

Lesson # 16, pp. 87 – 97
TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IHOP BIBLE STUDY
Topic: Matthew 12: 22 - Do the Will of God”

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 as "Head Trip Analysis").

This is our sixteenth lesson in this series, and this is associated with "The Moral Imperatives". "My reflections on the gospel give us the overall title of, "The Training Manual For Teaching The Transparent Sanctified Life."

With this metaphor established, let us continue.

<p>A Partial Summary Chart of the Gospel of Matthew</p> <p>Life in the Spiritual Oasis Matthew 12: 22 – 25: 46</p>		
<p>The Teacher's Handbook “Part II: The Spiritual Oasis” Matthew 12: 22 – 20: 16</p>		
<p>Teaching Life in the Spiritual Oasis Matthew 12: 22 – 13: 52</p>		
<p>Jesus and Beelzebub Matthew 12: 22 – 37</p>	<p>The Sign of Jonah Matthew 12: 38 – 45</p>	<p>Jesus' Mother and Brothers Matthew 12: 46 – 50</p>

I. Read the assigned readings at one time.

Today's lesson introduces the Teacher's Second Handbook concerning living the **humane and gracious** life working for justice and mercy; i.e., teaching us how to live in the Spiritual Oasis. It is helpful to remember that we humans are created to live in the Spiritual Oasis – this is HOME represented by living **dependently on God**. The human experience is represented in the story of Adam and Eve who are created to live in the Spiritual Oasis, but who choose to live **independently from God**. The result is we live ON VACATION but believe we are living AT HOME. Our need is to re-awaken to our intended creation.

The purpose of the 2nd Teacher's Handbook is to teach this lesson, and it is focused on "Life in the Spiritual Oasis." The Third Handbook embraces "Moral Lessons."

I. Matthew 12: 22 – 37 – Jesus and Beelzebub

A. Some Terms to define:

Baal-zebul: [Heb.=lord of flies],

This is a deliberate Hebrew distortion of the name of the god of Ekron in 2 Kings. See Baal and Satan. In ancient contexts, there appears to have been little, if any, meaningful distinction between Beelzebub and the polytheistic Semitic god named Ba'al. Monotheistic Jewish reference to Baal was almost certainly pejorative, and grew to be used among other terms for Satan. The name later appears as the name of a demon or devil, often interchanged with Baal-ze-bul. (*From Wikipedia*)

Son of David:

As the Son of David, Jesus Christ was heir to the throne of the Kingdom of Israel. King David was promised by God that his seed would build a temple to the Lord, and the throne of this son would be established forever. David's son Solomon built a magnificent temple to the LORD, established his father's kingdom in peace, and had wisdom above all other men of the earth. However, Solomon's temple was eventually topped, and his kingdom destroyed – testifying that Solomon did not fulfill God's promise to David.

Jesus build another temple to the LORD (his resurrected body), had wisdom greater than Solomon (he was able to discern the thoughts of people's hearts), and will establish the kingdom of his Father when he returns to earth again to complete fulfillment of God's promise to David that "I will be his father, and he shall be my son."

(*Answers.com/topic/Beelzebub*)

WS: This material makes the common assumption that Jesus' return is a physical event and misses the point that Jesus, as the Christ, is already present in our experience of the Spiritual Oasis; we don't wait to experience spiritual refreshment found in the middle of the aridity of our human experience is to know The Christ; to know that while victimized we can live as victors and this is the experience of The Resurrection.

Spiritual Oasis:

It is important to note that the Spiritual Oasis is not a place, but rather the experience of living refreshed, fed, healed, and to have whatever needs supplied. This term is an invention of mine as a paradigmatic coat-hook on which to hang any number of expressions that point to the reality of this experience.

Perhaps, this is best said by Howard Thurman, a colleague and mentor of Martin Luther King who wrote the following:

Often it is very hard to realize that I am one. The outer life seems utterly outer. It seems a part of a separate order. It is made up of the things I do, of my relationship of one kind or another with work, play, job, people, and things. The standard by which the outer is judged tends to be an artificial standard, made up of that which is convenient, practical, and expedient. The outer seems public; it seems ever to be an external net of physical relationships.

The inward sanctuary is my sanctuary. It is a place where I keep my trust with all my meanings and my values. It is the quiet place where the ultimate issues of my life are determined. What I know of myself, my meaning; what I know of God, His meaning; all this, and much more in made clear in my secret place. It seems strangely incongruous, often, to bring into my secret place the rasping, gritty noises of my outer life. Again, this may be for me merely an alibi. For I know that in the searching light of my inward sanctuary all the faults, limitations and evil of my outer life stand clearly revealed for what they are.

