

My comments in Lucida Sans 12 pt.. This change of font is to accommodate those unable to receive the color. Also, please note the changes from the "study page" made in sections II and III. WES Those of you who received an early draft, several minor changes are made in this edition.

Comments of Gene Mace preceded with the initials – GM.

**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IHOP BIBLE STUDY**

Topic: Matthew 9: 18 through 10: 42 "The transparent task" and "The Graduation Address"

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 twelfth 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. Read the assigned reading at one time.

II. The Context for this double section is that both pericopes support each other. The Transparent Task underlies and illuminates The Graduation Address." Again, a transparency is like a photographic positive film; that is, it is like a photographic slide. When light is passed through the film, the image is projected. The Transparent Task is similar. The task is demonstrated for us in the ministry of Jesus. All that is necessary is for light to be supplied and the "task" is projected *back into reality*. In this instance, the Spirit of God, and/or The Christ supply the light. *For this purpose, we embody the transparency, and the light passes through us to project The Good News to others. What we embody as the transparency is our experience of the Christ.*

Please be careful with the Old Christian Code Words of "Spirit of God" and "The Christ." The *experience of these words* points to the profound Freedom we find in our relationship to Perfect At-One-Ment (Spirit of God), and to the Good News we are called to live intentionally on behalf of the least, the lost, and the hopeless in this world (The Christ). When we intend to live purposefully and practice this relationship, we experience our own transformation, and we experience the authority of living and demonstrating these principles. **This is living the authentic life.**

III. Vss. 9: 18 to 9: 34 -- these are **four little healing stories** that turn on the light of the Transparent Task. This task is illustrated in the following construction.

1) On one side of our transparency is The Way Life Is (TWLI). TWLI is characterized by death, sickness, blindness and the inability to communicate (to be mute). **Also, we experience this as human/natural living, TWLI, or "living on vacation."**

2) When this material is passed through the transparency of The Good News (The Christ) then, **(We speak of this stage as "passing through Jesus or the cross.")**

3) On the other side of the transparency a transformation occurs. **Also, we experience this as spiritual living, or "living at home."**

It is important to remind ourselves that The Good News does not transform TWLI. Rather, the Good News transforms our relationship to TWLI. We are changed not our human situation. This is what Jesus illustrates as he embraces the human situations of death, sickness, blindness and the inability to communicate. This is to say Jesus no longer treats these things as enemies. He embraces them and takes away their power to victimize us. Our experience of this is Good News because we are no longer victims, but victors.

The importance of this process is not to be underestimated. Because this process ends up being Good News! **The Good News we experience as "living at home!"**

This is our transparent Task. We are to experience it, and we are to share it so that others may experience it. This is THE TOOL in the Teacher's Tool Box.

There is one caveat in this process of "living on vacation" or "living at home." THESE ARE NOT EXPERIENCED AS TWO DIFFERENT PLACES. THIS IS EXPERIENCED AS ONE REALITY THAT IS LIKE A REALITY SOUP. The "human/natural" and "the spiritual" part are of ONE REALITY—or a UNIVERSE-- are like tiny particles in this soup. As we observe these particles through our prescription glasses (ground on the stone of our gender, race, culture and education) one lens illuminates the "human/natural" part of the soup, and the other lens illuminates the "spiritual" part of this ONE REALITY SOUP!

We do not live in a parallel universe of two different worlds. We live in ONE WORLD with two realities.

IV. The Graduation Address – vss. 10: 1 to 10: 42

THE BIG QUESTION Jesus seeks to answer in his graduation address is in vs. 23b: "I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes." The Big Question becomes when does the Son of Man come?

A. First, Jesus addresses this question by reminding his graduates of their "Transparent Task." Vss. 10: 1. Jesus gives the first class of twelve disciples "authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness."

1. Now, if you are still uncertain about The Transparent Task, please review the Context to the lesson, and then ground it in your own human experience.

2. This is THE GOOD NEWS we have to offer to a hopeless world!

B. The audience to which these 12 graduates are sent is to those they know the best.

1). For this Jews, the "lost sheep of Israel" was their target. Their activity was to bring hope to the sick, dead or dying, and cleanse the lepers. Vss. 10: 6 – 9.

2). The tools for doing the job are minimal: take nothing with you, and depend solely on your audience for the necessities of life. Vss. 10: 9 – 10.

C. The one caveat Jesus offers this graduating class is in vs. 10: 16 – "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Wow! Wouldn't this be fun to run through "Gut Analysis?" Anybody want to try it?

