

STUDY SHEET
TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IHOP BIBLE STUDY
Session: May 27, 2003
Gospel of Mark 3:20 to 4:32

I. Read Mark 3:20 TO 4: 32 in one reading.

As you read, recall that we approach our study of Mark by section and not by chapters. The sections are reported in The Gospel Chart of St. Mark. This is a separate resource soon to be printed in a pdf. file related to this Gospel. (If not, it soon will be.)

II. In your research materials, find material describing the "Kingdom of God." Please write a brief report here.

During the last century, the Kingdom of God is considered to be "a place" where God lives. Often, we associate this "place" with "heaven." A couple of years ago, the Pope helped get rid of this illusion by associating the Kingdom of God as a relationship.

This was very helpful because it pulls our theological understanding out of a "head trip analysis" in which "heaven" is an idea about something. Instead, our understanding turns to the human (gut trip analysis) experience of a relationship. This is why Jesus could call God his "heavenly father."

For our purposes, the Kingdom of Heaven is the Place of At-One-Ment. When God is considered to be the Perfect At-One-Ment, then our small (penultimate) relationships that result in the experience of At-One-Ment, we experience a little bit of God's Kingdom.

III. Reflect on the following:

vss. 20 - 29 : Satan! Do a gut trip analysis identifying this satanic dynamic. Remember, keep it experiential! How might this dynamic be represented in a "kingdom divided against itself?"

Satan and the concept of evil is another "head trip analysis," or an analysis ABOUT something. This concept is made more difficult by making evil personal, or anthropomorphic: made in our own image. Personally, I believe that Evil and Satan are the most misunderstood of our Christian Old Code Words.

Evil is the Big Lie, and Satan is the Big Liar! These figures are always out to convince us that life victimizes us, and there is really No Hope! The "big lie" is this is that we are born with a choice: we can be victims, or we can be victors.

The difference is that "reality" is never a lie. Reality is filled with pain, disappointment, cancer, death, even joy and deep happiness. None of these is a lie! They are reality. They are THE WAY LIFE IS (TWLI).

While it is true all of us a victimized, the choice is ours! When we choose to be victors in spite of (or even because of) our circumstances, we have defeated the Big Lie/Liar.

Concerning a "kingdom divided against itself," God created us as human to be in harmony and in tune with all that exists ("neighbor, self and God," according to Jesus), or to be in "at-one-ment!" When the Kingdom of God is considered to be "at-one-ment," then a kingdom divided against itself would represent anti-at-one-ment, and hence "divided."

Vs. 29: The Holy Spirit! Do a gut trip analysis identifying this spiritual dynamic. Now, what would "blaspheming against the Holy Spirit" look like? Keep it a gut trip analysis. Then, remembering that only God is eternal, how might your analysis be an explanation of how one might be guilty of an "eternal sin?"

Well, cutting to the chase to answer this question, "blaspheming against the Holy Spirit" is doing anything to create anti-At-One-Ment. This is an "eternal sin" because such activity is antithetical to the purpose of the Eternal One — God.

IV. Choose one of the following and do a similar analysis of it: The Parable of the Sower (4: 1 - 20); A Lamp on a Stand (4: 21 - 25 — don't let the size fool you.); The Parable of the Growing Seeds (4: 26 - 29); The Mustard Seed (4: 30 - 34).

The Parable of the Sower (4:1-20) The key word here is "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." In 4: 1 - 8, Jesus uses a straight out simile; "the Kingdom of God is like. . ." Then, from vs 9 through 20, Jesus does a good job doing a gut trip analysis.

Satan plays a role in the second part concerning the "seeds along the path" and Satan comes and takes it away. In other words, The Big Liar comes to tell us "there is no growth in hard soil!" So, what is the lie? Hard soil does make growth difficult; isn't this our human experience.

While all this is true, the Big Lie wants to victimize us, but we have a choice to believe we are victims or victors. Add to this "victimizing" list: trouble and persecution, and the worries of life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desire for things, paint a bleak, but true picture of living daily life.

HOWEVER, ALL THESE THINGS ARE THE ANTITHESIS OF GOD'S PURPOSE FOR US. God puts us in good soil, and when we "accept it" (awaken to it) then we reap its benefit.

A Lamp on a Stand (4: 21-25) --- This is another simile, or a comparison to what the kingdom is "like" a Lamp on a Stand. Two phrases reveal the purpose of this section. First, "whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open." So, what is hidden, except the good news of At-One-Ment? The second revealing phrase is "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." Obviously, some people have the "ears of awakening" but fail to use them. Our awakening is already a given, unless we choose to close them.

Then, the kicker of this scripture is the final statement, "Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him." Curious indeed, until it is read in the experience of "awakening." The more "awakening" you use, the more will be given to you!

The parable of the Growing Seeds (4:26 - 29) — The Kingdom of God (the place of At-One-Ment, and/or Awakening) is like (a simile) grain that is sown, grows and is harvested. The significance of this is the soil is At-One-Ment because it belongs to God. The "ripe" harvest is an Awakening. It is important to accept that the "kingdom of God is already within you;" that's God's business. We are required to awaken to what is already there.

The parable of the Mustard Seed (4:30-34) --- Again, Jesus uses a simile. The significance is that the "mighty tree of At-One-Ment already exists within the seed. The Kingdom of At-One-Ment grows more and more as we come to accept its gifts.

V. Be prepared to reflect on the significance of vss. 3: 31 - 35 Jesus' Mother and Brothers. At IHOP, we'll spend some time here. The word here is not to get caught up in "head trip analysis." When we do "gut trip analysis," the meaning is clear. The relationships that keep us stuck doing "head trip analysis" are deadly to us. However, the relationships that keep us as the "Awakened," these are the most important, significant and the most personal.

There is a difference between friends and colleagues. A friend has an investment in us. A colleague has an investment in our purpose and mission in life. A friend can be a colleague. But a colleague does not need to be a friend. They just need to show up when we need to win our purpose. The purpose for Christians is to be "the awakened."