

Kylee's comments are in purple. My comments are in red.

TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IHOP BIBLE STUDY

Topic: Matthew 4: 12 to 4: 25 "Galilean Internship"

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 third lesson in this series, and is associated with "Preparing The Teacher." My reflections on the gospel give us the overall title of "**The Training Manual For Teaching The Transparent Sanctified Life.**" With this metaphor established, let us continue. .

- I. **Read the assigned reading at one time.**

- II. This section of the chart is titled the Galilean Internship. Jesus stays in northern Palestine for most of Matthew's Gospel! It is not until Chapter 16: 21 that Jesus acknowledges the necessity of going to Jerusalem. In Chapter 17, Jesus takes Peter, James and John up to the Mount of Transfiguration. Here, Jesus gets new marching orders to go to Jerusalem.

- III. Note that this Galilean Internship begins with the words of Isaiah 9:1, 2. This reading is from 1st Isaiah. Recall that the first 39 chapters may be written 150 years before 2nd Isaiah.
 - a. Speculate on the significance of the words of Isaiah as they can be applied to this early internship. Why do you think Matthew chose this experience of Jesus to record?

- IV. Chapter 4: 17 – Another way to get the message of Jesus is to think of this Internship period as the time when Jesus wrote down his theological purpose. For those of you who have been in seminary, today's scriptures could be his Credo.
 - a. How does Jesus stated purpose compare with your own stated purpose. Or, is your "credo" different from Jesus' credo? How come?

If we say that Jesus' credo is, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near," then I guess my credo if I have one is not the same. **You may be closer than you think!** I think Jesus had many different branches of theological purpose. **Check this out.** I think if I really thought about it my purpose might be to show people (specifically my art students) what is wonderful about them and what is wonderful about their classmates. **When you find something beautiful about each other, you just have to treat each other with more kindness. I think that Jesus was into that line of thinking. Actually I know that he was.**

Yes, indeed. The old Christian Code Words "Kingdom of Heaven" is the difficulty. As you ran these words through your gut you affirmed the

EXPERIENCE OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. This Kingdom is illuminated as At-One-Ment; it is the experience of Perfect At-One-Ment. Wonderful.

2. The message of repentance—This is an Old Christian Code Word. What is your experience of this word? Please work hard to avoid “Head Trip Analysis.” The encouraging word is that “repentance” is as common human experience as is the word “love.” Chew on this for a while, and dialogue with me on-line.

I looked in your book to see if I was on the right track but I didn't find this word when I was looking so I will be bold and just answer anyway. I guess it is like recognizing the separation (sin) between you and God and or you and others and deciding to do something about it. Like making a change in yourself for the better. My experience of this is that it is hard to change but it usually makes you feel good in the end even though it was hard.

Now I know someone who can write an additional chapter on "Repentance" for my book.

The traditional definition of repentance means to turn to look in a new direction. Note that this turning leaves you in the same circumstances, except you are looking in a new direction. Looking on a new direction is a persistent theme for Jesus. The second note is to observe that *our circumstances never change. We are the one's who are changed--we are looking in a new direction.*

- V. The Calling of the First Disciples 4:18 – 22. In a manner of speaking, this may be the way in which Jesus put together his staff. Look closely how he went about this task. Reflect on the experience of these men and their families. What is the significance of this particular ministry that made it so attractive for these disciples to immediately say “Yes?”

Honestly, I don't know. I don't think I would have gone if that was all that was said to me “Follow me, and I will turn you into fishers of people.” I think I would have said no thanks and went back to fishing unless I was looking for a way out of the life I was accustomed to. Maybe I would have gone with him just to see what in the world he was talking about. I always have wondered what the rest of the story was. Did their families approve? Was there more conversation?

The answer here needs a little more massaging of our old Christian Code Words. For now, it is enough to say that Christians always are the "YES" people. The experience is when we first say "NO," then we block all of our options. If our first response is "YES," then we can prioritize our responses: our "YES" can mean right now; or our "YES" can mean we'll do it later. The movie "Joe vs. The Volcano--with Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan--illustrates this perfectly. Hanks says an immediate and non-reflective "YES" to jumping into a volcano for a people to whom he owes nothing. Then, he and

Meg both jump together! Obviously, he is the Christ figure, and she is The Bride of Christ: The Church. Interesting.

Can you associate any books you've read, or movies you've seen, in which people made such radical decisions so quickly? (*Joe vs. the Volcano*, and the *Matrix* movies come to my mind.)