GM-*The "lesson" that I am picking for response in this study is Mtt:10:16 I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.*

In my living I have heard it taught that we must be kind and loving and accepting. These are virtues of merit, but they are often understood within a framework of naiveté that is sweet, nice

and uncritical. This teaching is calling us to be wise and judiciously critical. It seems to me that this calls us to look at life as it truly is (TWLI) and don't be taken in by those who would use our good will against us. Even more than this is the issue of combining loving acceptance with critical benevolence. As I have worked with people I have learned that I must accept them where they are in life without a blind confirmation or condemnation. If I am to help a person I must let them know that I care about them enough to accept that what they say is very real to them. At the same time I must be realistically critical of what they say. Loving wisdom always has a wary edge that refuses to take protestations at face value. "Innocent as a dove and wise as a serpent."

V. Second, Jesus addresses the BIG QUESTION as he turns to the body of his address. The essence of vss. 17 to 42 is a reminder that unless we are very careful, THE WORLD WILL GET US. If it does, everything worth living for is destroyed.

A. I can detect a list of 17 ways Jesus tells this graduating class about the dangers of the world getting us!

1. vs. 18 "On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witness to them and to the Gentiles."

The danger here is that the political process is associated with the human/natural activities, rather than with spiritual activities. My experience of the political process is that of compromise. In the Good News there is no compromise; either people are set free and transformed, or they are not.

2. vs. 19a "But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it."

Speaking the truth in love is dangerous in some circles. The interesting part of this sentence is the last part concerning *not worrying about the response*. The important part of what we can learn here is that the fundamentals never change. It is the situation in which the context is applied that changes.

For example, our context is always EXPERIENCED based. The first statement to ask in every circumstance is "Tell me what your experience is!"

From this point on, we are in dialogue.

In this instance, the danger from the world is the failure to ask this question!

3. vs. 19b "At that time you will be given to what to say, for it will not be you that is speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

In this situation the danger from the world is the question "Is this really 'the Father' speaking?" The answer is simple: "Does the message bring things/people into At-One-Ment? Always, this is "the Father's purpose. Unless, of course, it is the Mother's purpose! ☺"

4. vs. 21a "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child."

This is what happens when we depend exclusively on "things of the flesh." (My, I haven't use that expression in a long time!) Or, in my jargon,

this is what happens when we depend exclusively on the human/natural (living on vacation) instead of the spiritual (living at home).

5. vs. 21b “Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.”

This activity breaks the 5th Commandment. Anything that is the antithesis of At-One-Ment represents the world of living on vacation. The caveat: The danger here is thinking of being “on vacation” or “at home” as living in a parallel universe; i.e., in a human/natural realm or in a spiritual realm as two different places. It is important to remember we live in a UNI-verse in which both the human/natural and the spiritual are of one piece; that is, we live in a Reality Soup.

6. vs. 22 “All men (*and women*) will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

Why does the world hate those who “live at home” in the spirit realm? Because, men and women who are living in the world (living on vacation) believe they are really living. The message of faith calls into question the human/natural lifestyle. Those who embrace this worldly lifestyle are rightfully offended, and the attempt is made to destroy both the Good News message and the messenger. “Standing firm” in the Good News leads in salvation, which means being saved from living “on vacation,” and being saved to living “at home.”

7. vs. 23 “When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.” **The Big Question becomes, when does the Son of Man come?”**

The Son of man comes when God’s will for living in At-One-Ment is experienced.

This is the offense. This is why the world seeks to destroy the messenger—Jesus, and to destroy the message—the Good News. Consequently, the world tries to destroy the messengers of Jesus, as well as to destroy the Good News delivered by Jesus’ messengers.

8. vs. 24 – 25 “A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household.”

A little Internet research will tell you more than you want to know. Beelzebub is, literally, Lord of the Flies. This is associated with the dead around which flies are drawn. Here, this “death” is associated with Pride!

Notice, there are three images here that are tied together as the relationship of student/teacher, master/servant, and the house of Beelzebub or Pride. Pride is the antithesis of At-One-Ment; Pride is the symbol for how humans were kicked out of the Garden of Eden (living at home). The real worldly danger here is the danger of Pride.

For those who are AWAKE, our pride is not found in ourselves, but in our relationship to Perfect At-One-Ment.

9. vs. 26 "So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known."

I'm reminded of the statement "All is known." There is no place to hide. It is from this aspect of "living on vacation" from which humans attempt to escape, only to discover the escape is an intensification of the life from which they seek to escape. I see this when we camp. People escape the city for the lakeside, and in the process exchange 2000 sq. feet of house, for a 10X15 tent, and then share the public bath with 200 other people! Go figure.

