

Responders: **Jimmy Wheeler**, **Gene Mace**, **Nedra**. **My responses in Red.**

TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

IHOP BIBLE STUDY

Topic: **Matthew 5: 1 – 12 "Transparent Happiness"**

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 fourth lesson in this series, and is associated with "Tools For Teaching The Methods For A Happy/Holy Life." 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. I. Read the assigned reading at one time.

II. With this lesson we begin one of five major sections of the Matthew's Gospel. Now, we begin to review "The Teacher's Handbook – Part 1: Transparent Ethics." This large section contains chapters 5 through 11:19. Here, there are two words in need of re-defining: transparent and ethics.

A. *Transparent* can be associated with something that is "apparent." In this sense, something that is "trans-parent" is something that becomes apparent after we see through it. It is finding the significance of the object. In Christian terms, as we look through the mundane we discover a revealed meaning; this is a revelation or an epiphany.

B. The word *ethics* refers to a system by which we relate to others, our environment and, ultimately, to God. The *ethic* promoted in this bible study is the ethic of At-One-Ment. This is a relational system that seeks to define our relationships against the experience of being brought into harmony or peace with each other.

C. *Transparent Ethics* is a relational system to enable us to see through our ordinary experiences to the extra-ordinary and spiritual reality. It is a method that results in making ordinary activities holy endeavors.

III. The Beatitudes in Matthew 5 may be one of the most famous passages in the entire Bible. Certainly, the passage provided lots of fodder to be fired from pulpit canons. Now, we want to experience them through "Gut-Trip Analysis."

The first word to be examined in this way is the word "Blessed." This is an Old Christian Code Word that frequently is treated as something holy, pious or deeply religious. However, *transliterated bibles in the vernacular*, unlike *translated bibles from the original Greek and/or Hebrew*, translate the word "blessed" as "happy." The word "happy" is a "Gut Trip" word; it points to our human experience.

From our point of view, the Beatitudes are the experience of "transparent happiness." Jesus is teaching us his Christian Ethics in chapters 5 to 11:19. Each of our next 12 lessons will take apart the material in Jesus' Handbook – Part 1. The Beatitudes are the bedrock, or the foundation, of Jesus' ethical stance.

When we approach this material using *transparency*, then the contradictory nature of each beatitude is no longer a mystery.

As you approach this lesson, think of Alice Through The Looking Glass. When Alice looked into the large mirror above the fireplace, she knew there was another room, just like hers. *Except everything was reversed*. When she jumped through the looking glass she could look at the backside of the mirror. This is what we want to experience; it is this "looking at the backside of the beatitudes" to experience the significance of each one.

So, your assignment is to JUMP THROUGH! Push yourself to understand each beatitude as a metaphor to illuminate the way God as Perfect At-One-Ment views these experiences.

5: 3 *poor in spirit*. What is the transparent experience of this statement, and how is it related to the "Kingdom of heaven." (The Kingdom of heaven is an Old Christian Code Word that I experience as the relationship of Perfect At-One-Ment.)

The really happy are those who get their "self" out of the way. They are the ones who experience At-One-Ment.

It seems to me that this is addressing arrogance. Arrogance, at its base, is an attempt to deal with feelings of not really adding up in one's own estimation. Thus, it is a counter-phobic behavior. It tries to cover up one's fear related to his/her perceived inadequacies. The beatitude addresses our need to be comfortable with our inadequacies while at the same time not making a virtue out of them. Arrogance (of spirit) limits one's ability to live At-One in harmony with TWLI. Poor in spirit is not groveling and belittling oneself. It is a stance of recognizing our inabilities & limits in such manner as to enable us to develop as we were created to do. Thus, we are able to become At-One with life. This is true life, i.e., theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

5: 4 *those who mourn*. What is the transparent experience of this statement, and how does it bring on "spiritual comfort?" [Note: Isaiah 61: 2, 3.] (Spiritual comfort I experience as living in harmony with Perfect At-One-Ment; this is the peace that passes understanding.)

The really happy are those who make themselves intentionally vulnerable. They live in harmony and peace with Perfect At-One-Ment.

A fact of life is that those who cannot mourn are unable to know joy. In working with people in grief, it is important that they become able to feel their grief and socialize it. Those who strive ardently to "hold it in" do not experience the release from their grief that allows them to experience the comfort that comes from letting it out. This is rather like a boil. There are times when the boil is lanced to allow the infection to drain, i.e., come out.

5: 5. *the meek*. What is the transparent experience of this statement, and how does it result in "inheriting the earth?" [Note: Psalm 35: 11: "But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace."] (The way in which I experience my Christian inheritance is in the Good News that does not change my human situation, but transforms my relationship to my human situation. This I experience as a great peace.)

The really happy are those who live as though they want nothing. They discover they have everything.

The meek is so often understood as those who have no real backbone. To use your acronym, the meek are those who can face and live with TWLI. It seems to me that this relates a lot to how I see the "poor in spirit". These are the people who do not have to control life out of a sense that the control is essential to their well being. When we do not have to control life, we are able to inherit it. It just means that we can live in this existence in the fullness of life. We change our existence into life.

5: 6 *those who hunger and thirst for righteousness*. What is the transparent experience of this statement, and how does it result in "being filled?" [Note: Isaiah 55: 1, 2: "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost."] (The way in which I experience being "filled" is being *fulfilled!* Amen.)

The really happy are those who live passionately to bring all of their relationships into harmony. They experience a profound sense of fulfillment.

