

## TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

### IHOP BIBLE STUDY

**Topic: Matthew 11: 20 to 12: 21: "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 fourteenth lesson in this series, and is **a new lesson in a new part of the Matthew chart**. This new lesson still is under the banner associated with "A Training Manual For Teaching the Transparent Sanctified Life. However, this is the fourth reflection, and this is associated with Matthew's material on "Moral Imperatives." **It is interesting to note that this is the 14<sup>th</sup> lesson in our study of Matthew, and there are 14 studies left. So, this single lesson can be said to be the heart of Matthew's teaching manual!**

- I. **Read the assigned reading at one time.**
- II. **REFLECT ON THE FOLLOWING** – The question to be answered in this session is "what is the moral imperative for those who are awake? To answer this question, first it is necessary to review a bit of Christian philosophy concerning truth vs. goodness, experience vs. knowledge, and the role quality plays.

**TRUTH vs. GOODNESS**---Socrates had an argument with those in the Sophists' School about the nature of TRUTH. The Sophists embraced the idea that Goodness is of more value than truth. Socrates embraced the idea that Truth was of more value than goodness. Finally, Socrates won the argument: the result is humanity was set on the pursuit of the truth. We are the beneficiaries of this pursuit: medicine, industry, science, space, communications are all the result of our pursuit of THE TRUTH. Observe that the result of our search for truth leads us into "Head Trip Analysis."

**EXPERIENCE vs. KNOWLEDGE**--- Not surprisingly, it is my belief that the Sophists are right. GOODNESS is of more value than TRUTH. My position is that our experience is supported as "Gut Trip Analysis." The term goodness can have a similar meaning to the "word" God uses in Genesis 1 where it is recorded, "God said. . . and it was good." From the point of view of philosophy it is of more value. For example: is it of more value to sit on a cold stove instead of a hot one? For me, the value is found in the experience, rather than the knowledge.

*This kind of experience is about doing the will of God.*

- III. **Quality is doing the will of God. QUALITY**---Webster's Dictionary defines "quality" as, 1) a characteristic, property, or **attribute**; 2) character of nature, as belonging to or distinguishing a thing.

**The essence of something:** the essence of a tree is its quality; the authenticity of a human being is its quality. The essence of wholesome human beings is those associated with authentic humanness are those whose deeds result in our jargon, the quality experience is **to live at home**, rather than **on vacation**.

The important conclusion is that when we do QUALITY WORK, we are exposing the essence for which we are born and/or trained. Authenticity is a God given **attribute**. The experience of fulfilling our human attribute (Quality) is doing the will of God.

**The moral imperative for those who are awake is first to fulfill the essence for which they were created. This is doing the Will of God.** We humans are created to be human. We fulfill our essence when we are authentic humans. The antithesis of being human is either to be 1) Un-human, that is to be self-depreciating or prideful; 2) In-human, that is to be racist or sexist in putting others down in order to elevate ourselves.

III. **Leslie D. Weatherhead wrote the definitive book about the will of God (*The Will of God – 1944*).** The author identifies three elements in The Will of God: **the Intentional Will of God** (in our jargon: To Live At Home); **The Circumstantial Will of God** (in our jargon: To Live At Home in spite of The Way Life Is); **The Ultimate Will of God** (in our jargon: we Get Home because of our actions in Free Will.)

IV. **Third, doing God's will leads JUSTICE to victory! (Isaiah 42: 1 – 4).** Webster defines "justice" as 1) the quality of being just; righteousness, equitableness, or moral rightness; 3) the oral principle determining just conduct.

V. **In summary--The moral imperative for those who are awake as authentic human beings is to conduct ourselves so that our authentic lives enhances the lives of others. In fact, this is what makes being human authentic.**

**RIGHT AND WRONG: The study of ethics is done in a lot of ambiguity. Seldom are choices we have made between just Right and Wrong. Most decisions are not clear.**

**RIGHT AND RIGHT: Sometimes our choices are made between Right and Right; i.e., it is both right to order eggs for breakfast, or to chose pancakes.**

**WRONG AND WRONG: However, our choices are complicated when we make choices between Wrong and Wrong; i.e., pulling the life-support plug on a terminal patient is difficult; i.e., it is wrong to make this decision to play God; also, it is wrong to let a suffering person linger.**

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a 20<sup>th</sup> Century theologian, wrote about Christian ethics. He defines THE RESPONSIBLE PERSON as the one who stands in the tension between OBEDIENCE and IRRESPONSIBLE GENIOUS. Observe, that the definition is standing between these two choices, and it is standing in the tension. What this means is that we make a decision and to some this decision may look like blind obedience. To others, this decision may look like total irresponsibility.**

**However, it is what Bonhoeffer recommends *we do with the decision once it is made* that intrigues me. We are to give it up. We are to throw our decision into the arms of God. We are to surrender the deed to God. The implication is that we let God worry about the consequences, and we stop worrying about it.**

VI. **Now, in light of this discussion, answer the following questions:**

1. **vss. 11: 20 – 24:** What is the message missed by the cities of Korazin, Bethsaida, Tyre and Sidon, Capernaum and Sodom? Why are they cursed?

**They heard The Word and made the choice to ignore it. This is the reward for the deed is found in the deed itself. That is, when they choose to ignore The Word, the reward for this deed is the seed of their destruction.**

**“The Word” is experienced in the statement; “You can live abundantly the essence for which you were created.” As we choose to embrace this axiom, we find peace and joy. As we ignore this axiom, we are “cursed,” not by some Mysterious Power, but by the choice we made.**

- 2. vss. 11: 25 – 27: What is it “the son chooses to reveal?” **The Good News is revealed. The experience of the Good News is that I am given a choice to be a victim or to be a victor. The decision is mine.****
  
- 3. vss. 11: 25 – 27: What is the “yoke” Jesus gives to the weary and burdened? Why is it lighter than other burdens? (Please avoid the “Footprints in the sand” analogy.) **Actually, it is the same burdens transformed because my relationship to them is changed. The important element is now I’ve changed while the burdens remain the same. I am no longer a victim to them. Instead, I’m a victor!****
  
- 4. vss. 12: 1 – 8: When is it lawful for hungry people to pick grain to eat on the Sabbath? **The quick answer is “when they are hungry.” The underlying question here is just what is the Sabbath? The “Sabbath” is when justice is done! This is the real “Sabbath.”****
  
- 5. vss. 12: 9 – 14: When is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? **The answer in scripture is that the “Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” The experience of the term “Jesus” is that of the “Little Picture” of God as Perfect At-One-Ment. The term “Christ” is experienced as the Sacrificial Spirit.” “Lord of the Sabbath” is experienced as authentic justice that restores broken things into wholeness.****
  
- 6. vss. 12: 15 – 21: Speculate on the relationship of Jesus’ request “not to tell who he was” and the Isaiah 42: 1 – 4 passage. It may be helpful to recall that Isaiah 42 is called Second Isaiah because it was written after the return of the Hebrew Exiles from slavery in Iraq. **This is a stab in the darkness, but I’ll try. The Isaiah passage is a testimony to the restoration of the nation of Israel through an ethic of care and gentleness: “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not extinguish.” Jesus’ request for others not to spread the word is the decision to focus on the deed rather than the doer.****

**I don’t know. What do you think? Even the commentaries are confused on this question. Um-m-m-m. Alright folks, talk to me.**