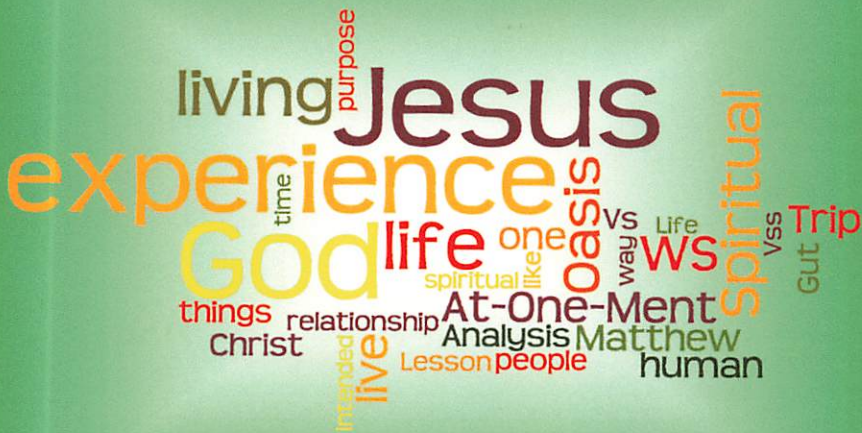


# The Making of a Teacher:

*Bible Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*



*William E. Salmon*

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***Bible Studies in the Gospel of Matthew***

by

**Dr. William E. Salmon**

**Published from the original:  
The Trinity Bible Commentary  
Revised December 2010  
From Original Publication by  
Mutual Ministry Methods**

***resurgence publishing corporation***  
**www.ResurgencePublishing.com**

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Cover graphics image attributed to Wordle™ at <http://www.wordle.net>  
Cover design by Richard G. Walters

ISBN: 0-9763892-7-4

Printed in the United States of America



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

But, where do I begin to recognize all of the people who have participated in the creation of **The Trinity Bible Commentary**? Certainly, I'll add each of the participants who attended all, or some, of the 9-year run of the TRINITY BIBLE STUDY Bible Study sessions at the local International House of Pancakes. Then, I'll need to add those who made physical contributions, some large and some small, to the material itself.

I'd better not leave out my ever-patient wife, **Beverly**. How many pages has she read of the things I've written and she edited for content, punctuation, syntax, grammar and spelling. Usually, her greatest reward was for me to tell her, "Circle the corrections with large red circles so I can see them all." Of course my response is from a selective memory. I suspect she has much more she could add. Whatever. She needs to know how much she is loved and appreciated.

Next, there are 10 years of subscribers to both **Sermon Starter** and to the **Trinity Bible Study**. Each week a few more get added to the list, and occasionally there is someone who asks to be "unsubscribed," and they are subtracted from the list with my deepest regrets. Today, there are 131 subscribers to **Sermon Starter** and 97 to **The Trinity Bible Commentary**. Their contributions of encouragement keep me going because it is for them that I labored in this vineyard; even today I struggle to meet my self-imposed deadline of keeping ahead three Sundays for the **Sermon Starter** subscribers, and at the moment I'm two weeks behind! Go figure

Bible Study Members		Contributors (In no order of importance)
Barry Dundas	Karl Stutterheim	Gene Mace – Retired Psychiatric Chaplain
Patrick Broz	Don Peterson	Kylee Rudkin – Art Teacher
Tammy Dees	Dennis Toews	Han Lankhorst – Progressive supporter
Robert Winters	Beverly Salmon	Keith Schadel – Political foil and Camp Dir.
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Ray Salmon	Daeon Matson	Emily Meckley – Progressive young pastor
Mark Ramsey	Dan Stutterheim	Barry Dundas – My home church pastor
Joseph Coachman	Bob Barhydt	Joseph Coachman - Progressive pastor
Bert Polk	Bob Brown	

## Acknowledgements

To those I've inadvertently left off the list, my sincere apology. My best excuse is the o'l brain synapses are not snapping like they used to snap.

For the creativity and free use of metaphors I take full responsibility; how I wish I could claim ownership, but they come from a deep place in my spiritual innards. Finally, this whole document is Revelation—so WAKE UP!

Inner Peace!

Pastor Bill  
Salina, KS  
January 2011

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. William Salmon is a retired United Methodist Minister and trained at the Ecumenical Institute, Chicago, now known as EI/ICA Chicago. In addition to this book, he is the author of "Decoding Our Christian Words," also published by Resurgence Publishing Corporation. In his career he served eighteen years in Kansas United Methodist Churches, eleven years as a Kansas Wesleyan University Administrator, and eleven years in international work with the Institute of Cultural Affairs (EI/ICA). For over fifty years he is married to Beverly Trapp, his college sweetheart. They live in Salina, Kansas – in the Nation's Heartland.

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# INTRODUCTION: LESSONS FROM THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Welcome to the study of the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew's message is powerful and relevant to our current human situation. Matthew shares with us the topic of *sanctification*. *During this study we will experience the meaning of this word instead of just studying it.* In this way, the meaning of sanctification is transformed into the joy of living in what I call our "Spiritual Oasis." I'll explain what a Spiritual Oasis is as we go.

Matthew's message is powerful and relevant to our current human situation. Matthew gives us a **training manual for teaching the Deeply Satisfied Life**. Matthew's teaching role model is Jesus.

We have charted the Gospel of Matthew and organized it into twenty-nine (29) lessons. We will refer to the Sections of this chart at the beginning of each chapter to indicate where we are in the study.

I give my reflections on the gospel the overall title of, **"The Training Manual For Teaching The Transparent Life."** We will look at this as a way to understand what is required of us if we would become teachers like the master teacher. This overall title is divided into five sections. Under these sections are twenty-nine lessons organized under eight parts. This teaching plan is to review The Gospel of Matthew. With this Master Metaphor established, let us begin.

Section I:	Preparing the Teacher
	Lessons 1-2      The Birth of a Teacher
	Lesson 3        The Training of a Teacher
Section II:	Tools for Teaching the Methods for a Holy/Happy Life
	Lessons 4-14    Transparent Ethics
Section III:	The Moral Imperatives;
	Lesson 15        The Foundations of Morality
Section IV:	Life on the Spiritual Oasis
	Lessons 16-21    The Spiritual Oasis
	Lessons 22-24    Moral Lessons
Section V	The Teacher's Reward
	Lessons 25-28    The Transparent Experience
	Lesson 29        The Next Step

# PART I: PREPARING THE TEACHER

## LESSON 1: THE BIRTH OF A TEACHER

### TOPIC: MATTHEW 1: 1 TO 2: 23 - THE BIRTH OF A TEACHER

<b>Part I: Preparing the Teacher</b>			
<b>The Birth of the Teacher</b>		<b>Training of a Teacher</b>	
<b>Genealogy: Note the Women</b>	<b>Christmas, Escape to Egypt and return</b>	<b>Introduction and Time Line</b>	<b>Galilean Internship</b>
<b>1: 1 – 1: 17</b>	<b>1: 18 – 2: 23</b>	<b>3: 1 – 4:11</b>	<b>4: 12 – 4: 25</b>
<b>Lesson 1</b>		<b>Lesson 2</b>	<b>Lesson 3</b>

- I. Read the whole assigned reading at one time.
- II. Vs. **1: 1 – 17** Take time now to research this genealogy. You can use your own library resources, or there is a wealth of material on the web. Share some of your research findings here.