I am determined to live the outer life in the inward sanctuary. The outer life must find its meaning, the source of its strength in the inward sanctuary. As this is done, the gulf between outer and inner will narrow and my life will be increasingly whole and of one piece. What I do in the outer will be blessed by the holiness of the inward sanctuary; for indeed it shall be one.

(Thurman, *Meditations of the Heart*, "The Outer Life and the Inward Sanctuary," p. 173.)

WS: Forgive me for highlighting the last paragraph, but this is the key to life in the Spiritual Oasis.

It is helpful to reiterate that the preceding material is the center piece of Matthew's Gospel, and it concerns the "Moral Imperatives" on which the foundations of morality are constructed. Immediately following begins the second of three Teacher's Handbooks containing the lesson plans used by Jesus. This material is focused on teachings about "The Spiritual Oasis."

A. What is it we find in the Spiritual Garden?

1. Vss. 12: 22 – 26, We find the power of At-One-Ment.

WS: The power of Beelzebub (Satan) is the antithesis of At-One-Ment. Jesus makes the point that the work of Satan and the work of Jesus cannot be the same. The work of Satan results in the antithesis of At-One-Ment; people are separated, things lie in "ruin" and "will not stand." Not so with Jesus because with him we experience healing, wholeness and the experience of living the humane and gracious life.

2. Vss. 12: 27 – 28, We experience the universality of the Spiritual Garden.

WS: Jesus counters the argument of the Pharisees by noting that there are those among the Pharisees who also are effective at healing, that is, in bringing people into At-One-Ment experienced as a sense of wholeness, health, and inner peace. As Howard Thurman might describe it, the outer and the inner experiences are synthesized; **the outer is judged by the inner, and the inner is made relevant by the outer.** Again, excuse my need to emphasize this sentence, but it is an important insight that is relevant and useful.

It is this universality that occasionally gets people into theological trouble, in particular with those who make the assumption that only Christians live out of the resources of Jesus. This is not the case just as Jesus emphasized at this point. Jews do it, and if them, then why not anyone and everyone at the moment in which they bring healing, health, wholeness and meaning to the lives of others. Yes, even atheists and non-monotheistic believers are capable of doing the work of God. We know this is a fact because we are able to pull these acts of goodness through the life of Jesus as the Christ, that is to pull our actions through the meaning of the Cross. Suddenly we discover that The Christ is universal. As the gospel writer John notes, "In the beginning was the Logos and the Logos was God and the Logos is God." The logos is experienced as Good News; i.e, At-One-Ment. Doing Bad News is the antithesis of At-One-Ment. All good is done in Jesus' name whether that name is used or not! Praise God!

3. **Vs. 12: 29, We find the possessions of the strong man**

WS: The strong man is in possession of the Kingdom of God, that is, s/he lives out of the resources of the Spiritual Oasis or of At-One-Ment.

4. **Vss. 12: 30 - 32, We find forgiveness and synthesized meaning.**

One of the key features of the Spiritual Oasis is the experience of forgiveness. Jesus makes it clear that there is nothing from which we are not already forgiven and forgotten. Sin, blasphemy, cursing the Son of Man (*an image from Daniel used to emphasize the human nature of Jesus*): All this is forgiven.

This point frequently is overlooked by those in the pew. Their question becomes, "What is the difference between license to be nasty and what is required to live in the Spiritual Oasis? Jesus' answer is that our actions have nothing to do with our forgiveness; WE ARE FORGIVEN, and have been since the creation of the world. Do we think a cow lives unforgiven because it butts heads with the neighbor's bull? No, the cow lives without conscience because this is its natural state of being; this is its "IS-ness."

Then, what is our problem? Our problem is a SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS; it is a problem with our EGO that comes to believe that the meaning of life is ME. This is not true. The meaning of life is not based on our human nature, nor is it all based on our spiritual resources. Rather, the meaning of our life is the synthesis by which we bring our human nature to be sorted out—to be judged—by our spiritual resources. This is life lived in the Spiritual Oasis.

5. **Vss. 12: 30 - 36, We find the "unforgiven sin."**

WS: There is no more controversial, or mis-understood phrase used by Jesus than this, **Vs. 32**, ". . . anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come."

It is controversial because it is used as a hammer by many from the pulpit to promote their own version of righteousness. "It is my way or the highway," kind of attitude, and "my way" is a profaning of the Holy Spirit that results in eternal damnation. Such admonishments are misguided.

