

Say Gang, this is my monthly appeal to expand the number of people in this list service. Presently, we have 40 participants. If you experience this Bible study as interesting or refreshing, please forward this material to a friend. You already know the drill: send email to biblestudy@triumc.org and in the "Subject" line write subscribe.

One recommendation is that this is commentary material available on Hebrews, Mark, John and now Matthew. The commentary provides fresh insights into scripture interpretation for sermon preparation and bible study.

Pass the word for me, will you? Thanks. Pastor Bill

TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

IHOP BIBLE STUDY

Topic: Matthew 13: 53 to 14: 12 "The cost of teaching"

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 sixteenth 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 related to Matthew's material on "The Teacher's Handbook: Part II – **The Oasis.**"

The **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."

Please note the change of metaphor from Secret Garden to The Oasis. The adjective "secret" was more mystical than most wanted to accept. My attachment to the term is based on the movie and a CD by the same title; this is a place of quiet reflection and a deep sense of peace.

However, The Oasis favors a place of refreshment after living or traveling through the desert. The desert can be a metaphor for The Way Life Is (TWLI). From this experience, The Oasis can be a metaphor of the desert transformed. Marcus Borg, in his recent book *The Heart of Christianity* writes about the "Thin Places." These are places where the nonmaterial intersects with the visible world. Or, in my terms, this is where the desert of separation and the oasis of At-One-Ment intersect to reveal God who is Perfect At-One-Ment.

When you get a chance to read the Borg book, give it a try. You'll be glad you did.

I. Read the assigned reading at one time.

This section of our study is the shortest reading of any preceding material. It is just two pericopes: A prophet without honor and John the Baptist Beheaded. However, the material does relate this material to the Teacher's Handbook—Part II. Obviously, there is a high cost to teaching The Kingdom of Heaven (The Oasis). The cost of teaching life in the Secret Garden—**First, teaching this concept is likely to be misunderstood. Second, it is possible to “lose one's head.”**

II. The assignment—

1. Using what you know about Gut Trip Analysis and the Secret Garden, how would you answer the question raised in 13: 54b and 56b? “Where did this man get this wisdom? **Jesus is profoundly tuned in to the Kingdom of Heaven. He is fully aware of these things: his “hole in his middle’ (his call and/or mission), his Inner Cathedral (spiritual awareness), his Altar of Spiritual Resources (work of the Holy Spirit), and The Oasis (The Kingdom of Heaven).**”
2. Chapter 14: 1 – 12--This story about Herod, Herodias and her daughter desiring the head of John the Baptist is horrific. What was Matthew's purpose in including this material in his gospel as this place? Do some research in your commentaries, or on-line, and write a short paper of your conjectures.

John the baptizer got himself in trouble by raising moral questions with the political leader of his time. Herod was fooling around with his brother's (Philip) wife Herodias. John's persistence concerning this issue angered Herodias, and when her daughter pleased Herod by dancing at a Herod's party, that Herod put himself in a bad position by promising anything to the dancer. In consultation with her mother (Herodias), she asked for the head of John the baptizer. Herod made a political decision to honor her request. Beheading is the easiest and quickest death the Romans provided.

It is noted that Herod believed Jesus might be the resurrection of John. It is interesting to observe that Herod, like the Jews, believed in the possibility of an intermediate resurrection of an individual; perhaps, like some kind of resuscitation, in this instance “headless” resuscitation. The Jews in the 1st Century C.E. never believe in an individual resurrection, rather they believed in a national or community resurrection of the dead.

For me, the question to be answered is “Why did Matthew include this episode at this time in his gospel? Is it redactive material; something misplaced or out-of-order? Perhaps. However, in light of the experience of The Oasis it can be said that “being called into question” is experienced as a “thin place;” that is, providing an intersection of the world and the experience of authenticity. In this case, Herod's authenticity was called into question.

This is a typical reaction, and one I experience many times a week. My wife calls my life into question when I'm slopping through life, and my reaction is the stop the messenger by killing the messenger. I do this by getting angry and saying inappropriate things.

However, the lesson is that at the time my life is addressed and awakened, I am confronted by my own authenticity. When this happens it is a desert experience quickly followed by an experience of The Oasis.

What do you think? Let me know.