WS: Using the “teaching” metaphor Matthew provides, we can ask the question:

“What is the lesson?” The Teacher (Jesus) is in the lineage of the great teachers of Abraham and David. Both of these ancient men are first-rank scholars and deeply in touch with the human/natural and the spiritual worlds. The contrast between the genealogy of Matthew and that of Luke 3: 23 –38 is interesting. Luke begins his with Jesus and Joseph and goes backward to Adam and God. On the other hand, Matthew begins his genealogy with Abraham—the father of the Jewish nation—and goes forward to Jesus.

The second notable difference between these two genealogies is that Matthew lifts up five women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary the mother of Jesus. A character study of these five women reveals them to be of doubtful morals and Ruth is an

outsider. This in itself is a lesson to be learned. Because of women's place in Jewish society this is a remarkable notation. Women were to play a central role in the life of the Teacher. This makes Jesus a revolutionary of his time.

**III. Vs. 1: 18 – 25** In light of our operating metaphor (the birth of the teacher) speculate on the angel's directions to Mary and Joseph. In particular, what are the "sins" from which the birth of The Teacher will save us? [**Vs. 21b**] Some research in my book "Decoding Our Christian Words", by Resurgence Publishing Corporation, may be helpful to recall how the word sin is used in "Gut Trip Analysis."

**WS:** "Sin" is associated with the word "separation." When it is understood that At-One-Ment is the purpose for which God created us, then separation is the antithesis of At-One-Ment. Anything that drives a wedge between us, our neighbor and God defeats the Great Lesson Jesus came to teach us: The Great Commandment is to love God as we love our neighbor and ourselves.

This places "sin" in an indicative ethic. It describes "The Way Life Is (TWLI)." It removes "sin" from a moral ethic. The indicative ethic supports the belief that we *are* sinners from birth (See Psalm 51: 5). The proof of this is that our gender, race, and culture define our relationship to each other as separate entities.

This is the "lesson" Jesus comes to teach us about the life of sanctification. Sanctification, understood in "Gut Trip Analysis," is the happy life or the life lived in deep satisfaction. This experience characterizes the Kingdom of God, and is my definition of "The Spiritual Oasis."

Then, in **Vs. 23b**, speculate on the significance of the name "Immanuel." In light of "Gut Trip Analysis" what difference does this make in our human experience? Share some of your ruminations.

Immanuel is translated as "God with us." To avoid "Head Trip Analysis" of the term God, it is necessary to ask how we experience God. If God is "love" then when was the last time we experienced being loved? Now, we have a common basis to discuss the nature of God.

One of my experiences of God is that of **The Guarantor**. When we do loving things, actions that help us experience At-One-Ment, then God guarantees that we experience feeling good about ourselves. When we do hateful things, actions in which we experience the antithesis of At-One-Ment, then God guarantees that we experience



## Preparing the Teacher

feeling bad about ourselves. In this way God is the Guarantor. Because God unreservedly loves us, God directly does not punish us, we punish ourselves.

This supports my belief that, “The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself.” We do happy things, and we feel good. We do mean things and we feel bad and make others feel bad. God Guarantees it!

**IV. 2: 1 – 12** In light of our Teaching metaphor, it is interesting to speculate on the Magi who are “Wise Men.” This is not to make too much of this part of the story, but to make the comparison of the gifts of gold, incense and myrrh. In practical terms, what is YOUR EXPERIENCE in using these three items? What lessons do we learn from this experience? Stay away from moralism. I’m pushing us to think about the “indicative;” that is, “The Way Life Is.”

**WS:** There is a danger here of pushing our “teaching” metaphor too far. However, my experience of the three gifts of the Three Learned Men is as follows:

**Gold** is experienced as being refined and is used to make things sturdy and last a long time. Sanctification, or the Holy/Happy Life, is a golden backbone of Christian faith. Perhaps this is the lesson taught by the first Wise Man. **Frankincense** is a fragrance used in incense. Somewhere in the Psalms (**Ps. 141: 2**), the psalmist writes of how we humans are incense wafted up to the nostrils of God.

The question is, what kind of smell are we to God who is The Perfect At-One-Ment? Perhaps this is the lesson taught by the second Wise Man. **Myrrh** is an ointment used in the preparation of a body for burial. When Baptism is considered our death to this world and our epiphany into the life of the spirit, then this ointment is the reminder we live in only one world but we live with two experiences of it; we have the human/natural experience and the experience of the spirit. Perhaps this is the lesson taught by the third Wise Man.

I told you not to make too much of this scripture passage, didn’t I?

**V. Referencing “The Escape/return” section in 2: 15B**

Note the reference to **Hosea 11:1**. Those of you who are Old Testament or Hebrew Testament scholars/students, perhaps you can enlighten us on the use of this Prophet. Why did Matthew use this reference in light of his intended metaphor of The Teacher? Or, in this same light, why the use of Jeremiah?

**WS:** Hosea, Micah and Jeremiah are all quoted. Matthew used a common method of proof-texting his message out of material readily familiar to his readers. Where more research is needed is why Matthew chooses these quotations rather than others. A New Testament professor once pushed my experience of the Gospels by raising the question, “What happened to Matthew the night before he wrote this down? Something that happened during which Matthew said, ‘Ah, yes, now I remember what happened to Jesus. . . . and this reminds us of some traditional quotations.’”

## **ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER— MT. 1: 1 – 17**

**A confession**— Advent preaching has never been fun for me. The stories are so familiar and the lections so sparse that I dreaded the task of developing a helpful and thoughtful message. My own discovery of Gut Trip Analysis helped me a lot. I began by asking myself, “How do I experience this story in my own life?” The answer is, The Christmas story is the story of my own life! Just like the whole of the scriptures.

The recent discovery of “The Lowery Loop” (Lowery, Eugene L. The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form, Louisville: Westminster John Know Press, 2001) gave me the reflective tools to take the Advent scriptures, such as they are, as a method to look behind them, under them, and through them so that the richness is revealed like black light reveals hidden writing. For illuminating The Lowery Loop I am grateful to Pastor Barry Dundas, my own pastor at Salina Trinity UMC (Kansas). Following his inspiration, I’m exploring a powerful new way of organizing the sermon using “The Lowery Loop.” The “loop” has four parts:

**The Itch**— The purpose of the Itch is to create a sense of unresolved tension within the experience of the congregation; in this way the Itch is children’s stories during which the ambiguity is resolved at the end as the Good News.

This is the place to think deeply about your own questions about the underlying message of the pericope. Don’t be afraid to speculate and play with any number of questions that come to mind. Recently, Pastor Barry and I sat down to work on his upcoming sermon for Christmas Eve. His initial question was, “Why would God put a young couple through such a terrible ordeal?” This is the “itch;” this is the question to which the congregation can relate. His next step is to drive this point as deep as his reflections will take it. Continuing the “Itch,” he raises secondary questions about the story such as, “Why are shepherds a part of the story; these are people who were on the bottom rung of the social ladder?” “Why was it necessary for the host of angels to appear to

## Preparing the Teacher

shepherds?" "Why did they obey the angels and go to Bethlehem?" Why do we tell the Christmas story in this way?"

