

Hello, you all. Let the Holy Spirit move you to join in the conversation. It is so much more interesting as dialogue takes place. My comments are in red in Lucida Sans 12 point. This is to accommodate those whose software does not translate color. Pastor Bill

TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

IHOP BIBLE STUDY

Topic: Matthew 13 1 to 13: 52 “Teaching life in the Secret Garden”

Please note this is a correction in the Matthew Chart. Matthew 12: 22 to 50 is an addition to last week’s lesson. In a few days, I’ll submit my comments on this additional section. This is the result of doing the chart “on the fly.” Sorry about this change. However, please read on!

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 fifteenth lesson in this series, and is **a new lesson in a new part of the Matthew chart**. 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 related to Matthew’s material on “The Teacher’s Handbook: Part II – The Secrete Garden.”

The Secret Garden is not really all that secret. It is a metaphor for the **Kingdom of Heaven**. However, what interest 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.”

- I. **Read the assigned reading at one time.**
- II. **Kingdom of Heaven defined**

What is the EXPERIENCE of the Kingdom of Heaven? Well, Jesus provides with eight examples in chapter 13. We will look at each of them in more detail. However, it is necessary to make a contextual statement to get us into the topic.

1. **The word “heaven” is understood**—from a “Head Trip Analysis” as the place where God lives. Heaven is experienced as familiarity with Perfect At-One-Ment. Our old Christian code words have little, if any, connection with *places*, but it has everything to do with *relationships*. In speaking about the “Kingdom of Heaven,” Jesus is speaking about our relationship to God. For Jesus this relationship was so personal that he called God “Father.” Using “Gut Trip Analysis” we call God Perfect At-One-Ment, because this describes *our experience of God*; when we feel At-One with neighbor and self, we are experiencing a little bit of Perfect At-One-Ment.

As a personal testimony, the more I awaken to this experience, the more events, happenings, occasions, conversations, become revelations. For instance, a young college student’s music major from a Kansas university on occasion plays during our

church services of worship. His music resonates deeply within me. While he plays I experience a deep peace. This is what I mean by experiencing a relationship to the Kingdom of Heaven. The same can be said for the organ music, or the Brass Choir, or listening to a modern jazz combo. Nearly anything and everything becomes a revelation of this Kingdom.

So, what is the Secret Garden? Ah, it is the Kingdom of Heaven. In chapter 13: 10 and 11, Matthew reports, "The disciples came to him and asked, 'Why do you speak to the people in parables?' He replied, 'The knowledge of the **secrets of the kingdom of heaven** has been given to you, but not to them [the crowd].'"

This is the Secret Garden. It is the experience of the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. The key verses in this chapter are 13: 9, 16, and 43b: "He who has ear, let him hear."

What is it we are supposed to hear if we have the ears to hear it?

To explain: Teilhard de Chardin, the contemporary Christian mystic, writes about the "Diaphanous Divine." What a beautiful phrase. The word "diaphanous" means "gossamer," like the wings of a butterfly. Also, it means "transparent." Jesus statement concerning "ears" refers to the ability *to hear* through to the meaning of things. That is, *to experience through* to the significance of things. Chardin *hears* what Jesus is pointing to: it is something that is transparent, deep and meaningful; it is something that is the diaphanous divine.

Jesus speaks about what is heard as the Kingdom of Heaven. We speak of it as The Secret Garden.

III. With this context, let us turn to study the eight "parables," or metaphors, Jesus shares with us. In these lessons, Jesus teaches us the first lesson in The Teacher's Handbook – Part II.

A. vss. 1 – 23: The parable of The Sower -- What do we learn about the Secret Garden in this story? (Remember: the Kingdom of Heaven is a place, while the Secret Garden is an experience! So, tell us how you experience the story. What does the story reveal about you?)

The interpretation of the message is of more interest to us at this time beginning in 13: 11 - 23. Jesus reminds us of things concerning "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God." Remember, the foundational question is what are we supposed to hear (or experience).

First, Jesus tells us that if we already have ears to hear, then more is given us. If we fail to develop our spiritual hearing, what we have is taken away. Then, he tells us "This is the reason I speak in parables." For me, the implication is that parables are the language that takes us into The Secret Garden.

Second, from this perspective, we can transliterate vss. 16., *Those who have spiritual eyes and ears experience living At-One (blessed).*

Third, in vss. 18 to 23, Jesus gives us the interpretation of the parable of the sower.

