricably bound up in your. I am a human because I belong. It speaks about wholeness; it speaks about compassion. A person with *ubuntu* is welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, willing to share. . . . **They know that they are diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are. The quality of *ubuntu* gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them.**" (*Bold emphasis is mine. pp. 25, 26.*)

This is what I mean that the "reward for the deed is found in the deed itself. When we dehumanize others, we are dehumanized as well. As Tutu observes, "You know when *ubuntu* is there, and it is obvious when it is absent. It has to do with what it means to be truly human, to know that you are bound up with others in the bundle of life. . . A person is a person because he *recognizes* others as persons." (p. 26.) What does this say to us about what God as Perfect At-One-Ment desires for our relationship to Muslims, to Gays, and to Iraqi's?

Now apply this principle to the following questions.

I. Luke 12: 54 – 59: "Interpreting The Times"

- 1. What does it mean to interpret "this present time?"** (It may be helpful to compare interpreting our physical experiences to interpreting our spiritual experiences now that Jesus is our teacher. This is a relational method of examining this scripture. Describe your *relationship* to Jesus, and the difference between the two methods is made clear.

WS: The IHOP discussion noted that, for Christians, all decisions are made in light of WWJD. Christians (Little Christs) are those who live THROUGH Jesus. We stand The Cross of Christ before us and between us and literally everything else. Think what this would mean to Ken Lay of ENRON. Think what this means as we go into the voting booth.

2. Vss. 57 – 59:

This section begins with a question, "Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right?" Then, Luke launches into the illustration of being reconciled to your neighbor so as to avoid judgment. Do some research in a commentary or in your Study Bible.

Write a note or two to be shared on line or at the weekly IHOP Bible Study. What do you learn about this story in Luke?

WS: Bible Gateway (<http://bible.gospelcom.net>) provides the following: "Such meteorological expertise is common among the people Jesus addresses. But they cannot tell what breezes are blowing through their lives from Jesus' ministry. Or as Jesus says, *"Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky. How is it you don't know how to interpret this present time?"* The signs of the time are everywhere, and so was spiritual blindness. Not reading this weather (*the sign of Jesus*) correctly is dangerous—more dangerous than missing a hurricane."

The question raised is how is missing the significance of Jesus Christ more dangerous than missing a hurricane warning? This concerns the judgment -- Bible Gateway puts it this way: *The point is our accountability before God. . . Having warned about division and failing to read the sign of the time correctly, he warns of the need to repent. . . His presence forces choices and brings the potential for division. We need to look at the ledger. **Bankruptcy and debtors' prison** will be the results of rejecting God. Only Jesus can pay our debt.*

When "Bankruptcy and debtors' prison" is not taken literally, the metaphor is extended to each individual's personal prison of isolation caused by no longer being humane and consequently no longer human. This is the point Desmond Tutu makes about *ubuntu*. (See above.)

II. Luke 14: 25 –27: "The Cost of Being A Disciple"

1. Vs. 25: What does it mean to "travel with Jesus?" Think of Jesus as "The Little Picture," and God as "The Big Picture." What are Jesus' expectations of us as his disciples?

WS: "Traveling with Jesus." What a lovely metaphor! For me, to travel with Jesus is to raise the question of WWJD. The deeper reflection is that as we ask "What Would Jesus Do?" we are identifying the nature of God's Will. In this way, when we look at Jesus we see a little picture of what God—the Big Picture—is like.

2. What does it mean to make God our priority?

WS: The basic response is "SURRENDER."

3. What is the significance of the "cross" we are required to carry? What does the following mean to you? Our cross is---

WS: My responses are:

- a. A way to die in order to live: to die to living spiritually asleep.
- b. A way to live in order to die: intentionally dying and purposely living.
- c. The experience of surrender.

All right, folks. Talk to me.