### **CONCERNING THE ITCH IN MATTHEW 1: 18 – 25:**

As I sat down to speculate on what the itch might be in this lection I ended up with many questions. The earliest concerned the "naming." My later questions concerned the mysteriousness of the event, questions concerning the use of angels, identifying the Holy Spirit, and the fulfillment of prophecy. What I couldn't shake was *my itch* concerning male ontology. So much is said about Mary that Joseph comes off too cheap. I'm of the opinion that women can use Mary as a pretty good example for themselves. Today, especially today, we men come off as abusers, bumbler, cartoon characters, and irresponsible absentee figures—unfortunately, most of this is true, just watch TV for a half hour and observe 99% of the TV ads!

Yet, Joseph is our example of what a "righteous" man looks like! Righteousness means to be a good man. But more than this, righteousness means to be obedient to The Law; to fulfill the Commandments of Moses. In Gut Trip Analysis this is done by living the surrendered life in dependence on God. This is a perfect Christmas gift for the male population that is experiential, existential, and relational. Or, in other words, a male viewed through the lens of our "softer side." Pastor Barry recommends that the Itch be dwelt with at length in order to keep driving this one point deeply into the questions of your listeners; i.e., to raise the anxiety level of the listeners about the ambiguity they experience. Like guilt, ambiguity is an attention getter.

**The UGH—** This is ANALYSIS time, the time to use the material in the pericope to rub the "itch." This is the place to "deepen the ambiguity." In today's scripture, the UGH begins by observing how Matthew treats Joseph. He begins by placing his whole Gospel in the context of the genealogy of Joseph. The character development is impressive. Barry recommends that the UGH treat a single itch. In today's scripture I found that Matthew was really helpful in directly dealing with the ontology represented in Joseph.

**The Ah-Ha---** This part of the "Lowery Loop" takes the obvious answer and turns it upside down or inside out. Lowery writes of this as the principle of reversal; "to reveal our human aspirations for the dead-ends they are" (p. 72.) The way I introduced this response was to ask the reflective question, "What is Matthew telling us?" Again, I found the pericope material helpful and descriptive. This is the time to disclose the clue to resolving the ambiguity and prepares the way for the Good News to be proclaimed. Generally, after this point is clarified and announced, then resolving the ambiguity with the Gospel of Jesus Christ is relatively easy.

**The Good News**— The approach I took to relate this section to the itch of male ontology was to reflect on the lesson Matthew reveals which can be summarized as “learning what it means to be a “gentle-man.”

**\*\* This sermonic progression is described in more detail in the following resource: Lowry, Eugene L., *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.**

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER: MT. 1: 18 – 25**

The outline for this sermon can be found on-line at [www.triumc.org/web1/sermonstarter](http://www.triumc.org/web1/sermonstarter). Follow the links. No significant insights were developed to be shared in this commentary.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER: MT. 2: 1 – 12**

*Epiphany*—The awakening! What is it to which we awaken? We awaken to see a demonstration of what it means to live the humane and gracious life. We awaken to see a demonstration of At-One-Ment. Our awakening is a “Christ Event.” In fact, every awakening is located on a continuum from “being asleep” to “being enlightened.”

Today’s sermon is about having an epiphany; it is awakening to the significance of the babe in the manger. In particular, it is awakening to living in Bethlehem, when this word is used as a metaphor for living the Awakened life. The Magi were following their intuitions. Maybe they read the times in which they lived for the Magi were Wise Men. Today, we are called to be interpreters of our times. Isn’t the role of the preacher to stay in touch with where our people are spiritually and emotionally and to interpret to them the nature of the Good News?

**GUT TRIP ANALYSIS RECOMMENDS THAT YOU MEMORIZE THE FOLLOWING**

“You, O LORD, keep my lamp burning;  
my God turns my darkness into light.”

**Psalm 18: 28**

## Preparing the Teacher

SERMON BY BARRY DUNDAS, JUNE 5, 2009, A VBS REFLECTION

The Magi interpreted dreams – Don't go back to Herod, so they went home a different way. Early Christian followers of the way sought to find not just an alternate route, but to seek a new path: They are followers of the way. By the end of the VBS week, our little disciples are returning home a different way.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER: MT. 2: 1 – 12

*Theological "East"*---The church always considered *The East* as a theological and liturgical place. The influence of this is noted in much of our church architecture where many church sanctuaries are built on an East-West axis with the altar at the East end letting in the light of the Eastern Rising Sun. If they are not so constructed then the architect will note that the congregation faces a "Liturgical East."

Ask your local mortician which way caskets are put into the ground. Almost universally, bodies are placed so that they face the rising sun in the East.

Liturgical East is an important factor for the Muslim religion too. Every faithful Muslim places his/her prayer rug on the ground and faces Mecca in the East.

When Matthew reports that the Magi are from the East he is making a profound point that these men are representatives of God. Of course, part of this profundity is that they are Gentile representatives who came to Christ as a revelation, or as an "Epiphany."

There are many questions about these Magi. Traditionally, we number them at three although Matthew never tells us their number. This we assume because of the three gifts of gold, incense and myrrh. Again, tradition identifies them as Wise Men, but the translation of these words better makes them "Magi" or magicians. It is because they were following the Star from the East that some traditions assume them to be astrologers. Go figure!

It interests me that the New Testament is filled with the revelations that the Good News is delivered to all nations and all peoples; those who were marginalized by the Hebrew tradition found a special place in Jesus' ministry. Women were recognized by Jesus and played a central role in his ministry and in the future development of the early Christian belief system. Also, those outside the Jewish faith-system also were recognized, such as the story of the Woman at the well.

*The Star as metaphor*—It is a mistake to make too much of “the star in the east.” Many such stories can be found in the mythology of other cultures surrounding the Hebrew nation. The Gut Trip question is, “How do we experience the role of this Star as a metaphor.” The word “mythology” is used here in a technical and theological manner as something that is so true that it can only be expressed in a metaphor, allegory, parable, or fable; as Harvey Cox—a noted sociologist and futurist—observed, the message is the message.

Perhaps it is helpful to note that the gospel writers are like today’s TV/Video producers. Nothing is put into the picture, or the story, that is extraneous to the story itself. Consequently, the use of The Star as a method to point to the importance of getting Christ into the world. The use of the star by the Magi can be related to today’s use of the GPS; they put into their module Herod’s information, the study of the Hebrew prophecies in 2 Samuel and Micah and, *Viola!* the sought is found.

The real question for the preacher and the pew is what are the Stars available to us now that will lead us to the Babe in the Manger? Scripture study is one such star. Spiritual retreats such as “The Walk to Emmaus” are another. The study of Gut Trip Analysis is a third. It is these kinds of things that become “stars from the east” that lead us to our own Bethlehems.

*An interesting study of Mary*—While this is a bit extraneous to today’s scripture, a reading of, “The Protoevangelion of James” lays out the background of why Mary is chosen to give birth to God’s son as a virgin. It would be helpful to do a study of this material using Gut Trip Analysis. Anybody want to take a stab at it?

