

My comments are in red Lucida San Unicode 12 pt. This is an especially reflective session. A serious approach to reading this material will be appreciated. Also, your comments are solicited. Pastor Bill

TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH July 7, 2004

IHOP BIBLE STUDY

Topic: Matthew 26: 31 to 27: 31 -- "The Way Life Is"

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.

Because we are winding down the study of Matthews' gospel, it may be helpful to remind ourselves that this method of Bible study is plowing new ground.

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").

The theological perspective for this gospel is that of "sanctification" (a Head Trip Word), or a path to "deep satisfaction" (a Gut Trip Word).

This is our twenty-sixth lesson in this series. This lesson remains under the general banner associated with "A Training Manual For Teaching the Transparent Sanctified Life. However, this is the seventh arena and the third lesson on "The Transparent Experience."

The use of the Matthew chart reveals a totally new perspective that makes this whole gospel take on new, and deeper, meaning.

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."

The method used is experiential rather than an intellectual approach. The use of experience grounds our old "code words" in the human situation, and transforms the gospel's meaning into something immediately recognizable to everyone. This eliminates arguments that begin when we objectify our old "code words" into ideas.

I. Read the assigned reading at one time.

- II. **Note:** The way in which the word "transparency" is used in this Bible Study associates the concept with the photographic film used to make transparencies. This film has an image engraved on the emulsion. When a light is passed through the transparency the result is an image that is thrown up on a screen. It is my contention that the "image" engraved into our human emulsion is the idea (Head Trip Analysis) of the Holy. The experience of Holiness, or the "sanctified life," is the experience (Gut Trip Analysis) of *deep satisfaction*, or what I've called The Spiritual Oasis.

The key word in this current study is "transparent." This word means the same thing as when a person reveal his/her intended purpose. For example, "The harpist was at one with her instrument, and it was a beautiful experience."

This seventh arena of our study supports "The Transparent Experience."

- III. **Note:** "The Way Life Is" is just the way life is (TWLI).

First, it is important to note that life comes to us in many different ways. The chief characteristic of "life" is that it ends in "death." For some reason, we humans came to believe that death is something not associated with being a human being. Of course, angst characterizes our experience of death, as does our fear of dying. But these are to be considered a normal part of our human experience. These experiences are a part of our being human.

One of the operating principles of this approach to Bible study always is to ask the question, "What is your experience?" The IHOP Bible Study spent some time in sharing their experiences of "The Way Life Is" (TWLI). TWLI is just "The Way Life Is." One person reminded the group of a bumper sticker that illuminates this human situation. It read "Shit happens." It is to be remembered that "If it can happen, it will!" TWLI reveals itself as being transparent; i.e., it is clear that the way it is, is the way it is!

Second, some people associate death with being evil. This could not be further from the truth. Evil, or the personification of evil that is called The Devil, always is out to convince us of a LIE. The lie is that we are *hopeless* because life always ends in a six-foot hole—the grave. Compare this to the reality that death never lies to us! If we ask Death, "Am I dead," and Death replies, "No." Then, you are still alive. However, if we ask Death, "Am I dead," and Death replies, "Yes," we are! This is the experience of The Way Life Is (TWLI).

Evil is our most misunderstood theological concept. Frequently, evil is misunderstood (Head Trip) as the cause of all our troubles. This is NOT

TRUE! The cause of all our troubles is The Way Life Is! (Remember, if it can happen, it will!)

On the other hand, Evil always is a lie. The evil message is that TWLI leads us into HOPELESSNESS, and THIS IS ABSOLUTELY NOT TRUE. The reason is that the significance of being HUMAN is TO HAVE CHOICE, while we are *victimized* we can be VICTIMS or we can be VICTORS.

Third, in this way, death is our friend. The Devil is the enemy whose purpose is to deceive us. The truth of the matter is that death does not make us hopeless. We have a choice in the matter. We can chose to be victimized by death and become hopeless. Or, we can chose to be a victor, and in spite of death, become hopeful. Further, we can chose to be the hopeful part of society against the day when all of society can become hopeless in spite of death, or even because of death.

The personification of Evil we call The Devil, or The Demon. No matter what name we give it, its message is one of hopelessness, and it is a lie.

In this light, what's wrong with the following statement? "Improper self-confidence, like that of Peter (Matthew 26:31-35), is the first step to a fall. There is a proneness in all of us to be over-confident. But those fall soonest and foulest, who are the most confident in themselves. Those are least safe, who think themselves most secure. *Satan is active to lead such astray; they are most off their guard: God leaves them to themselves, to humble them.*" (Italics mine for emphasis.) [Matthew 26—Matthew Henry's Commentary – Bible Software by johnhurt.com.]

This is a common, and traditional, treatment of this passage. There are two glaring misunderstandings in this paragraph. The first is the treatment of Peter's over-confidence and self-security as being the field on which Satan can play. This is not true. Over-confidence and self-security are manifestations of The Way Life Is!

