

My comments are in Lucida Sans Unicode 12 pt. The comments of Gene Mace are in blue. Gene is a retired Psychiatric Chaplain, and his remarks are cast with this background in mind. He brings to us a refreshing Gut-Trip Analysis. Please remember, everyone is invited to add his or her insights. Pastor Bill

**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IHOP BIBLE STUDY**

Topic: Luke 4:14 to 5:11 -- "The First Demo: How Jesus' authority is recognized."

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 is 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.

This is lesson number 3 of 31. In lessons 3, 4, and 5 we experience the way Luke "Demonstrates the Authority of Jesus." In this session, we lift up the ways in which *Jesus' authority is recognized*.

- I. Read the assigned reading at one time.
- II. 4:14 to 4:30 -- Jesus Rejected At Nazareth
It is more accurate to say this pericope reveals Jesus' context for ministry.
 1. First, it is noted that Jesus returns to Galilee and then goes home to Nazareth. In the other three gospels, the act of going home is a metaphor for revealing our "spiritual home." You'll recall the difference between *being on vacation (our natural/human experience)* and *living at home (our spiritual/complete life)*. Apparently, Luke makes a historical statement in reporting this location. What better place to read your Credo ("I Believe.") at the beginning of one's ministry in your hometown?
 2. vss. 17 to 19 -- "The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written. . . " For background, read Isaiah 61: 1, 2.

Using Gut-Trip Analysis, ground the following words:

“anointed” Literally, “to be set aside.” The question to be answered is, to what purpose is the one anointed to be set aside? From the point of view of Gut-Trip Analysis, the purpose is to awaken others.

GM: Anointed says to me that one is gifted. In this case Jesus seems to be saying that he is experiencing a gift that prompts him to see truth of the reality of life as it is (TWLI).

“preach the good news” The “Good News” is that we have a choice to either be victims or to be victors within our given life circumstances: The Way Life Is (TWLI); life victimizes us but we have a choice. Jesus was anointed, set aside, to demonstrate this truth. Yet, even the victimization of death presents us with this choice. Jesus decided to intentionally live his life and to intentionally die his death to demonstrate our freedom in Christ.

GM: This involves clarifying that one is acceptable as is. This is good news for all of us in that we all live with a sense that we are not good enough. The good news calls us out of our despair to the ability to live life to the full.

“proclaim freedom to the captives” The word “freedom” is the important word in this sentence. We humans are captive to The Way Life Is; it is life that victimizes us. Jesus, as the Christ, pronounces the word of freedom: “You are not victims. Choose to live as victors.”

GM: This is the clarification that we do not need to be captive to what Fritz Perls called our “baggage” of the past. We can turn loose of all our inadequacies, failures, errors & such and move on from now.

“recovery of sight to the blind” The “sight” we recover is our spiritual sight. Note: our spiritual sight and our human/natural sight are not two different things. Both of these “sights” coexist together at the same time. What we recover is the ability to use the spiritual sight we have, that is to Awaken spiritually.

GM: So much of the time we lose sight of what we have because we are so preoccupied with the “baggage” of the past. In that framework a

pound of negative outweighs 99 pounds of positive. In recovery of our sight of our gifts and abilities we are able to move into the future.

“release the oppressed” This “oppression” can be associated with our spiritual captivity and/or our spiritual blindness. The point is that when we are unawakened we are oppressed by the lives we have to live.

GM: Release from the oppression that results when we can only look at the past failures.

“proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Do a little research on this term.) This term is associated The Year of Jubilee. According to Leviticus 25:10, every 50th year was to be set aside as a year of rest for the land and for the people. During this year, all debts were canceled, after all everything belonged to God anyway. At the same time, all the slaves were freed. There is some association with the 7th day as a Sabbath day of rest. In this regard, every seven years was a sabbatical year. Apparently, this caused some consternation at the end of the 49th year when the 49th and the 50th years occurred together as two fallow years.

GM: It seems to me that in this Jesus was saying that the kingdom of God is now here. Nobody has to wait for it, the ability to live one's life is here to be accepted now.

3. vss. 4: 24 – 23: Jesus gets a little nasty with the hometown folks. Speculate on what this is all about. A little reading in a commentary might help some. Speculate on why Luke uses this event to establish Jesus’ authority.

It is appreciated that Jesus begins his ministry in his hometown. However, his relationship to them is curious. It may be assumed that Luke is out to demonstrate some fulfillment of ancient prophecy. Also, it is interesting to observe that Jesus quotes a proverb, but this is unrelated to the Book of Proverbs. Luke must be using a colloquial axiom because the Book of Proverbs makes no such reference.

Second, he quotes Jewish history concerning Israel in the time of Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17: 1ff), when the Gentiles came out on top and the Israelites in second place. Is it any wonder that the hometown folks were angry?

GM: I think that here Jesus was challenging those who thought they were the "good" people and Jesus should do some marvelous things to affirm them. Instead, he tells them that even they have failed and need to face the truth of their being, and this involves cessation of their self-elevation in their society.

4. vss. 4: 31 – 37: Jesus Drives Out an Evil Spirit
The key words in this pericope are in verse 4: 32, "They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority." This is immediately followed by an episode with an evil spirit. Speculate on what Luke is telling us in this episode. Be careful because this is a Head-Trip trap. Get clear on what is the experience of evil. Remember, evil always is a lie. What is the lie by which this man is possessed?