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER: MT. 2: 1 – 12**

*New Birth as Awakening and Faith History:* The danger in preparing and in delivering this sermon is that it can easily drift off into Head Trip stuff. The material is so familiar that it may be necessary to break through the easy way people assume they know the story. The question must be asked, “Do you really know the story?”

**It is important to keep saying to ourselves, “This is the story of my life! What does this episode mean for my own story of Awakening and spiritual transformation?”**

This is why I push so hard on the image of Bethlehem. The answer to how we EXPERIENCE Bethlehem will put the Magi story into perspective. It is easy to get

## Preparing the Teacher

involved in the meaning of the gifts of the Magi and miss the point that Bethlehem is where they find the Christ. Also, it is easy to get lost in the prophecies that the Baby will be born in the City of David. None of this is significant except to the Jews.

It is easy to forget that Bethlehem is a nothing little village. It was the place that had “no room in the Inn;” a stable sufficed. Yet it is in every little insignificant “Bethlehem” that is the place where we experience AWAKENMENT; God shows up in MY LIFE just as it is. Frequently, my life smells like a stable, yet God is “with us!”

What makes Bethlehem significant is this is where Wise Ones—those who interpret time times for us—leave us golden opportunity for increasing joy for making my life smell just right, and stuff that “prepares for my death to defining my life by the this world!” For me, these things are the gift of the Magi: gold, frankincense and myrrh.

What do you think?

## ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER— MT. 2: 13 – 23

*Joseph:* The theological focus of this sermon is on “Awakening Intuitions.” Like last week’s sermon, the focus also could be on Male Ontology. In visiting with a pastor this week we both were struck on how well Joseph comes off during the Christmas season. Usually, he stands in the background while Mary and the new born Jesus take center stage; but not in these two lections. Here Joseph is the decision maker, the one living on his spiritual intuitions and putting plans into action. Modern women have their self-understanding pretty well in hand, other than some latent self depreciation that creeps in. For many Christians, Mary is a role model of faithful surrender to God. Certainly, we men need a role model, and Joseph provides that guidance.

### **Awakenment and At-One-Ment:**

Always, it is helpful to remind ourselves that every theological word can be Gut Trip rationalized down to the words **Awakenment** and/or **At-One-Ment**. Keep yourself grounded in these terms, so that when you are asked the meaning of the word “grace,” you immediately can answer, “At-One-Ment.” Or when you have an inquiry regarding “sin,” you can say, “Sin is living the ‘unawakened life,’ or it is the antithesis of ‘At-One-Ment.’”

Why does this work so well? It works because the answers come out of our experience rather than our Head Trip understandings. In other words, we Gut Tripped them.



**GUT TRIP ANALYSIS RECOMMENDS THAT YOU MEMORIZE THE FOLLOWING**

**Learn the lesson of the Fig Tree [Jesus is the Fig Tree],**

**“When you see these things happening,  
you know the Kingdom of God is near.”**

**Luke 21: 29ff**

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**\*\*** This sermonic progression is described in more detail in the following resource:  
Lowry, Eugene L., [The Homilectical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form](#), Louisville:  
Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

## LESSON 2: THE TRAINING OF A TEACHER

TOPIC: MATTHEW 3: 1 – 4: 11, TRAINING OF A TEACHER

Preparing the Teacher			
The Birth of the Teacher		Training of a Teacher	
Genealogy: Note the Women	Christmas, Escape to Egypt and return	<b>Introduction and Test Time</b>	Galilean Internship
1: 1 – 1: 17	1: 18 – 2: 23	<b>3: 1 – 4:11</b>	4: 12 – 4: 25
Lesson 1		<b>Lesson 2</b>	Lesson 3

### Part 1: Matthew 3: 1 to 4: 11 “Instructions and test time”

- I. **Read the assigned reading at one time.**
  
- II. **Conduct a little research on John The Baptizer.** Use your own study resources, or the Internet. Share with us what you find.
  
- III. **Chapter 3: 3** The use of **Isaiah 40: 3** is interesting. Beginning with the 40<sup>th</sup> chapter, we are reminded this is **2nd Isaiah**. 1st Isaiah is written before Judah is exiled to Babylonia (Iraq). 2nd Isaiah is written after this exile as a promised return to the Holy Land. It is important to recall the importance of the prophet Isaiah to Jesus and his ministry. You’ll recall that Jesus chooses the *Isaiah scroll* to announce his ministry to the Jews. Isaiah’s explanation of this punishment to Exile is due to their disobedience to *the mission* God gave them to share God’s love with the whole world! An interesting observation is that God achieved Isaiah’s purpose anyway. While the Jews were in Exile they maintained their traditions and faithfulness as a demonstration to “the world” of God’s love.

All this is in deference to the prophet **Jeremiah** whose purpose is to announce to the Jews that the reason for their punishment to Exile is due to their disobedience to the 10

Commandments. *Jeremiah's call is to more faithfulness.* The position of Jeremiah is later picked up by the Pharisees.

#### IV. The lessons of John the Baptizer for Jesus his student.

##### 1st lesson: *Confession of sins* --

The need for "confession of sins." (3: 6). Do some research on "confession," and on "sin." Helpful material on our understanding of "sin" is in my book "Decoding Our Christian Words." As you explore this topic, force yourself to look at your experience of these words. Your references give you "Head Trip Analysis." Run these definitions through your "Gut Trip Analysis."

**Comments by Gene Mace, a retired psychiatric chaplain:**

**Gene Mace.** *Confession of sins: My sense of this is that we are being called to face ourselves quite squarely and honestly.* It is rather like in psychotherapy. If we are to effectively deal with our life's problems we must first begin by facing what is there within us. It is rather like working on a car. You have to know what happening before you is set about fixing it. A lot of confessions I have heard sound more like bragging about how bad someone was before they changed their modes of functioning. To me that is not confession but grandstanding. There is real value in genuine confession in that it accepts responsibility for who we are. However, we have to have a sense that we are loved even in our failures. Only then can we face who we are. At times I have seen confession as a means of trying to justify our failures and even make them seem like virtues. That is quite counterproductive. Another thing about confession is that it has a positive dynamic in being a statement of what we stand for. *Confession involves what we are leaving as well as what we are going toward.*

**WS:** Obviously I am a neophyte when it comes to psychological reflection. Your responses appear to be a fairly comprehensive analysis of the Confession of Sins. From my perspective, as a local-church theologian, confession of sin happens as we raise into consciousness the ways in which we prevent At-One-Ment. The purpose of being human is to experience living in harmony, agreement, to be in-tune, to experience contentment with neighbor, self and God who is The Perfect At-One-Ment fulfilling the New Commandment. Anything that results in driving us apart from this At-One-Ment is the antithesis of our human purpose and can be considered SIN. Paul Tillich notes that, "Sin equals separation plus guilt." Further, he notes that if we do not feel guilty about this state of being separated, then we are deceiving ourselves. Of course, Tillich is writing at

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the time when psychology first became a tool for theological reflection. How well I remember this early exposure to the psychological approach in seminary.

Confession of our human state of being is the acknowledgment of our human situation (Wesley's term). Our human predicament (Wesley's term) is we can do nothing to restore ourselves to unity. Hence, we are totally dependent on the Grace Of God; i.e., in "Gut Trip Analysis" this means to open our eyes to our restoration as human beings that already is ours to have. It is only necessary for us to accept it. (Tillich: "Accept the fact we are already accepted!")