The Nature of the Holy Spirit--

A second problem with the unforgiven sin is that many preachers are not clear on the nature of the Holy Spirit. The basic problem is that the Holy Spirit becomes an object to be observed rather than an experience.

The Holy Spirit as Freedom

Familiarity of the Holy Spirit is experienced as Freedom, but it is not just any old wishy-washy freedom but the freedom to choose to be obedient to God-in-Christ. Do we have the Freedom not to be obedient? Yes, of course we do.

My example is the questions, "How do fish know they swim in water?" Probably, they don't know, until they find themselves out of the water. Then, the fish begins to gasp for air and to flop around struggling to get back into a familiar environment. This is the experience of those choosing to be disobedient to our intended creation. We are created with the purpose of living in the water of

obedience to our intended creation which is to live the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy. Living the "Fish Tank" life is living in the Spiritual Oasis.

Observe that either way there is a price to pay. When we choose to be obedient to this purpose, then we are not free to live the antithesis of At-One-Ment. On the contrary, there is the expectation of living obedient to the model of Jesus. When we choose to live disobedient to this purpose, then we experience the gasping for air and thrashing around. I tell prisoners all of the time, when you are having a bad time, you can know that you are out of synch with your intended creation as human and gracious people. In fact, also I tell them that their freedom is not determined by the jail cell, rather their freedom is discovered within themselves. When they do embrace this freedom to be obedient, then they are truly free.

The unpardonable sin?

The unpardonable sin is an empirical reality rather than moral. Being naughty is living as though we are *not forgiven*. God, experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment sees this all the time; sometimes we are naughty when we don't intend to be; these are the sins of *omission*. Sin is nothing more than the experience of separation or the antithesis of At-One-Ment. The Roman Catholic Church observes six unforgivable sins: despair, presumption, impenitence, obstinacy, resisting truth, and envy of another's spiritual welfare. From the perspective of Gut Trip Analysis, these are only additional sins of *co-mission*.

What God, experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment, cannot forgive is the failure to fulfill our intended creation. The reason it is unforgivable is that it is impossible to do; the sin comes in the assumption that it can be possible. For instance, a cow can not be anything other than a cow which is its Is-ness. In like manner, we recognize in the tree its tree-ness, never mind if it is deciduous or an evergreen tree or bush; tree-ness is its Is-ness. In this same way, humanity fulfills its Is-ness when we live the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.

How is punishment meted out by God?

Any review of commentaries that deal with this passage (**Vs. 32**), struggles with the issue of being punished by God. How can a loving God deliberately punish anyone when forgiveness is so prevalent. Some commentators claim that there is "no salvation" for such people, that is, the unforgiven live now and for eternity in the absence of God.

How is this possible?

My answer is, that it is not possible to live out of the gracious and forgiving love of God. Is this universal salvation? Not at all!

The Wrath of God always is the love of God: The Guarantor

At this point my axiom is most helpful. "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself." What makes this helpful is that God never has to punish us

because we punish ourselves when we chose to live away from the resources of the Spiritual Oasis. In such situations I've found that God is identified as The Guarantor. God guarantees the scientific law of gravity that is universal. God guarantees the civil law of obedient or disobedient driving on the highway: "Click it or Ticket." God guarantees moral law when we do dumb things in the back of a car, it can be called Parenthood." God is the guarantor of the reward for the deed that is found in the deed itself.

It is to be clearly understood that life is not without judgment. We know when we are out of compliance by the way we gasp for air and flop around. On the other hand, when we live in compliance then there is a sense of peace, of harmony, of living in synch. In other words we experience living in At-One-Ment.

Now, on to the next part of our lesson in **Matthew 12: 38 - 45**.

5. The "Sign of Jonah"

How do we awaken to the Spiritual Oasis already within us?

WS: Isn't this the question of the Pharisees and Teachers, "Show us miraculous signs." Isn't this the question we all ask of our spiritual leaders? As usual Jesus' answer throws us over into a totally new experience. "I'll give you two signs," Jesus replies." The first is the Sign of Jonah and the second is the sign of the Queen of the South; one sign concerns righteousness and the other sign is about wisdom.

Righteousness and wisdom. Two good signs concerning the Spiritual Oasis, don't you think? Well, we'll soon see.