The second error is in the statement "God leaves them to themselves, to humble them." Again, this is not true! God never abandons us under any circumstances. Frequently, humility begins in humiliation—at least this is my frequent experience.

Choosing to be hopeful is the rest of this story. Jesus chose to intentionally live his life, and to intentionally die his death as an illustration for all of humanity. The cross and resurrection (the defeat of death) is the result, and we are the recipients of this gift of the resurrection. Jesus is the first born of many brothers and sisters in this matter.

IV. Review the following verses and share how these passages reveal The Way Life Is (TWLI).

1. 26: 31 – 35: Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

What is the significance of Peter's boast that reveals something about TWLI?

From my perspective over-confidence and self-security find its reward in being over-confident and self-secure. The emphasis is on the experience of my-self, an ego-trip. To this end, the axiom holds, "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself. In this way, God does not abandon us, humans abandon the principles to which we are created TO BE TRANSPARENT! Again, there is no evil intent at work here. It is a common human experience that in our most existential moments our courage turns to angst. This is TWLI.

Please find in your commentary information about Zechariah 13: 7 that is mentioned in 26: 31.

Two quick observations can be made. Several of the commentaries available on the web associate all of the Old Testament testimonies as a forecasting of Jesus ministry. Personally, I find this presumptuous. To associate the testimony of Zechariah with Jesus—the man—fails to take seriously Zechariah's unique contribution to the history of faith.

In terms of Christology, I can make a case that the universal Christ was a present in the work of Zechariah as the universality of Christ was present "in the beginning."

When "Christ", as an old code word, is made an object of study instead of an experience, then these kinds of mistakes are made. On the other hand, when Christ is no longer an object, but rather the experience of AWAKENMENT, then Christ's work is very evident in Zechariah.

Zechariah, writing at the time of the Persian Empire, was sent to rebuild both the physical Jerusalem wall as well as to rebuild the spirituality—to

Awaken—the Hebrew nation. This, then, is the work of The Good Shepherd. This is over against the work of the “Bad Shepherd” who continues to thwart the work of building both foundations.

Observe the work of the “Bad Shepherd” is not a work of evil. Rather, it is the work of TWLI.

2. 26: 36 -- 46: The Disciples and Jesus in Gethsemane

Jesus observes, “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” How does this statement illuminate TWLI?

TWLI. I rest my case.

3. 26: 47 -- 56: Jesus Arrested

Read this section to see what it reveals about TWLI?

Betrayal is not the work of evil; this is the work of TWLI.

4. 26: 57 – 68: Before the Sanhedrin

What do the actions of this religious tribunal reveal about TWLI? (Try not to be cynical.)

Now, we are getting to the interesting parts. The little tag on the sentence above is appropriate. It is easy for those of us “christians” to believe we have righteousness sewed up. However. Take a brief look as the intended purpose of religious institutions. The reason they are “institutions” is that their purpose is to protect the status quo! Before we get too quick to condemn the Sanhedrin, it is good to remember this point.

The best we can hope for is THE AWAKENMENT OF OUR ECCLESIASTICAL INSTITUTIONS. Certainly, we want them to produce the best fruit possible. Like most churches today, they are blind to the *will of God for our time!*

To this end, the Sanhedrin, nor our current church institutions, needs condemnation, they need transformation. This is the goal of the IHOP Bible Study. Today’s church needs the language of Gut Trip Analysis to make relevant the ancient Good News. This is what aids in the transformation of our clergy, laity and institutions.

5. 26: 69 – 75: Peter Disowns Jesus

How do Peter's actions reveal TWLI?

The experience of being compromised is an every day experience. It was for Peter, and it is for us as well. Part of the problem is that our clergy have explored in their seminary education a study of the Good News that would speak clearly to the worldview of the 21st Century. The information has been around for almost 100 years. The failure is that the clergy are faint-hearted when it comes to educating those in the pew about these wonderful relevant theological studies.

This is not the work of evil, it is simply TWLI.

From our perspective, theological teachers and clergy do not have a language to which laity can relate, nor can they. This is the purpose of Gut Trip Analysis! Clergy and laity understand the transliteration of our Old Christian Code Words because it is based on their human experience.

6. 27: 1 – 26: Jesus Before Pilate

What do the actions of the political representatives reveal about TWLI? (Try not to be cynical.)

Again, the tag line is important. The political arm of society is an institution whose purpose is to maintain the status quo to help most of the people most of the time. What we can hope for is an AWAKENED political institution. What is said above about the Church hierarchy can be said for the political hierarchy.

This is not the work of evil, it is simply TWLI.

7. 27: 27 – 31: The Soldiers Mock Jesus

What do the actions of the military representatives reveal about TWLI? (Try not to be cynical.)

Once again, the tag line is important. What is said about the Church and politics is applicable to the military institutions.

This is not the work of evil, it is simply TWLI.

All right, folks. Talk to me.

As you come to the end of this document, please provide some feedback. On Tuesday, July 27, the Salina IHOP will take the whole session to evaluate our work in the Gospel of Matthew. Your input now will be helpful as we come to this task.