### 2<sup>nd</sup> lesson: *Baptism* --

The need for "baptism" (3: 6B). Recall our recent work in the Gospel of John. What is the human experience of baptism, and what is achieved because of baptism? Share some of your insights with us.

**Gene Mace.** Baptism is like a kind of rebirth. You go into it as you are and come out renewed because you show in your baptism that you choose to be in the family of God. It is much more complicated than that, but basically it is a way that you can join the Christian family. I don't remember my baptism because I was too little when it happened.

**WS:** I'm happy that you were too little to remember your baptism, because baptism is a Gift from God. Just as friends and family brought you baby gifts, probably you do not remember these gifts either. However, they represented their love for you. It is not necessary that we remember, but that we learn to accept our baptism. Baptism is the way in which we are clothed with the uniform of our faith. The league to which we belong is the Universal Team of Jesus Christ. The Uniform, and our particular logo, represents the denominational team to which we belong. The best definition I have of Baptism is that it is an awakening event in which we literally and physically die to this world, and when we are raised up out of this watery grave, we are new creatures whose eyes are opened to this reality. As we grow up, our spiritual eyes are opened more and more. This is the purpose of the church's educational ministry.

**Gene Mace:** I see baptism as a way of *witnessing to something* that is part of our being. Sometimes this is something that has always been there. Sometimes it expresses what has happened new. Both have significant value depending upon the person and her/his background and basic personality. The main thing I see about baptism is that it is a way of socializing this part of our being. *It is a result rather than an event that happens upon the person.*

**WS:** Well you're on to something, but what is it? Anybody want to help him? From my perspective, this "something" is the awakening from our human predicament that John Wesley embraced as his "warm heart experience." Recently, I've talked about this something as my SPIRITUAL OASIS that is the experience of wholeness, authenticity, the experience of being a genuine human being. This is the experience of being At-One with the environment, neighbor, self and Perfect At-One-Ment. The Spiritual Oasis is the "Gut Trip Analysis" of the Kingdom of God.

3rd lesson: Wrath of God --

In 3: 7B, what is the "wrath" from which we are to flee? Keep your ruminations experience oriented.

**Gene Mace.** I try to avoid all kinds of wrath because I am generally a people pleaser and can't stand to have people mad at me. I like to live in my little harmonious world with no conflicts of any sort, but that doesn't always work out for me. I suspect that this verse refers to something a little more extreme. Some people would say that it is "the Judgment" but I don't know what I would say.

**WS:** Well you're getting after it. Keep pushing on your experience of "wrath." How does it make you feel? How does it make you feel to avoid "wrath?"

**Gene Mace.** The wrath from which we are to flee: This is a phrase that tends to chill my soul. Use of "wrath" has too many negative emotional reactions to me. However, I see this saying that there are many negative things that we really need to avoid. Maybe to avoid those negatives is to "flee from the wrath". However, I think this is so predicated upon a despotic monarch which was TWLI [The Way Life Is] then. It sort of reminds me of growing up as a child when much of the discipline was an expression of the anger of my parents more than a concern for me in the situation in which I had done something wrong. As a parent I have tried not to let that be the case in my relationship with my children. However, I did have those times when I was angry with my kids for what they did as though it were something done against me. *I don't think we have to flee from God's wrath. I see God in a much different perspective. I see God as a truly concerned parent whose will is benevolence rather than punitive.*

**WS:** Of course, you are right-on here. Wrath is a word that needs massaging. As much as Beverly dislikes this illustration, always it is appropriate. You see Beverly, my wife, is the Wrath of God in my life. When I get to acting in inhuman or in-humane ways (being hateful and angry) Beverly calls me back to full humanity. In effect she says,

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"Salmon wake up! No one likes you in this condition." Then, she stands there while I kill the messenger with a flood of inappropriate words. My experience of this is that Beverly loves me so much she is willing to call me back to being a full human being I am. She loves me so much; she is willing to stand the storm in order to call me back to full humanness. Now, this is real love. This is the experience of The Wrath of God which always is experienced as love.

My experience of the Wrath of God is that God doesn't do anything. What we experience we do to ourselves. My summary statement for this is, "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself." We do hurtful things (anti At-One-Ment); the reward is the experience of our in-humanity. We do helpful/healthful things (At-One-Ment); the reward is the experience of fuller humanness. God's "wrath" is the expression of God's love as Perfect At-One-Ment.

The only place I'd push your thinking is on the nature of God. The danger we have in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the objectification of our Old Christian code words. God is not an object to be studied. Rather, God is the human experience of At-One-Ment. After you've read my book on, "Decoding Our Christian Words," you'll have a better grasp on where I'm coming from.

4<sup>th</sup> lesson: Good Fruit --

What is the "good fruit" we are commanded to be? Share some of your insights with us.

**Comments by participants:** Kylee Rudkin is an Art Teacher living in South West Kansas.

**Kylee Rudkin .** I think we should be carriers of God's love and goodness. When we use our words and actions to build others up or to help in the ways that we can, and avoid things that separate us from others, then I think we are good fruit. Fruit is healthy and nourishing so we should be like that.

**WS:** Amen, sister! Amen.

**Gene Mace.** The good fruit in my opinion is to live life to the fullest that we can. This is not to try everything we can get ourselves into. It is to live it to the very most of love, being and living. *It involves a contentment with what happens.*

**WS:** Ah, yes. The Spiritual Oasis, aka: The experience of the Kingdom of God.

5<sup>th</sup> lesson: The Baptism of Fire --

What is the lesson to be learned concerning **3: 11B**, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire?"

**Gene Mace.** Hmm...I am not sure but it is fun to think about. Maybe it means that we will be baptized by the spirit of God (Holy Spirit) and maybe the fire reference means that it will be more extreme. What do you think Pastor Bill? My experience of Water is that it is kind of mysterious and that you have to have water to live whether you understand exactly how it works or why it works. It doesn't really scare me though. My experience of fire is that it is also mysterious and I am kind of afraid of it. In small carefully controlled amounts it is not quite as scary. I also know that it consumes what it touches. Hmm.. maybe it is like that song says "Our God, He is a consuming fire." That kind of makes sense.

**WS:** You are moving in the right direction. It is helpful to remember that Bible words are metaphors. Fire represents passion! "I'm on fire for the Lord!" To be baptized by the Holy Spirit means to be awakened (baptism) and given our Freedom (the Holy Spirit.) The Holy Spirit always means "freedom; that is the Freedom to Obey the created Is-ness of our intended creation: Live the humane and gracious life while working for Justice and Mercy.

**Gene Mace.** Baptizing with the Holy Spirit and Fire: My Nazarene background leaves me with a lot of negatives about those words. They were like words from Polly the Parrot that sounded big but had no meaning. They were the expectation of people who were saved and sanctified. Unfortunately, I have not yet overcome those emotional responses as yet. Maybe someday.

**WS:** Speaking of the Role of Confession. Do you recall your statement: "*Confession involves what we are leaving as well as what we are going toward.*" Thanks for the self-revelation. Truly, it is refreshing. Something for you to "move toward"—When the Holy Spirit and Fire are objectified as something to be studied, then our childhood experiences are the result of "Head Trip Analysis." Your testimony is a demonstration of the self destructive nature of such objectification. However, in terms of our EXPERIENCE as "Gut Trip Analysis," there is a revelation, or awakening, that leads us to the sense of "contentment" you speak of in the previous paragraph.