The only real escape is to surrender to living "at home," and this is wherever we happen to find ourselves at the moment.

10. vs. 27 "What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul."

Perhaps, this is one of the more hopeful statements made by Jesus in this graduation ceremony. Jesus speaks to all of us living "in the dark," which is living "on vacation." As we take seriously this message then we are speaking "in the daylight," i.e., speaking of it "at home."

11: vs. 28 "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both the soul and body in hell."

This danger is particularly interesting to me because it speaks of "the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." What is our relationship to hell? It is the antithesis of At-One-Ment. It is helpful to remember that "evil" always is a lie and the Demon is a liar. The Demon wants to convince us we are victims and all is hopeless. This is a lie because we have a choice to be victimized or to be victors. Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection prove it. We are Victors!

12. vs. 30 , 31 "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny. Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from **the will of your Father**. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows .

My Confession: This is a curious statement, and I've struggled to identify the danger in this particular point. The point of my struggle is with the idea that we humans are of more value than two sparrows or a hair on my head. It is my personal belief that sparrows and our hair are At-One with Perfect At-One-Ment as much as we humans are At-One-Ment with Perfect At-One-ment. Does anybody want to take a swing at this?

13. vs. 32 – 33 "Whoever acknowledges me before men [or women], I will also acknowledge him [her] before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men [and/or women], I will disown him [her] before my Father in heaven"

The worldly danger here is being blind to the choice we are asked to make. The word "choice" is crucial here. It is important to remember that humans are guaranteed our freedom to make choices. However, the axiom always is to be applied: "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself."

When we make choices that result in At-One-Ment, then we receive the reward of deep satisfaction. When we make choices that result in Separation or anti-At-One-Ment then we receive the reward of hurt and dissatisfaction. In these situations God is The Guarantor; that is, God guarantees the reward for everyone, everywhere so that each has the same experience.

Consequently, choosing to do things that do not "acknowledge the power of At-One-Ment," the reward for this deed is dissatisfaction. On the other hand, the choice to do things that "acknowledge the power of At-One-Ment," the reward is deep satisfaction.

14. vs. 34 - 36 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword, For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law--a man's enemies will be the members of his own household."

The key phrase in this worldly danger is "to the earth." So the question remains, just where did Jesus plan to bring peace? Deep peace cannot be found "on vacation." It can only be found "at home." This justifies the statement "against father. . . mother, man's enemies will be the members of his own household." As long as the man's house is a worldly "vacation" house, separation--the antithesis of At-One-Ment-- is the result.

15. vs. 37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; any one who loves his own son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me."

This statement continues the "hard sayings" Matthew uses on several occasions. The worldly danger in this pair of sayings is not in understanding this business of being "on vacation," and/or being "at home." Putting our family first is idolatry, and breaks the first three commandments.

The transformation that takes place in putting Perfect At-One-Ment first in our lives, is that we are given back our love and respect for our human/natural parental and familial relationships.

A fundamental question to be answered here is "what is the cross that makes us worthy of Christ? The answer is, our cross is the burden of living "at home" in a human/natural world that is "on vacation." The danger is mistaking the one for the other.

16. vs. 38, 39 "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

The worldly danger represented in this saying is making the choice to "fool ourselves." One of the great dangers presented by the world is thinking we've found a life to live. Unfortunately, this is very common. Even our ordinary expressions give us away-- "Get a life!"

Jesus is on target by saying the only real life is the life you give away for the sake of the Good News! For me, the Good News means giving every relationship a choice. This choice is revealed in the simple question, "Have

a good day. Will you?" The one to whom this choice is given now has a decision to make. "Will I decide to have a good day, or not? This decision is an exercise of her or his FREEDOM, and is a true expression of a full and abundant life.

17. vs. 40 – 42 "He who receive you receives me, and he who receives me receive the one who sent me. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward, And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little one because he is any disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.

This supports the axiom, "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself." The worldly danger is failing to heed the meaning of the axiom. Receiving a "prophet," or a "righteous person," and "giving a cup of water to a person" results in At-One-Ment. Failing to do these things results in Separation and is the antithesis of At-One-Ment.

C. Your assignment this week is to pick one or more of these "lessons" that Jesus mentions in this graduation address and run it through your experience. Do a "Gut Analysis" on it. Then, please share the results with us.

D. The last question to answer is this. In light of this work, when is it The Son of Man comes? See # 7 above. Do you agree or not?

All right, please talk to me!