I particularly like your word "fulfilled". This fits into some of the biblical translations of John 10:10 in which Jesus is said to have come that we

might have life "in all its fullness". It is always interesting to me that this does not speak of those who have achieved righteousness. It speaks of hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Part of this relates to facing the fact that we never fully achieve righteousness, i.e., we are always short of the glory of God. It seems to me that this reiterates the dynamic of being poor in spirit and meek. When we are able to accept, embrace and even love our inadequacies and limits, we are able to work at changing them so we can grow. It enables us to strive after the fullness of life. Only within this stance can we be fulfilled.

5: 7 the merciful. What is the transparent experience of this statement, and how does it result in "being shown mercy?"(My experience in being shown mercy is to be awakened that I live on both sides of the mirror.)

Those who go searching for love never find it. Only the loving find it, and they do not go searching for it. These are the really happy people.

I think of the old Saturday night cowboy movies in which the good guys were all good and not at all bad and the bad guys had no goodness. We are merciful as we are able to face our failures and "shortcomings". Again, though, we need to be able to love ourselves within these limitations. A caveat here is that loving does not mean to make a virtue of our failures. Loving requires knowing the love of God that accepts us as we are and seeks that we strive toward the fullness of life. This enables us to be merciful, i.e., able to extend beneficence to others who are as we know ourselves to be. Out of our true self-love we reach out to others in their limits. This, in turn, prompts their beneficence-mercy -- toward us. In this atmosphere of mutual mercy, we are able to live At-One in communion with life and our brother and sister humans.

5:8 pure in heart. What is the transparent experience of this statement, and how does it result in "being shown God?" [Note: Psalm 24: 3, 4: . . "who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false."] (My experience of "being shown God" is the experience of At-One-Ment with neighbor, self and God—this fulfills the New Commandment.)

The really happy are those who are single-minded in their relationship to the environment, neighbors, themselves, and finally with Perfect At-One-Ment. They stand face-to-face with the depth of reality and authenticity, and they experience full human-ness.

Purity has suffered so much from piosity that it loses its real meaning. As I understand Wesley's concept of sanctification, it has to do with our heart intent not with behavioral accomplishment. When our heart's intent is

toward the ultimate reality, then we see who, what, where, how God is in the very core of who we are. Then we truly are at the "gut level".

5.9 the peacemakers. What is the transparent experience of this statement, and how does it result in being called "sons/daughters of God?" (My experience of being a "son of God" is of living on both sides of the mirror.)

The really happy are those who work to bring balance into all their relationships. They are given the name "an intimate of Perfect At-One-Ment."

This beatitude seems so self-evident that I find it difficult to say any more than it says. In reading the background material, it appears that this was a response to the emperors of the day calling themselves "peacemakers" and therefore "sons of god". True children of God are more than passive non-warriors. Peacemaking involves action. I see this as a call to be actively involved in making peace, which is a basic Godly virtue in living.

5:10 persecuted because of righteousness. What is the transparent experience of this statement, and how does it result in being given "the Kingdom of heaven?" (The "Kingdom of heaven" I experience as the relationship of At-One-Ment.)

The really happy are those who stand in the gap for the sake of justice. They inherit the reward of peace in At-One-Ment.

This beatitude speaks of the cost of living in a state of At-One-Ment with the truth of life. Basically, it seems to sum up the previous beatitudes and says that there is a cost involved in them. One of the disturbing factors of life for me was that I understood that if I were virtuous and followed God's ways, goodness would follow me all the days of my life. However, I learned that it cost to live by "God's ways" even at times when I did a respectable job of that. I remember one fellow saying that for every dollar he gave to God's work he received 10 in return. He was involved in oil and banking and seemed to have what has been called the Midas touch. For most of us it costs to do right. However, as is often said, "we can sleep at night" which indicates that we are at peace with life. We experience what in the Jewish tradition is called Shalom. Here we are told that ours will be "the kingdom of heaven" which I understand to be what you call At-One-Ment.

All right, everyone. Take a whack at this, and talk to me!

The following is from Jimmy Wheeler, on the list service in OKC. Jim chose to answer this study from the point of view of the process, rather than a transliteration of The Beatitudes. The following is an interesting development.

For me, Bill, I've come to know that mysterious "power, spirit, dynamic, energy, force" whatever, as "social justice," which is a real possibility that comes to us, biblical metaphor "kingdom of heaven/God." You cannot have or own it. You can only witness it or to it, relate to it. You can point to it in the "integrity discovered in the mending of selfhood (wholeness or being made whole)," or when human institutions manifest integrity rather than mendacity! It is socialism in the social process, but as an underlying dynamic rather than a political program. Jesus = social justice. The law = social justice. The prophets = social justice. The story = judgment among the people, not as a designation of "good or bad" but as healing, reconciliation and wholeness when they drew near social integrity in themselves and their systems! Play with the idea. Read the Bible by not trying to understand the bible in the terms of our times, but using the biblical metaphors of "truth" among us, or in history, to illuminate our times and our "reality." In our times, [*these things*] identify "sin," "judgment," "love."

The following is from Nedra:

OK..here goes. I believe that there are those "aaaah, ha" moments when God manifests the "at-one-ment" experience. This is the moment, I believe, when you rise above the pain of the ego and can experience the kingdom of heaven. Just lasts a short while ... feels incredible. **This is like anything else, "use it or lose it." The more you use it, the longer it lasts. For the moment everything seems to be so clear. I think that it is seeing with the 'third eye', if you will. You know those moments...they are a feeling that we are yearning for. Absolutely!** However, we are human and have the wonderful opportunity to be here, to help our soul grow, and learn to develop our wholeness. **Actually, my experience is that we are asleep to a full-grown soul. The more we awaken to it, the more we access what is already there. How do we do this? By free will. By choices. By guts. By being at one with God. Yep! As I said above, "being At-One with God" is awakening to the At-One-Ment that is already ours. You are on target and awakening more and more. Keep forging deeper! Pastor Bill**