Pharisees and Teachers want Jesus to perform miraculous signs:

Reasonable request, it seems. After all it is these people whose business was dedicated to protecting the things of God. Why does Jesus address it by associating it with wickedness and adultery? Is it possible that God needs our surrendered lives rather than our protection.

Vs. 39B - 41, The sign of Jonah—

Jesus gives these learned protectors of the *status quo* "The sign of Jonah." What an interesting choice, after all, each and every *Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement*—the Hebrews read the entire short story of Jonah. Why? What is in the story that would remind the Jews of their need for repentance and gratitude?

Not enough is made out of the Big Fish. Because this story is all metaphor and allegory, it is inaccurate to not dwell on the symbolism of this symbol. The Big Fish is nothing more than the spiritual nation of Israel, just as it is for The Church of Christ Jesus.

I'll dwell on neither Nineveh nor Jonah's sermon. Suffice it to say that Nineveh and Israel were like cross-town high school competitors, and Jonah's sermon is likened to be the worst sermon ever preached, yet the most effective.

At this point, Jesus is making a sarcastic remark about what Judaism did to the religious experience of its ordinary citizens; it swallowed them up to keep them from doing their work of evangelization. Previously, Isaiah identified their evangelical task to tell the story of God's love to all people, and "ALL means ALL."

Even today, we have trouble fulfilling the meaning of the word ALL. Perhaps, this still is why the story of Jonah is so relevant.

The way to awaken to the Spiritual Oasis that is already within us is to surrender to the message of *agape* love and then go practice it to ALL PEOPLE, and ALL means ALL.

Vs. 42, *The sign of the Queen from the South—*

If Jonah is about *righteousness as surrender*, then the story of the Queen of the South is about *wisdom*.

Solomon, David's son, developed a reputation for "splitting the baby." Because of this his reputation for wise judgment spread throughout the then known world. Far South and to the East lays the country of Yemen, an Arab relationship. The Queen of Sheba—named for the town in which she reigned—came to Solomon to sit at his feet and to engage in the process of learning and dialogue.

It would seem that *knowledge* and *wisdom* are fine characteristics to prepare us to awaken to the realm of our inner kingdom; don't you think? Apparently, Jesus has other ideas. His response is, ". . . and now one grater than Solomon is here."

OK, if righteousness and wisdom don't cut it concerning the Spiritual Oasis, what is it that Jesus has to offer that's so unique? What is it about such things that convict us as a wicked and adulterous generation?

Let's answer the last question first. Apparently, this is what Jesus did too.

Vss. 43 - 45, *House invasion!*

Every time I write about evil I get in trouble. Most people want to make evil an objective reality; there is something evil that takes away our power to combat it. Of course, this is hog-wash! Evil, like every other theological work in the Christian lexicon is a metaphor. Evil is the Big Lie that while we certainly know that we are victimized (live in the arid land of the living dead), we have the choice to either be victims or victors. Jesus' birth, ministry, death and crucifixion demonstrate that we too can die to living as victors. In fact, our entire freedom is to choose to be obedient to dieing to our barriers preventing us from living in Freedom. Yes, We Can!

This is why those nice folks like the Pharisees and Teachers get into so much trouble, yet they are the salt of the earth, and the ones who pay the bills. They believed they were trapped in a life of aridity with "No Exit." (*Thank you Mr. Sartre!*) As hard as they tried to get into the Spiritual Oasis, they were blocked by their self-righteousness and moralism.

"Say, Mr. Jesus, show us a miracle." "Are you looking for a miracle? I'm He!" "Oh, yes, I Am sent me."

Vss. 43 - 45, The Big Lie will get you every time. The BL goes on R&R, comes back to see the HOUSE cleaned, swept, and unoccupied. Ah, the HOUSE of Israel, of course, it's Our HOUSE! But now the Big Lie brings seven (the perfect number) and makes it much more difficult for people to REPENT.

Let's see, what is it the Ninevites did? Repent?

Like Alice in Wonderland who sees the Red Queen across the valley and wishes to go visit, the Red Rose instructs her to "Turn around, Alice." When Alice finally complies, she turns around and there is the Red Queen.

Now, how did that happen? All she did was to *turn around*.

Turning around to see life in a new direction—although from the same spot—is the only way into the sanctuary of the Spiritual Oasis.

Where can we take this next? OK, on to Matthew 12: 46 - 50.

6. Jesus' Mother and Brothers—

How does this introduce us to the Spiritual Oasis? The Spiritual Oasis is opened to us when we "hear the word of God" and then do it; it is walking the walk and talking the talk. Recently, my favorite bumper sticker reminds us, "Less TALK and more WALK." Amen.