"Baptism" is the EXPERIENCE of AWAKENMENT to the reality that God is love. This love is experienced as At-One-Ment. "The Holy Spirit" is a "Head Trip Word." Yet, when it is experienced the word is transformed so that it is experienced as OUR FREEDOM. In this way the Holy Spirit is Good News.



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"The Good News of the Gospel" cannot change life's circumstances. All humans live oppressed; we live in the jails of life's circumstances. What the Good News can change is us! It is true we are victimized, but the Good News is we have a choice to be VICTIMS or to be VICTORS. My freedom is not dependent on life's circumstances; these do not define my life. My freedom is dependent on the relationship I choose to take to life's circumstances. Jesus death and resurrection is the demonstration of this truth. He died to the political and religious barriers of his day in order to illustrate that once we choose to die (for instance, in baptism), then what we experience is the resurrection. This is the transformation of us, but not of the circumstances itself. It needs to be remembered that life's circumstances are not out to get us; our human situations are amoral. Do they victimize us. Absolutely! But the Cross of Christ is my reminder that it is not the cross that defines us, rather it is our relationship to the demonstration of Christ that defines us. This is our freedom!

I AM FREE! Do you hear the Good News in this?

Please keep sharing with me what you experience! This is crucial to understand your experiences, and to better clarify how to explore this gospel using "Gut Trip Analysis."

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 3: 1- 12**

Matthew associates this scripture with, "Preparing the Teacher," and shares with us the topic of **justification**. This theology illuminates for us the transformed life of living in human deserts of everyday existence. Frequently, our human experience is arid and joyless. In Matthew's experience of justification we'll discover the transformed desert becomes an "oasis" or a garden. The interesting point is that this "garden" always is with us. Unfortunately, we are unaware of it, in denial of its existence, or simply forget about it. Always it is a refreshing experience to awaken to the reality of the inner garden!

This is what Christmas is all about. The Manger is both a wake-up call as well as the demonstration of spiritual refreshment itself.

**GUT TRIP ANALYSIS RECOMMENDS THAT YOU MEMORIZE THE FOLLOWING**

**"Christ IS all, and is IN all."**

**Colossians 3: 11B**

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER-- MT 3: 13 – 17**

**Epiphany—**

There are two dimensions that help to define the term “Epiphany.”

*Revelation*—One term is “revelation” which implies that we awaken to see something that we’ve never seen before, but that has always been there to see. In some ways this is a paradigm shift; i.e., it is like living in a “World of Squares” and to have someone say, “Today, I saw a Round!” “No way. There are no Rounds.” “Oh yes, there are too. There’s one right there!” Well, I’ll be. . . I’ve never seen one before.” This is what made meaningful the journey of the Magi; they discovered The Christ lying in the manger.

*Exposure*---The other term is “exposure” which implies using the intensity of light and time. This is like using a camera to expose film. What we discover is that Kairotic time reveals the intensity of New Illumination. Again, what is discovered is what is already there – the picture on the film is a picture of that which we discover. What Epiphany reveals is already there for us to discover. This is the demonstration of what it means to fulfill our intended purpose for living the humane and gracious life. This is what the Magi discovered, it is what Mary and Joseph brought into the world, and it is what is available for us to live the abundant life. When we live with such joy we become the demonstration for others to discover their intended purpose; this is the work of the Church.

**GUT TRIP ANALYSIS RECOMMENDS THAT YOU MEMORIZE THE FOLLOWING**

“For with you is the fountain of life;  
in your light we see light.”

**Psalm 36: 9**

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 3: 1- 12**

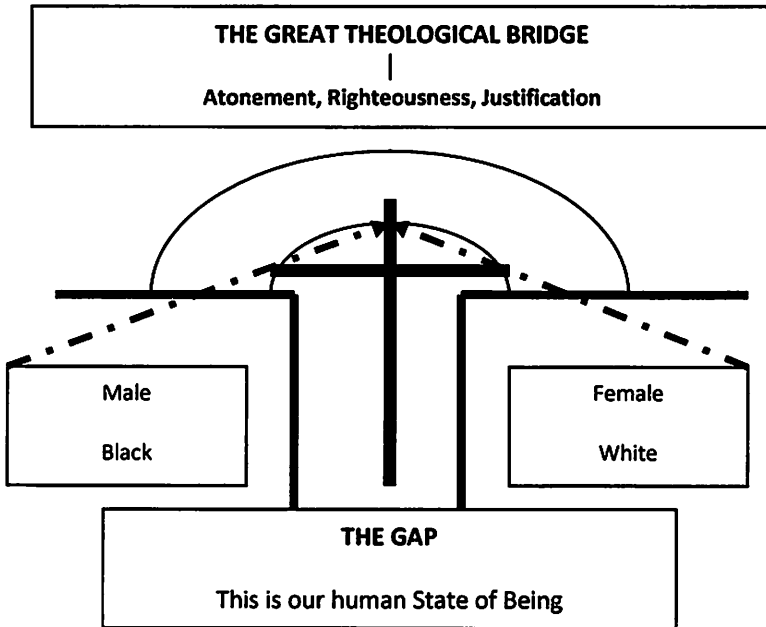
Epiphany is the 6<sup>th</sup> of January, the thirteenth day after Christmas Eve. Traditionally, this is the day the gentile Magi follow the Bethlehem Star and bring gifts to the Christ Child. The theme focuses on the light being shared with both the Jews and the rest of the world’s people. Traditionally, the first Sunday after Epiphany celebrates the baptism of Jesus.

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From the point of view of Gut Trip Analysis, Epiphany is the experience of inner illumination, the experience of Spiritual Awakening. Other words associated with Epiphany are **revelation** as disclosure or suddenly seeing something that is already there; **exposure** – as in a **photo exposure** means the time and intensity of light is a metaphor for the spiritual light revealing God’s intended purpose for humans to live the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.

The key to this sermon lies in an exploration of the word “**righteousness.**” Jesus uses it to justify himself before his cousin John the Baptizer. Righteousness is one of the great atonement theories to bridge the insurmountable gap between our genders, race, and/or our cultures. These are things over which we have no control. Gut Trip Analysis experiences **SIN** as living in a state of separation (Paul Tillich); this is a state of being that humans cannot overcome on our own effort. Our only hope of **SALVATION** is through an outside relationship to the Cross of Christ.

The following drawing may help.



THE MASS (Eucharist and/or Holy Communion), along with BAPTISM, are the rituals Christians use to rehearse the story of our spiritual awakening. In BAPTISM we go under the water to die to the barriers just as Jesus intentionally died on the cross as an

illustration for us that such a death is possible. In this way, Baptism is a tool by which we too can die to the barriers preventing us from having a personal relationship across the gap illustrated above. When we come up out of the baptismal water we experience a resurrection like Jesus experienced. The barriers are defeated.

