

## TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

### IHOP BIBLE STUDY

**Topic: Matthew 16: 21 to 17: 27 “The Ministry of Transparency” (new title)**

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 eighteenth 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 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. What is the “Transparent Ministry?”**

The material in this section is very powerful. The ministry that **emanates** from The Spiritual Oasis is a “**transparent** ministry.” It is a ministry **of immanence**; always it is about to fulfill itself; it stands on the brink of a chasm into which the audience is invited to surrender themselves. The result is the leap of faith!

**Something that “emanates” is something that glows from within. Marcus Borg, in his recent book The Heart of Christianity writes about the “thin places” where life and the spirit intersect. His description aptly can be applied to something that emanates.**

**The word Transparency is described several times in the recent past in our studies. However, thinking of a photo-transparency is helpful. There is an image on the film there so the light deep behind the film illuminates and enlarges the image. For our purposes, the image records our experience of authenticity, and the light is the spirit that emanates through it.**

**The theological concept is that of “immanence.” This is the experience of always standing on the brink of a chasm into which we are invited to surrender “the things of this world” and radically trust—or faith—ourselves depending on the sustenance of God’s spirit. Faith and trust are words that mean “surrender.” This is living the life that is always coming into fulfillment. It is immanent.**

So, what is **impending**? What can we anticipate?

The answer is we can anticipate our own death to the things of this world in anticipation of our own transfiguration. Marcus Borg, in his recent book, *The Heart of Christianity*, observes that this death is both metaphorical and real. In baptism we experience a metaphorical death to this world (Salmon: being *on vacation*), and a metaphorical resurrection (Salmon: being *at home*). Also it is a physical death and resurrection. On one side of this event, we live as human beings. On the other side of this event, we live as spiritual/human beings until we experience the final death of our bodies. (*For a deeper discussion, see Borg, Marcus Chapter Six "Born Again: A New Heart" 104ff.*)

The "reality" of our death is that on one side of this experience we are completely different from the other side of it! We look the same, but everything is transformed. Jesus is the demonstration of this transformation. **It is helpful to recall that what is changed is us! Life and reality are the same, but we are transformed.**

**Vss. 16: 21—Jesus predicts his death: two times.**

At the beginning of this section of our study, Jesus established an imperative for himself: he must go to Jerusalem to suffer and be killed. Then, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day "be raised to life." What is the imperative? **Why must Jesus die?**

**This question is a stickler, and opens up "Head Trip" conversations. However, the answer drawn from our experience is that Jesus demonstrates the kind of "surrender" necessary for us to follow.**

The imperative is that Jesus demonstrates the kind of surrender necessary to make full use of our Spiritual Altars, and to live the abundant life in the Spiritual Oasis. This is Transparent Ministry. This is not an Adoptionist Theology for paying the price of our salvation. This is Transparent Theology to illuminate The Way Home. We want the Good Life? The Way is to surrender our love of this world in order to acquire the authentic life that is hidden within us. Hidden, because we are blind to it, not because it is secret.

**"Adoptionist" Theology is described as paying the price. Humans are lost in the Pawn Shop of life, and Jesus' death pays the "redemption price" for us. Since The Christ Jesus is a Son of God, then we are God's adopted sons and daughters.**

**Concerning "Transparent Theology," Jesus' death and resurrection illuminates The Way Home to the human/spirit life of authenticity. This is the "Good Life."**

Jesus' second prediction of his death comes at the end of the Healing of the Epileptic Boy in 17: 22, 23.

## **Vss. 17: 14 to 23—The Healing of a Boy with a Demon**

This Ministry of Transparency is illustrated in this story. The fundamentals of the story are that an epileptic child is brought to the disciples for healing, but they cannot heal him. The family comes to Jesus with this complaint. His response is, “O unbelieving and perverse generation.” The reason for this failure of the disciples is their unbelief. Jesus confronts his disciples with this accusation, “Because you have so little faith. **In this instance, unbelief and unfaith are associated with un-surrender.**

At this point, it is helpful to remember that the experience of “belief” and “faith” is SURRENDER. That is, we are called upon to GIVE UP our worldly things (Salmon: on vacation) for our spiritual things (Salmon: at home).

To do this requires a leap of surrender (faith). When we do this NOTHING IS CHANGED, but EVERYTHING IS TRANSFORMED.

### **II. The assignment**

1. **vss. 17: 1 – 13**—In light of this Ministry of Transparency, interpret the significance of The Transfiguration in Chapter 17: 1 – 13.

**This event represents one of the three great theological descriptions of faith as “Glorification.” The other two events are “Justification” (the experience of awaking), and “Sanctification” (the experience of living awake). Glorification is embodying awakenment, or BEING awakenment itself. Another description is that of living in the presence of God who is Perfect Awakenment itself, or Perfect At-One-Ment.**

2. Do a little research in your commentaries about the significance of Moses and Elijah showing up to talk to Jesus.

**It can be said that Moses represents all of the Law, while Elijah represents all of the Prophets. In these two are embodied the fulfillment of the Old Testament. The presence of The Christ Jesus represents the completion of God’s message to the world. Moses and Elijah both looked at God face-to-face with the result of changing their lives. Also, it is claimed that both men were bodily assumed into God’s presence (heaven) at death.**

3. Why did Matthew choose to put this event at this place in his gospel?

**What better way to illustrate the “transparent ministry” than with this event of total spiritual transparency? Also, this story illuminates the kind of resources made available to those awakened to their Spiritual Oasis! Moses and Elijah and Jesus are available to us all the time. Fantastic!**

4. **vss. 17: 23 – 27—The Temple Tax**

In this section, Matthew gives us a “fishy tail.” This story illustrates the fun those who live “at home” have at the expense of those who are living “on vacation” and

still blind. Interpret this story by standing “at home” looking back at those “on vacation.” Give it try! Keep it fun!

**“Now, how’d he do that?” Was it magic like pulling a quarter from behind a child’s ear? Perhaps, by looking through the Christ we can de-mystify this strange and funny occasion.**

**First, Jesus asks if others pay the King’s tax, or do the King’s sons pay taxes? The response is that the “sons” are exempt. Next, Jesus identifies himself as a son, and thereby exempt. Since, we also are sons and daughters of the King, we too are exempt from paying taxes. However, elsewhere Jesus teaches us to “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.” So, we are under the commandment to honor the world of taxes.**

**Now, to have faith and trust means to radically surrender ourselves to God’s grace. If God wants us to pay taxes, then let God find the money for us.**

**Ridiculous? How do we know until we’ve tried it. After all, “Nothing is impossible for those who love the Lord (Perfect At-One-Ment).”**

**In other words, Jesus is playing a little joke on the tax collectors. So, how’d he do it? If we have to have an answer, then there isn’t any answer. When we no longer need an answer, this is it. Go figure.**

**All right people. Talk to me.**