The only movie I found like that in looking through my collection is *Romeo and Juliet* where after they meet for the first time later that evening they decide to marry and then the next day that is what happens. I also read a book called "The Bean Trees" where the main character decides upon turning 18 to change her name and start driving to anywhere to start her life and ends up with a three year old abused child given to her by a woman in a diner so that she will be safe. Pretty radical decisions in my opinion.

Thanks for a more sophisticated illustration.

Have you personally responded in such fashion? When and why? Please share your experience with us.

I don't really think many of the decisions I have made are very radical. I was once offered a job at a church camp that would start the next day. I did not know the place or the people but I went anyway and I knew that I would be stuck there for five weeks. Turned out to be a good experience.

From my perspective, this is a good illustration of living in The Kingdom of God. Also, it illustrates The Secret Garden. Do you see the miracle produced here?

VI. The third inner lesson concerns the experience of healing. Can you speculate on why Matthew chooses to make healing the "final test" for Jesus' internship? Observe that Jesus is practicing outside of his Jewish district up in Syria and in the Decapolis. Jesus really studied hard for the final presentation of his thesis: "Repentance Produces Miracles." (Isn't this fun!)

I don't know why healing is the clincher but I guess maybe it is because the ability to heal someone of a serious illness or any ailment for that matter is very impressive. I know about what it is like to be really sick and not be able to get well and how lonely that can feel. I also know what it is like to get well in a way that you didn't expect and make a miracle type recovery. Mine was 7 1/2 months of constant muscle spasms, pain, and difficulty walking. If you have not experienced that then you probably know someone who is sick and seemingly no one can help them. It is really amazing to go from a very sick state to being okay again. Healing isn't always like not being able to walk and then walking again. **Sometimes healing is taking place in a less obvious way like in your soul. It is obvious to those who know you well but not everyone. I really identify with the stories of people wanting Jesus to heal them. Soul wounds can be just as debilitating as physical ones.**

Thanks so much for sharing. This kind of thinking is a continuation of your physical and spiritual healing. Two things to think about--

FIRST, God is not in the business of changing circumstances. If this were true, then we are victims of a petulant God: "Why didn't God heal us in the first place? It doesn't work this way, although this is a very popular and relevant way of thinking. This kind of thinking is evidence that we make OBJECTS of our faith: God is an object out there who does miracles for us so that "good things happen to good people." Uh-uh!

THE WAY LIFE IS does these things to us. When you experienced the remission of your illness, you expressed your deep gratitude, and we rejoice with you. However, this emission is as deeply mysterious as getting the pain in the first place! **THE WAY LIFE IS** is responsible for both! So where does God come into the picture?

God does not change our circumstances! **GOD CHANGES OUR RELATIONSHIP WE HAVE TO OUR CIRCUMSTANCES**. God changes us! When the pains of life become unbearable, the Word tells us to look in a new direction. Observe, this doesn't change the circumstances; still we are in pain. When we look in a new direction, what is changed is our relationship to the pain. In effect we say, "YES!" to the pain. We can decide to make the pain our friend instead of our enemy.

Do you hear the **GOOD NEWS** here? The Way Life Is can no longer defeat us. We are no longer victims of our circumstances. We can now be victors. Now, this is Good News. It is **REPENTANCE** that results in healing. It is looking at our physical ailments from a new perspective. I suppose an interesting result of this new direction is that some of our physical circumstances are psychosomatic. Healing our psychic (our soul-relationship?) brings healing to our bodies.

SECOND, it is helpful to remember that the Bible is built on metaphors. The danger is approaching the bible literally. Why this is dangerous is that the literal approach misses the significance of the bible's message. Kylee, you provide the evidence for this illustration. Taking the miracle of healing literally makes no human sense to us because it is out of our realm **OF EXPERIENCE**.

As I ruminate of this, an old hymn comes to mind, "There is a balm in Gilead, to make the wounded whole." What is the experience of the Good News of Repentance, and how does it get applied to wounded souls?

I guess if I am honest with myself I have "wounds" that I carry with me and Jesus can heal them if I let that happen. You have to choose to "get well" if it is the kind of wound that is a soul wound.

You are on target here; it is a matter of your choice to be a victim or a victor. Our being victimized (wounded) is without questions. It may be helpful to add here the danger of making an **OBJECT** of our healing: "If Jesus can heal them. . ." Taken from "Gut Trip Analysis," the Christ of Jesus already turned our heads in a new direction, and we have yet to awaken and make the transition. This healing is already accomplished, **ONLY WE CAN ACCEPT IT!** This is the "choice" we have to make.

Well, gang. Kylee provided us with a thoughtful journey. I'm grateful for the push. Anybody want to join in? Pastor Bill

Next week we start learning from The Teacher's Handbook. Come on. Talk to me!