So that when men have a relationship to the Cross of Christ and women have a similar relationship, then what reunites them is the Cross of Christ. It is this personal relationship to Jesus Christ that overcomes the SIN OF SEPARATION and gives us the gift of salvation that unites all of us through the Cross of Jesus Christ.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER--- MT. 4: 1 – 11**  
**The Christian Season of Lent --**

This is the time in the Christian year for individuals, and the church institution, to be introspective. I like the word "introspection" because it drives us deep into our human experience. It is inside us that we discover God's Kingdom that is prepared for us. It is in the darkness of our human experience that we discover where God lives, it is where we find the significance of living wholesome, healthy, deeply satisfied lives. While the darkness is fearful; Christ is our light who reveals our Spiritual Father as Perfect At-One-Ment. We have six Sundays (seven weeks) to dive deeply into our spiritual innards. When we come up for breath, well, it's like we're reborn.

**The Key to Gut Trip Analysis---** Keep asking yourself the question, what is my experience of these old scriptural words. Make your answers true to your human experience.

**The Devil, Satan, the Tempter--**

Lent may not be a time to get into a Gut Trip Analysis of the Devil. Perhaps, it is enough to remember that all of these words are metaphors for the human experience of hopelessness and The Big Lie that we are victims. We are not! Easter is the proof that even our experience of death is transformed into victory. This is why our experience of baptism is the way in which we die to the barriers preventing us from living the humane and gracious life; that is, to live the fulfillment of our intended creation. As Howard Thurman reminds us, "We are not Human Beings having a Spiritual Experience. Rather, we are Spiritual Beings having a Human Experience."

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### The Desert ---

The word “desert” is theological geography representing the human experience of aridity in our personal lives. It is what Thurman identifies as living as Human Beings. Gut Trip Analysis experiences this human desert as the mistaken notion that we are “Living at home.” We have spent so many years believing this aridity is all there is that we’ve come to associate it with the meaning of our lives. **This is not true!**

**This human experience is living on vacation! God created us to live within a deep sense of satisfaction! That is to live At-One with all things and with everyone. When we do, then this is HOME!** This is what Howard Thurman suggests in living as Spiritual Beings having a Human Experience. However, as we grow and mature spiritually and we awaken, then the difference between living at home and living on vacation becomes more evident.

Another illustration is that of living in the *human desert* and on occasion finding the significance of our *spiritual oasis*. The Oasis means refreshment. Again, as we grow and mature spiritually, we discover that we actually live in the Oasis all of the time. We have a real tendency to forget, to deny, and to be spiritually ignorant.

This is why Lent is so important. It is a time to reevaluate our lives so that we uncover our Spiritual Oasis as the perpetual refreshment it represents.

### **GUT TRIP ANALYSIS RECOMMENDS THAT YOU MEMORIZE THE FOLLOWING**

“In him was life, and that life was the light of men (*sic*).  
The light shines in the darkness,  
but the darkness has not understood it.”

**John 1: 4, 5**

### **Sermon by Barry Dundas**

Lent is a journey, a walking into the desert of our lives. We don’t have to seek the desert, it finds us. Holy Communion is a reminder that we are not alone.

# LESSON 3: THE GALILEAN INTERNSHIP

TOPIC: MATTHEW 4: 12 TO 4: 25 - TRAINING OF A TEACHER

Preparing the Teacher			
The Birth of the Teacher		Training of a Teacher	
Genealogy: Note the Women	Christmas, Escape to Egypt and return	Introduction and Time Line	Galilean Internship
1: 1 – 1: 17	1: 18 – 2: 23	3: 1 – 4:11	4: 12 – 4: 25
Lesson 1		Lesson 2	Lesson 3

### Opening Reflection

“For where your treasure is,  
there your heart will be also.”  
**Luke 12: 34**

**I. Read the whole 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 1<sup>st</sup> Isaiah. Recall that the first 39 chapters may be written 150 years before 2<sup>nd</sup> Isaiah. Some scholars identify three separate letters representing three periods of Hebrew history.

1. Speculate on the significance of the words of Isaiah as they can be applied to this early internship. Why do you think Matthew chose to record this experience of Jesus?

**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.

1. How does Jesus' stated purpose compare with your own stated purpose. Is your "credo" different from Jesus' credo? How come?

**Kylee Rudkin**– If we say that Jesus' credo is, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near," and 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.

**WS:** 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.

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.

**Kylee Rudkin:** 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.

**WS:** 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 in 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.*



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**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?"

**Kylee Rudkin:** 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?

**WS:** 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.)

**Kylee Rudkin:** 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. 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.

**WS:** Thanks for a more sophisticated illustration.

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

**Kylee Rudkin:** 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.*

**WS:** From my perspective, this is a good illustration of living in The Kingdom of God. Also, it illustrates The Spiritual Oasis. 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 Spoils. Jesus really studied hard for the final presentation of his thesis: "Repentance Produces Miracles."

**Kylee Rudkin:** 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 ½ 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.*

**WS:** 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." 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 remission is as deeply mysterious as getting the pain in the first place! THE WAY LIFE IS is responsible for both!

## Preparing the Teacher

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 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 be victors. 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. Bible Study participant's comment, 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 on 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?

**Kylee Rudkin:** 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.

**WS:** 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 question. This healing is already accomplished, ONLY WE CAN ACCEPT IT! This is the "choice" we have to make.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER--- MT. 4: 12 TO 23**

**Prelude:** At our United Methodist Seminary, like St. Paul's School of Theology, this is a time when seniors write their "Credos." This is a very serious business for seminarians because their professors carefully read and critique them, and then the students are asked to verbally defend them before their professors. It's a scary time. I'm not certain

that Jesus was all that scared, but today's reading can be considered apart of Jesus' Credo – "This I believe."

**The Key: Vs. 16,** "The people in darkness have seen a great light." In this sermon we move from the land in the shadow of death to live in the land of the great light.

#### ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER--- MT. 4: 12 TO 25

**The Mission of Isaiah** — In God's conversation with Abram, and later with Moses, the challenge for the Nation of Israel was to take the message of God's love to all the world. The one big problem is that the Promised Land given by God belonged to someone else, and the Nation spent most of its time defending what they thought God gave to them. This made their work of spreading the Good News of God's love a difficult process. Prior to The Babylonian Exile, **Jeremiah** forth-told (the examination of the Times and what would be the result) that Judah (southern Palestine) would be defeated because they had failed to be obedient to the 10 Commandments. **Isaiah** contradicted Jeremiah, believing they would be defeated because they failed to be obedient to their assignment of spreading God's love. As we know, Jesus picks up Isaiah's format (Isaiah 9: 1 & 2) as his own, while the Pharisees pick up the message of Jeremiah.

**The Purpose of Matthew**--- It is necessary to add to the statement above about Matthew that Jesus' Teaching Manual begins with establishing an "internship," of which the material is printed in the early chapters of Matthew. Also, at this point Jesus is writing his theological "credo."

**The Kingdom of Heaven**--- In Gut Trip Analysis, all theological terms are to first taken experientially. The first question always is, "How do we experience them?" In this regard, the KOH is not a place but rather a relationship. When we experience a sense of deep satisfaction after a hard day's labor then we have experienced a little bit of living in the presence of God; i.e., the kingdom of heaven.

