

My comments are in Lucida Sans Unicode 12 pt.

TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

IHOP BIBLE STUDY

Topic: Matthew 19:1 to 20: 16 "Growing to Perfection"

The Gospel of Matthew's message is powerful and relevant to our current human situation. Matthew's purpose is to give us a training manual for teaching the Deeply Satisfied Life. This material is developed for the early church, but is applicable for us today.

Matthew's teaching role model is Jesus. The "Deeply Satisfied Life" is the experience ("Gut Trip Analysis") of the term Sanctification (which is an Old Christian Code Word understood through "Head Trip Analysis").

This is our twentieth lesson in this series. This lesson still is under the general banner associated with "A Training Manual For Teaching the Transparent Sanctified Life. However, this is the fifth arena, and this is the last lesson associated with Matthew's material on "The Teacher's Handbook: Part II – The Spiritual Oasis."

The Spiritual Oasis (formerly, the Secret Garden) is not really all that secret. It is a metaphor for the Kingdom of Heaven. However, what interests us is the experience of the Kingdom rather than an understanding of the Kingdom. This relates to our understanding of the difference between "Head Trip Analysis" and "Gut Trip Analysis."

I. Read the assigned reading at one time.

II. Because our topic is "Growing to Perfection," we can associate this with John Wesley's material on the same topic. From Wesley's perspective, growing to perfection is not a goal but a process. The theological concern is that sanctification, or in our terms the experience of deep satisfaction. With this in mind, consider the next four pericopes in light of how they illuminate our experience of deep satisfaction and our relationship to the Spiritual Oasis.

1. Vss. 19: 1 – 12 Divorce---

At first glance, the topic of divorce seems an unlikely place to begin a discussion about "growing to perfection." However, when this whole section is taken seriously, the topic is apropos.

1. vss. 1b—is rather interesting.

Again, Jesus is "going to the other side." Matthew uses this figure of speech a lot. In each instance a healing takes place. From our perspective of either living "on vacation" or living "at home" this little statement points the "home;" things are brought together, or support our understanding of At-One-Ment.

"Going to the other side" is the place of deep satisfaction, or the Spiritual Oasis.

2. Read this section from the viewpoint of what is being separated, and what brings people together again?

What is separated is the spiritual and the physical. God, as Perfect At-One-Ment is the experience of being brought together again.

3. Concerning vss. 19: 8 and following, what is this business of a "hard heart?"

A "hard heart" results in a relationship of separation.

4. Explore Jesus' advice in 19: 10 – 12.

When you are given The Word, your situation become a gift, even being—or becoming—a eunuch. If you can accept it. OK. If not, OK.

III. Vss. 19: 13 – 15 The Little Children and Jesus—

1. What is the experience here that illuminates "growing to perfection?"

Embracing everything is living in the Spiritual Oasis. To deny anyone, is to deny our perfection. Note: In the Early Church, children had no status.

IV. Vss. 19: 16 – 30 The Rich Young Ruler—

1. There are a number of interesting dynamics in this section. First, the association of "eternal life" with our Spiritual Oasis is evident. The same can be said of its relationship in "growing to perfection." Then, Jesus lays out two criteria that fulfill the criteria of growing to perfection. What are these two criteria? How can they be used to help us grow to perfection?

A. Fulfilling the 10 Commandments—Christians fulfill them not for salvation, but because of salvation. The 10 Commandments keep us awake.

B. Compassion is the concern here; faith without works is dead.

How does wealth stand in our way?

The danger of wealth is that it possess us, rather than we possess it. If is stuff we can consider is a part of the world; i.e., being on vacation. The axiom is "In the Spiritual Oasis, wanting nothing gives us everything."

2. **The big question in this pericope is in verse 19: 25 and 26, "Who then can be saved?"** Jesus gives a curious answer. In light of our terminology how *is the issue of salvation* an interest in Perfect At-One-Ment?

Salvation means to be "saved." This word is a transitive verb implying that we are save from something and saved to something. In our experience, we are saved from spiritual sleep, and we are saved to spiritual awakenment; i.e., we awaken to the Spiritual Oasis.

"With man" salvation is impossible. With Perfect At-One-Ment all is possible."

3. **vss. 19: 27 to 30— Reflect on Jesus' statement ". . .at the renewal of things."**

This supports the Big Question "What do we lose while we are "on vacation," and what do we gain back when we return "home?"

V. vss. 20: 1 to 16--- The parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

1. This closing parable for this section on Handbook II, applies the "law of reversal," living in our Spiritual Oasis reverses our earthly experience. How does this story inform us about growing to perfection? For me, a key phrase is 20: 12 ". . .you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day." What's going on?

This parable supports the story of the Rich Young Ruler. It reminds me of a quotation (deChardin?): "If you don't care who gets the credit, you can do anything." This is the result of viewing everything from the perspective of the Spiritual Oasis.

All right people. Talk to me.