

The comments of Gene Mace are in blue. My comments are in Lucida Sans Unicode pt. 12. Having Gene Mace's comments makes this study especially interesting. What is your experience?

**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IHOP BIBLE STUDY**

Topic: Luke 2: 3 to 4: 13 -- "Affirming Jesus' Transparency" (His divinity)

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.

The reflective studies forming the chart of Luke's gospel reveals the overall title of "Affirming The Life, Message, and Demonstration of Jesus' Message." This theme has three major sections: "Affirming The Life of Jesus Christ" (1:1 – 3:33); "Fourteen Themes of Jesus' Message (4: 1 – 21:4); "Affirming the Transparent Jesus" (2: 5 – 24: 50). There are 32 lessons in this series.

The uniqueness of Luke's gospel is discovered in the "Fourteen Themes of Jesus' Message." This material encompasses 58 pericopes. A "pericope" can be associated with the subsections titled in the chapters of most bible translations. Sometimes some translations differ, and some leave this titling out altogether.

For our purposes, this material is grouped into fourteen themes. This work was aided by the chart work previously done. This thematic approach is unique and, as you will discover, it is an interesting endeavor. The study of this thematic material begins in session 8.

- I. **Read the assigned reading at one time.**
- II. **Oh my! Shepherds, Angels, circumcision, and baptism. So much packed into a few paragraphs. Wow! Our first lesson examined Jesus' humanity, and this session we examine Jesus divinity. Remember the old arguments? Is Jesus fully human or fully divine? John's answer is that Jesus is both. Because the word "divinity" is a Head-Trip word, the IHOP method is to us the Gut-Trip term of "Transparency." During this session we are presented with material allowing us to see through the events and activities to the Christ that Jesus embodies.**
- III. **Vss. 2: 8 – 20 – In a way, it is awkward to begin today's study with the shepherds and angels. However, the birth of Jesus is clearly associated with his humanity. What could be more human that a birth story? Consequently, we begin with the shepherds and the angels. What is the opening message the angels sing? How is this message a Gut-Trip? Put this in the context that the angels proclaim this the birth of THE CHRIST.**

Take a moment to reflect on how we understand "Christ" through Gut-Trip Analysis

It seems to me that “Christ” is what Paul Tillich referred to as the “ultimate reality” of life. Exactly! The “ultimate reality” for which we are created is to live in At-One-Ment with self, neighbor and God that is experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment. Jesus embodied this “ultimate reality” and demonstrated At-One-Ment by really living his life and dying his death. An interesting attachment to this is that we, like Jesus, embody our own “ultimate reality,” and reveal that we are, as Luther suggested, Little Christs. This is affirmed as we experience feeling fulfilled in our relationships to self, neighbor and the ultimate reality that is God that that Perfect At-One-Ment.

The message addresses the fear that we all have in life, a fear that prevents our living life in all its fullness as addressed in John 10:10. (“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” NIV.) The message is “do not be afraid” and then is completed with identifying that in such a state of mind there can be peace on earth among “those whom he favors.”

This can be a bit of a bummer if we think of God as favoring a group that becomes “God’s gang” rather than seeing God as finding favor in those who have overcome their fears and, thereby, being enabled to live life to the full. Wonderful and insightful. Exactly!

“God’s Gang,” eh? I’ve been waiting for the opportunity for quote a friend who recently wrote, “If your God seems to like all the people you like and hate all the people you hate, that’s good evidence that you have created your God in your own image! Transcendence, other than magical intervention, is really hard to grasp practically; however, following this line of thought is an awfully good start. Then you must find another way of understanding what it means to believe in God, at all.”

Take another moment to reflect on the word “Savior.” What is our Gut-Trip Analysis of this word?

Savior designates an entity that inspires us to transcend our fears so as to enable our living that life for which we were created.

Absolutely! The only words I’d change are “to transcend.” Transcendence is a Head-Trip Analysis word. The preferred word is “transformation.” This is a Gut-Trip word that can be associated

with the word "fear." Fear is a Gut-Trip word because it is related to The Way Life Is (TWLI). TWLI cannot be changed, but we can be changed from being victims to being victors through our choices.

- IV. vss. 2: 20 – 40 -- Jesus Presented in the Temple
Do some research on the custom of circumcision. What is its religious (transparent) function? What does it reveal about Jesus' divinity?

Here I have some difficulty as I do with many rites. Its historic significance seems to have had some possible significance in terms of perceived physical health value, sacrificial symbolism and/or tribal initiation. **Yes, all three.** The ultimate decision of the early Christian leaders was to the effect that the external rite was not so significant as is the internal commitment/transformation/change. **Absolutely.**

Jesus' divinity is not that he was circumcised but that he caught hold of that the ultimate essence of life involves being freed from the fears that encompass us and this can only come about within the framework of knowing that we are loved and accepted. In this state we are "circumcised" in our hearts. **The only way we "know that we are loved and accepted" is through the experience that affirms we are loved and accepted.** Yes, I can agree that our circumcision is of the heart. The theological principle to apply is to NAME the experience. Consequently, the symbol of actual circumcision is that the "naming" points to covenant, or to that on which we bet our life.

It is interesting to note that we are exploring "the ultimate essence of life." Covenant is the story of our ultimate essence. Because we live and die before symbols, the outward and visible symbol is important because it points us to the inward and "spiritual grace" that I associate with spiritual surrender.

Jesus participation in the revelation of this relationship is his Divinity.

What did Simeon and Anna see and understand?

I have trouble here because I see this writing as a story written after the fact with some fabrication to make a point. The point was that they supposedly saw in this event the fulfillment of some historic predictions of one "anointed" by God to lead the people of Israel to their presumed destiny. **Yes, Luke is Head-Trippy with this point.**

Getting away from my literalistic teaching, the point was that they sensed in this tiny child something that gave them hope and freed them from the fears and despair that they faced in their living.