1. vs. 19—those who fail to experience the meaning are subject to the work of The Liar – the Great Illusioner—the “evil one.” What the Word sows in our heart in the experience of abundant peace that is the reward for opening our ears and eyes: we are living the Good News that we are not victims. When this message is not deeply settled into our human experience, we are subject to being made victims instead of victors.
2. vss. 20 and 21—the rocky ground represents the Word falling into shallow ground; this is the experience of getting all excited about a new insight that makes sense to us, and then fail to associate with a mentor, or another group or community, to help us stay awake. Then, when trouble comes, our original insight is not enough to sustain us.
3. vs. 22 – the word sown among the thorns of worries and deceitfulness of wealth. The experience of “worry” always worries me. Worry is an early indication of closing off your relationship to the Secret Garden. This is not to say that those in the Secret Garden do not worry. It does say that we are not victims to our worries; our worry does not define us.
4. vs. 23—obviously, the good soil, and the multiplying crops, are the experience of abundant living in the Secret Garden.

B. vss. 24 – 30: The parable of the Weeds – As you read this parable, what is your experience of the “Enemy?” What is the message of the “Enemy?” (Perhaps, it is helpful to recall that the “enemy” is a liar. The enemy is out to convince you that we are victims and not victors.)

What does the parable of the Weeds reveal about The Secret Garden? What is it we are supposed “to hear?”

A couple of things come to mind as I reflect on my experience. First is to be careful about what we consider “weeds” and “wheat.” The experience of something is not

known until the fruit can be identified. Frequently, in my experience, I throw out the baby with the bathwater. (OK, I know this mixes the metaphors, but the point is the same.)

The second thing is the process of discernment. Those who have "eyes" to see discover that patience produces deeper insights into the nature of things. So does maturity.

C. (Note: the section is out of order according to Matthew. However, the Parables of the Mustard and Yeast obviously are redacted (inserted by subsequent reorganizers for some obscure reason. For our purposes, Jesus' explanation is reinserted here for our purposes.) vss. 36 – 43: **The parable of the Weeds explained** – I can count ten little metaphors identified in this section. How many do you count? One good approach is to divide a sheet of paper into two columns. The Left column label it "the word," in the Right column label it "Explained."

THE WORD

EXPLAINED

Field **The way life is**

world **"on vacation"**

Good seed **The Really Real**

sons of the kingdom **"At home!"**

*(See my book **Old Code Words**)*

Weeds **Victimization**

sons of the **evil one** **The Liars**

Enemy **Victimizers**

the Devil **The Big Liar**

Harvest **Transforming awakening** **end of the age** **Perfect At-One-Ment**

Weeds pulled up **Victors awakened** burned in fire **Destruction of**
Hopelessness

Send out angels **The Awakened** **sin and evil** **Separation the result of**
lies and illusion

Righteousness shines like the sun **Radiate a Peace** In the kingdom of the Father **Secret**
Garden

Most of these comparisons will be a snap to relate to The Secret Garden (an experience. Remember?)

However, struggle with the words "evil one," "the end of the age," and "sin and evil." What is your **experience** of these things?

See above for my experience.

D. vss. 31 – 32: The parable of the Mustard Seed -- What does this parable reveal about The Secret Garden? **If knowledge about the Secret Garden is one of the tiniest “seeds,” this affirms that the Kingdom of God is not seen but experienced. When it grows within us, it becomes something with deep roots and can be useful to others (the birds of the air).**

E. Vss. 33 – 35: The parable of the Yeast – Recall an experience in which something you heard opened your eyes in such a way that you believe your life is different; it was as powerful as yeast in dough.

Frequently, I talk to prisoners at the Saline County jail. One of our persistent themes is their sense of feeling empty and lost. After we establish a relationship I’ll give them my own personal testimony concerning my emptiness and when I discovered this emptiness is where God lives within me; in my innards. Learning to embrace our sense of emptiness and loss transforms me! The emptiness and loss may remain, but I am no longer a victim, but now I’m a victor.

F. vss. 44 – 46: The Parable of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl. What is your experience of these metaphors, and what do they reveal about The Secret Garden? What is it we hear in this experience?

Experiencing the Secret Garden is such a treasure that if it were possible to buy into it, the experience is worth everything we have or own.

F. vss. 47 – 52: The parable of the Net.

This is another “end of the age” parable. This “end of the age” I define happens when we renew our dependence on the Kingdom of God (Secret Garden). This end of the age is not a physical experience. It is an eschatological experience; i.e., it is the defining of a spiritual reality when something dies and something is birthed. As we grow more confident of living in the Secret Garden, we learn to separate the bad fish (those things leading to hopelessness) from the good fish (those things that free us to live At-One with all things.). As we do these things, we are living in our eschatological existence.

The curious statement Jesus makes is in vs. 52: “Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who bring out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.” *As Jesus is teacher us to be teacher, what is our “storeroom,” and what are the old treasurers and the new?*

This goes back to 13: 11 and 12 concerning “Whoever has will be given more.” The source of the “more” is the Secret Garden. A close association is my image of My Altar of Spiritual Resources that is the

resources given to us at our birth. Everything we need is ours to have, we need only to open our eyes to see it, and to make use of it.

Alright folks. Talk to me.