When viewed through Head-Trip Analysis, evil becomes an idea to be explored. The common misuse of this term is its association with supernaturalism; in this regard, evil is something beyond our power to control; we are victims of it with no recourse. From this position, Jesus becomes a supernatural controller of events. The life question raised is, if Jesus can control these supernatural occurrences, why didn't Jesus just finish up the job?

The experience of evil is best understood when viewed as Gut-Trip Analysis. In this way, evil always is a LIE that we are victims! When we experience victimization we are confronted with the choice to be "victims" or to be "victors." This choice is presented to us as The Good News.

However, there is another, more serious dimension, to Evil when it is experienced as hopelessness.

As Sartre noted, there are human circumstances in which there is "No Exit." From a human/natural point of view, this is our experience of hopelessness because we are fated to live in a *state of separation of gender, race, birth order, educational background, etc.*

So what is the solution? Traditionally, Christian theology deals with this in the doctrines of the atonement, justification/reconciliation, and righteousness. That is, through a relationship with The Good News (Christ). These doctrines act as bridges to unite us. At-One-Ment bridges separated relationships; Justification reconciles opposing sides; Righteousness results in separation being "made right."

The Bible Gateway Commentary on the web observes,

Here is a case of evil having great angst in the presence of active righteousness. Evil cannot stand up to righteousness when righteousness takes a firm stand. Any victory it may appear to have is fleeting. **While this response is a little Head-Trippy--because it doesn't tell us the experience of the words chosen to explain evil to us—it is on target. Righteousness heals while evil dwells in sickness.**

GM: The lie is that "you are no damn good." I think that much of the church throughout history has held this as a fundamental issue. The lie is that God will love you only if you join God's gang and there are a number of rules that you have to follow to become one of God's gang. Of course, these rules are humankind's inventions. The resultant lie is that they are God's inventions.

5. **vss. 4: 36 – 41: Jesus Heals Many**
The healing of Peter's mother-in-law, and the healing of "all who had various kinds of sickness" can be tied together with vss. 42 – 44 to answer the question, what is the "good news of the kingdom of God?" It may be helpful to begin by reminding yourself of our definition of the "kingdom of God." (Think: the experience of At-One-Ment.).

The miracles were a problem for Jesus. Several times, in the Gospels, Jesus tells those who witnessed these events not to tell anyone. It can be assumed that Jesus was concerned that the message of the miracle would become more important than the messenger.

GM: Sometime ago I was trying to take an auto part to Kansas to have it reproduced. At the airport terminal I was told that I could not carry it on because it held potential as a weapon. I was also told that it could not be insured if it were put in the baggage hold. After a bit of frustrating dialogue I came up with the statement, "There's got to be a way to do this." For me this has been an important dynamic of my life. We do not have to be defeated, "there's got to be a way."

What does this reveal about Jesus' authority?

The Bible Gateway Commentary on the web uses two metaphors defining Jesus' miracles; they are "snapshots" and "audio-visuals" of Jesus' authority. The danger to be avoided is Head-Trip Analysis that associates miracles with the supernatural. It is my contention that these

confrontations with “the demons” are metaphors or similes for the struggles we humans have with hopelessness.

Concerning The Good News--

Certainly, it is confirmed that the worldview of the 1st Century was explained through demonology. However, the basic human problem is not based in the supernatural but in the relationships we choose to make with our human/natural experiences.

Jesus was awake to the power of the Good News that we are not victims, but victors. His life and ministry, death and resurrection are demonstrations of this Good News.

Concerning The Kingdom of God—

As one of our IHOP participants observed, “The Kingdom of God is the Spiritual Oasis.” This is true. As we live in the ambiguity and foibles of life, there are times when we are awakened to the Good News that we are not victims. At moments like these, we experience a peace that passes understanding, or a profound sense of At-One-Ment with all things. This experience is what the scriptures define as living in the presence of God who is Perfect At-One-Ment, or living in the Kingdom of God. Marcus Borg, in his book *The Heart of Christianity*, describes these occasions as “thin places.”

6. **vss. 5: 1 – 11: The Calling of the First Disciples**
Read over this event carefully. Note the following progression of words:
Vss. 5:3b: “sat down and taught the people;” The teaching is what Awakens us to the Good News and The Kingdom of God.
Vss. 5: 9: “astonished at the catch;” The human experience of being “astonished” is a demonstration of our spiritual awakening.
Vss. 5:10b: “Don’t be afraid;” This admonition is the reminder to be accepting and open to this new and profound awareness.

Vss. 5:11: “left everything and followed him.” This is the proof of the pudding—unless we choose to act out of our new sense of Awakening, we are in danger of going back to sleep.

What does this progression tell us about those who recognize the authority of Jesus?

This progression illuminates the process of awakening. Jesus “taught the people” awakening; as his followers were awakened they experienced a profound new sense of being whole people; then, the awakened were encouraged to accept their new situation, and then to begin to live and practice its principles.

The progression illuminated in this passage also is our own progression to enlightenment and its practice.

GM: I think that this says that when we really hear what Jesus had to say, it sounds so real and hopeful that one really cannot challenge the truth that is in it. It is very winsome to us.

All right, folks. Talk to me!