First off, how many people know about Jesus' brothers? This in itself is interesting conjecture we'll leave for another time. The significance we want to mine from this message is what it reveals about the inner kingdom of the Spiritual Oasis.

The following is from the material in Luke 8: 19 - 21.

NOTE: In each of the "Hard Sayings" the underlying theme is "Judgment." For many Christians, the judgment of God is not easily understood, if at all. The reason for this lapse is that we forget that God is incapable of being mean. Consequently, God's judgment always represents tough love that we experience as the "wrath of God."

First, it is helpful to think of God's Wrath in terms of relationships. 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.

Now apply this principle to the following questions.

1. What is the lesson Jesus is teaching in this story?

WS: The IHOP men struggled with this for awhile. One observation one IHOPER made is the following: "By this time Jesus' father, Joseph, was dead. Also, the "brothers" mentioned would be half brothers, because they were the offspring of Joseph, while Jesus is the offspring of God."

I share this with you because it illustrates how easily we fall into Head Trip Analysis. In this kind of thinking, Jesus is an object to be studied, rather than a relationship or an experience. To make Jesus an object is to get into abstract thinking about the human dimensions of family relationships.

From a Gut Trip Analysis, this event describes the special relationship of Christians as those who are awake spiritually and as human/humane individuals. In

this way, we fulfill both our intended purposes for which we are created—to be human/humane—and our purpose as spiritual families.

Again, not to make too much of this, but it intrigues me concerning the frequency of the gospel writer's use of the term "outside;" "your mother and brothers are standing outside. (Vs. 20b.) According to Gut Trip Analysis, "outside" is the place of spiritual sleep." On the other hand, inside with Jesus always is the place of awakening.

2. What is the significance of Vs. 21?

WS: The IHOP men struggled for several minutes defining what it means to be "those who hear God's word and put it into practice." Then, the group went back to our Gut Trip roots to define **The Good News** as: *God does not make no junk;* our **PRESENT** is received as a gift, and this is why we call it the Present; our **PAST** is not only forgiven but it is forgotten; when these things are affirmed then our **FUTURE is open and hopeful.** This is THE GOOD NEWS that we are not victims, but victors!

How do we put this into practice? We be it! We embody this truth. We embrace this experience.

Note this caveat: In 1964 I had the profound experience of being deeply awakened to the reality and truth of Gut Trip Analysis. My excitement was unbounded. I wanted to be unleashed to share the sense of enlightenment with others. Shortly afterward, I returned home to meet my wife, whom I wanted to both share my new enthusiasm as well as to experience it. I had what I thought was a profound conversation with her, which for a time only alienated the two of us for a brief time. The danger in using family relationships to demonstrate profound awakening can result in separation instead of At-One-Ment.

Did this happen to Jesus as the result of this experience? I'm going to side with tradition and say no. I say this because the apparent purpose for which Matthew includes this story is to illuminate the judgment that is associated with not fulfilling our intended purpose. When we live the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy, then we are listening "to hear God's word."

<p>Chart of THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW <i>A Training Manual For Teaching The Transparent Life</i> The Teacher's Handbook – Part II The Spiritual Oasis</p>	
<p>Teaching Life in the Spiritual Oasis Matthew 13: 1 – 52</p>	
<p>Parable of the Weeds (on the Kingdom of Heaven) Matthew 13: 1 – 23</p>	<p>The Parable of the Weeds Explained Matthew 13: 24 – 30 Matthew 13: 36 – 43</p>

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from SermonStarter— Matthew 13:1 - 9, 18 - 23.

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 in Head Trip Analysis) . . . This lesson still is under the banner associated with "Teaching the Transparent Sanctified Life" . . . This is related to Matthew's material on, "The Teacher's Handbook: Part II – The Spiritual Oasis." . . . The Spiritual Oasis 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 is crucial to our understanding of the difference between Head Trip Analysis and Gut Trip Analysis."

The key to the sermon is:

Think through what sanctification means to you. For me, it is living the deeply satisfied life – the Good News of Jesus Christ. Isn't this what the Sower (Jesus Christ) is spreading around. His problem is that we humans are In different places on our spiritual journey. The lesson to be learned is to use Jesus' teaching on how to listen intuitively to where people are on their journey. Every one of us is somewhere on our spiritual journeys illustrated by Jesus. The important focus is on "Life in the Spiritual Oasis."