Ah, the question becomes, how did this resonance take place. My speculation is that Anna and Simeon were people who lived their lives working to attune themselves to the life of the spirit; this is their Gut-Trip Analysis.

- V. vss. 2: 41 - 2: 52 -- The Boy Jesus at the Temple
This is one of the folksy tales about Jesus that is a charmer. Ask yourself what Jesus' parent's saw or heard that so "astounded" them? Jesus' answer is very revealing. Don't be fooled into Head-Trip Analysis—keep it experiential. "Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. " 2: 47 NIV.

I don't quite understand the question here. My response to the event is that the parents were very properly worried because they were not aware of their son and where he was.

An interesting response and spoken like a good parent.

They really did not know who this child was, i.e. for some reason they had not known him at his core. Did they shuck off his interests and speaking as just some sort of precocious child who would eventually grow out of that? If they had really known him, they would have known that he would be where people would take him seriously. O-o-o, I like this understanding of The Temple as a place where people are taken seriously. Nice, isn't it. In fact, it supports the notion that The Church is where God's Will is done. Those "churches" in which God will is not done, they ARE NOT THE CHURCH. From our perspective, doing God's will is to live At-One with neighbor, self and the Ultimate Meaning of Life (At-One-Ment.)

Gene, your perceptions always intrigue me. Perhaps, the reason they "had not known him at his core, is confirmed in each of our own families. Why do we not know in our own children the Christ that is surely there? Is it because we are blind to the reality to the Christ that is within us? I suspect so, and this confirms John Wesley's insight that the human situation is that we are blind to our (inner) spiritual natures.

- VI. vss. 3: 1 – 20 -- John the Baptist Prepares the Way
Speculate on why Luke uses Isaiah 40: 3 – 5? Recall that this is the opening verses to 2nd Isaiah. 1st Isaiah is pre-Exile. This portion is written after the return of the Jews from Persian Exile. What may be the significance of this choice, and what does it say about Jesus' divinity? Be careful, because this is one of those places where Head-Trip Analysis can trap us.

Like any author, nothing is included in the final publication unless it is for a specific purpose. I'm not certain that I've ever seen any professional commentaries speculate on "why" such references were used. Much to do is make about how this reference foreshadows this or that prophecy. This is why I've added the caveat about being careful about Head-Trip Analysis. As foreshadowing, it is an appropriate historical reference.

One of things I find myself brooding about is Jesus preference for Isaiah instead of Jeremiah, both of whom are Post-Exilic people. The Senior Pastor at Colorado Springs First UMC suggests the following:

Jeremiah believed that the Exile took place because The People were not faithful to fulfilling the 10 Commandments. Isaiah believed The People were punished because they were not faithful in fulfilling the mission of taking God's love to all the world. Jesus preferred Isaiah's version.

Consequently, the Gospels always favor Isaiah, which is a good lesson for us as well.

Vss. 3: 21 – 22 – The Baptism of Jesus

Read these two verses carefully. Observe what happens. Can you make a transliteration of verses 21 and 22? Give it try. A transliteration is using your own motional/experiential words to say the same thing.

When everybody, including Jesus, had been baptized and Jesus was praying he had an experience that included a physical sense of God's presence that he understood as a strong affirmation of himself as being pleasing to God.

As people came to Awakening, they came to John to symbolize their death to having been spiritual asleep. Jesus confirmed with experience by being baptized as well. As Awakened Ones, those baptized experienced a deep sense of living At-One with neighbor, self and Perfect At-One-Ment.

Vss. 3: 23 – 38 – The Genealogy of Jesus

Where does Luke start and end his genealogy? How does this differ from Matthew 1? What's going on here?

Luke starts his genealogy with Joseph and ends with God. Matthew starts with Abraham and ends with Joseph. Throughout this section, Luke is trying to identify Jesus as the Son of God rather than emphasizing his ties to Abraham and David. **Good help. Thanks, Gene. This is further confirmation of Jesus' divinity.**

Vss. 4: 1 – 13 -- The Temptation of Jesus

What the devil is Jesus doing in the desert?

I am inclined to consider Jesus' "desert" as turning into himself and struggling with just what he thinks he should do rather than a physical desert, though he may have gone out into a physical desert.

A number of great teachers seem to have found the desert retreat to be a time in which they struggled with their destinies. The real issue is not the physical environment but the internal "desert" of looking at what he saw as his talents and options of what he could do with them.

The questions [for Jesus] I see are: 1) What if I become a magician and thereby prove that I am one to be heard? 2) Should I strive for political power? After all, isn't that the way to have the greatest impact upon the world? or 3) Should I check out God to see if I really have some supernatural powers. It seems to me that Jesus realized that he could sway people and was struggling with the basic internal temptation of whether to build a following of power or speak of the "transparent" truths of life.

The only notation I have to add to this statement concerns the word "supernatural powers." I'm of a mind that Jesus rejected the supernatural in favor of the realizing the Indicative.

I can affirm that the whole of the Bible, New and Old Testaments, lived in a worldview where supernaturalism is the common experience; it is the common metaphor. However, what Jesus discovers about himself is not a supernatural relationship with God. Rather, it is an indicative relationship with God. In grammar, the indicative mode deals with the present tense; the indicative is The Way Life Is.

What Jesus discovered is that he embodies The Christ. This is not supernaturalism, nor is it anything spectacular! Everyone has within themselves The Christ. We are asleep to this truth! Jesus lived, and died, so as to reveal something about all our lives.

Can I have an Amen?

All right, folks. Talk to me!