A contextual background –

Each of the following words are grounded in Gut Trip Analysis. It is important to remind ourselves that all of our old Christian Code words are not objects, but rather are relationships to be experienced. This is the basic fault line in Christian theology. It is a product of our Greek foundation in the 1st Century and the Scientific Revolution in the 15th and 16th Centuries. In other words, we lost our ability to think intuitively, experientially, existentially, and relationally. Second, it is important for your own preaching that you run these words through your own gut, i.e., through your own experience. I've shared the result of my work in the hope it will inspire you to make this effort.

The Kingdom of God—

The KOG is the experience of living the authentic human life. This is the life that fulfills our creation for the humane and gracious life. In this scripture lesson, Jesus refers to it both as the KOG, as the Sons of the Kingdom, and as The Barn into which we are to bring the harvest.

The Son of Man—

This is a reference to the Book of Daniel who envisioned the Messiah coming as the Son of Man in the clouds. The Gospel writers universally use this image to emphasize the human nature of Jesus as the Christ. In Gut Trip Analysis, the Son of Man is the Awakened One who demonstrates authentic living as the humane and gracious life. Also, it is the life of living dependently on God who is experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment.

The Enemy: also the Devil and/or the Demon, and by inference, Hell---

It is crucial that these terms be run through our human experience or they quickly drift off into either something objective as "an evil power" to which we are subject, or into moralism in which we are bad people.

In light of Gut Trip Analysis, The Enemy is none of these explanations. Evil is experienced as The Big Lie; it demonstrates that we are victimized and hopeless to do anything about it; this is a LIE. Jesus' intentional death on the cross is the demonstration that we can die to the barriers preventing us from living the abundant and meaningful life. Jesus' resurrection is proof of this possibility. Jesus was victimized by the political and religious establishments of his time—we too are victimized by life. Jesus' death and resurrection is the demonstration that we can intentionally choose to die to the

barriers preventing us from fulfilling our intended creation to live the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy.

The Enemy is The Big Lie. Always, The Lie seeks to convince us that because our circumstances can't be changed, there is no hope for us. My illustration is of the one-legged runner who had the choice of being a one-legged grouch, or the best one-legged dancer. This choice always is our choice too.

Evil wants to convict us with the false hope—the Illusion—that our circumstances can be changed. We look forward to a Lone Ranger to ride into our lives, heal us from our brokenness, leave a silver bullet for a souvenir, and ride off into the sunset singing, “Heigh Ho, Silver. A-way!” This is the work of the Demon who comes to us as the Great Illusioner. Jesus’ message is that there is no Lone Ranger! At least not this kind of savior; this is a false savior. What intrigues me is that the one who comes to tells us, “There is no Lone Ranger, IS THE LONE RANGER.” This is our Savior, the one who comes to deliver us from our false hopes and illusions. This is the way in which we Beat the Devil. This is the way in which we “Get the hell out of Dodge;” what else do you want “out of Dodge, but The Hell?”

Sons of the Evil One—

Any of the helpers who help to spread the message above are the Sons of the Evil One. It is helpful to remember that these sons are legion! Media Advertising is geared to “making believe” that a Botox treatment, or a new car, or a new dolly (no matter how young or how old), is the answer to our prayers. Nationalism can also become idolatrous and a son of the Evil One.

The only anecdote is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who is the illustrator or how to die to these barriers that lead to false hopes.

End of the Age, and The Harvest---

Jesus is the End of the Age. Jesus is The Harvest. Jesus is the Fully Awakened One. It is when we finally awaken to the Good News that, while victimized, we have a choice to either be victims or victors; it is at this moment that we experience the Christ Event in our lives.

We experience this relationship as a death and resurrection. We die to the Old Covenant (represented as the 10 Commandments), and are reborn to a New Covenant (the Divine Commandment of Jesus Christ). In this relationship we die to the barriers preventing us from embracing life’s circumstances and claim this new relationship as living the victorious life.

The Bus Stop story is illustrative of this. A person waits for the bus that is supposed to come by “Every 15 minutes.” He/She waits 15, 30 and then 45 minutes. Finally, a neighbor comes to ask, “Are you waiting for the bus?” After an affirmative response, the neighbor concludes, “Well, I’ve got **GOOD NEWS** for you. The bus doesn’t come by here anymore.” Now, why is this Good News? It is Good News because we can stop waiting and start walking.

The point being that this Good News does not change our circumstances. The bus is not going to come. However, this Good News changes us! Now, we can cry and whine hoping the bus will still come by, or we can whistle while we walk. The choice is up to us.