**Repentance**--- Repentance is experienced as a turning around. The function of repentance is not to change my human circumstance, but rather to change me; i.e., to transform my perception of my problem. Take, for instance, the Bus Stop story: A man waits at a city bus stop under a sign saying "The Bus Stops Here Every 15 minutes." After waiting for 30 minutes, a neighbor comes by asking, "Are you waiting for the bus?" When we affirm that we are, the neighbor informs us, "I've got good news for you; the bus doesn't stop here any more."

## Preparing the Teacher

Is this Good News? Ah, yes, we can stop waiting and start walking. Has this information changed the Bus Stop? Not at all but now my perception of my situation is changed, and I can do something about me. Do you hear the “Good News” in this? Repentance is frequently defined as “looking in a new direction.” While standing in the same place, but now I can look in a new direction and find hope.

**Christians are “Yes” people—** One TRINITY correspondent said it was unrealistic that Peter and Andrew, and James and John, would respond so quickly as simply to leave their fishing equipment and father Zebedee in the boat and leave to follow Jesus. My response to her was to note that Christians are the “Yes” people. Our first response always is “Yes.” If our first response, “No,” then we limit our options. However, when we first respond with “Yes,” then we can add qualifiers as necessary. In the movie “Joe Vs. the Volcano,” Joe is confronted with the possibility of jumping into a volcano on behalf of a “Jewish remnant who had integrated into the Polynesian island community.” Joe (Tom Hanks) thinks for just a second, and responds, “OK!” This is a prime example of Christian surrender (faith).

**Nazareth and Zebulun/Naphtali, and “Galilee of the Gentiles—** In the New Testament place names are to be treated as Theological Geography. The writers of the New Testament are like today’s TV or movie producers. Nothing can be left to chance, and every word, action, backdrop, activity, raised eyebrow, or song choice has a purpose. Consequently, the NT writers set the location of their material very deliberately. Gut Trip Analysis helps us immeasurably. In today’s scripture, **Nazareth**, the Safe Place, is the place Jesus leaves.

So what does Nazareth represent but a place of deep familiarity. Jesus is choosing to expose himself to something that is unfamiliar and this is the Gentile world. So the question for us is, “How do we experience the Gentile world?” First, we are Gentiles. Second, our human experience is constantly exposed to situations and circumstances that are totally unfamiliar and frightening. This can be as personal as getting lost using a road map, to those with dementia, the loss of a relationship, or going broke or winning the lottery. The solution is that there is no place where Jesus hasn’t already “left Nazareth” and found his way into our lost world. The Good News is that we can look in a new direction (repent) and see Jesus leading the way out.

**A persistent theme of “Theological Geography”**

Gut Trip Analysis always treats any geography mentioned in the Gospels as theological metaphors. Consequently, physical geography is not germane to the message, but the message of the metaphor is crucial in setting a context for us.

**Vs. 12, Returned to Galilee**

Galilee represents our spiritual home, the place of our intended living in a relationship to God.

**Vs. 13, Leaving Nazareth He went and lived in Capernaum**

Nazareth is a place of familiarity. Capernaum is in Gentile territory; a place of unfamiliarity. From our perspective, Nazareth is home while Capernaum is a place of danger.

**Vs. 15B, the Galilee of the Gentiles**

A place of darkness and a type of death.

**Vs. 17B, Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near**

Gut Trip treats the KOH as a relationship and not a place.

**Vs. 18A, Jesus walking besides the Sea of Galilee**

The Sea of Galilee can represent living in a sense of place or living in our spiritual home. Also, there may be some baptismal imagery here too.

## SECTION II: TOOLS FOR TEACHING THE METHODS FOR A HAPPY/HOLY LIFE

### LESSON 4: TRANSPARENT HAPPINESS

TOPIC: MATTHEW 5: 1 – 12 - TRANSPARENT ETHICS

Section II: Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life					
The Teacher's Handbook – Part I: Transparent Ethics Lessons 4-9					
Transparent happiness	Teacher's challenge	Indicative Ethics: WWJD	Watch your focus	Watch your priorities	The Transparent focus
5:1-12	5:13-20	5:21-48	6:1-24	6:25-7:29	8:1-18
Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6	Lesson 7	Lesson 8	Lesson 9

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."

**Blessed:**

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. 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.)



## Tools for Teaching

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

**Gene Mace** (Retired Psychiatric Chaplain): 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 [The Way Life Is]. 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 is experienced as living in harmony with Perfect At-One-Ment; this is the peace that passes understanding.)

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

**Gene Mace:** 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.)

**WS:** The really happy are those who live as though they want nothing, then they discover they have everything.

**Gene Mace:** 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!*)

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

**Gene Mace:** 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 Alice's mirror.

**WS:** "Those that go searching for love only make manifest their own lovelessness, and the loveless never find love, only the loving find love, and they never have to seek it." (D. H. Lawrence) These are the really happy people.

**Gene Mace:** 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.

## Tools for Teaching

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.)

**WS:** 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 humanness.

**Gene Mace:** 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 Alice's mirror.)

**WS:** 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."

**Gene Mace:** 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.)

**WS:** 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.

**Gene Mace:** 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 was 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.

**Bible Study participant Comment:** The following is from a Bible Study participant subscriber. He 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, 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."

**Gene Mace:** 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 [*and*] feels incredible.

## Tools for Teaching

**WS:** This is like anything else, use it or lose it. The more you use it the longer it lasts.

**Gene Mace:** 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. However, we are human and have the wonderful opportunity to be here, to help our soul grow, and learn to develop our wholeness.

**WS:** Actually, my experience is that we are asleep to a full-grown soul. The more we awaken to it, the more we access we have to what already is there.

**Gene Mace:** How do we do this? By free will. By choices. By guts. By being at one with God.

**WS:** 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!

## ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER: MT. 5: 1 – 12

### The Christian Season of Epiphany.

Remember, the Spiritual Oasis is the experience of living the deeply satisfied life.

**NOTE:** The Beatitudes are representations of Transparent Ethics. Transparent means to look at the mundane of life and discover a deep meaning; in this way we have an epiphany! "Ethics" refers to a system by which we relate to each other. Gut Trip Analysis promotes the ethic of At-One-Ment. "Transparent Ethics" is a method that results in making ordinary activities into holy endeavors.

**From our point of view,** the Beatitudes are the experience of "transparent happiness." This is the bedrock of Jesus' ethical stance. Think of "Alice Through the Looking Glass." Look at the backside of the Beatitudes to identify the holy endeavor represented in them.

Most *transliterations* of the Bible translate the word "Blessed" as "Happy."

**The Key:** It is important not to get hung up on the negativity of The Beatitudes. As a friend points out, "Read the Bible by not trying to understand the bible in terms of our times, but using the biblical metaphors of "truth" among us, or in history, to illuminate our times and our "reality." In this way the Bible makes sense.

## LESSON 5: THE TEACHER’S CHALLENGE

TOPIC: MATTHEW 5: 13 - 20, TRANSPARENT ETHICS

<b>Section II: Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life</b>					
<b>The Teacher’s Handbook – Part I: Transparent Ethics Section A</b>					
<b>Transparent happiness</b>	<b>Teacher’s challenge</b>	<b>Indicative Ethics: WWJD</b>	<b>Watch your focus</b>	<b>Watch your priorities</b>	<b>The Transparent focus</b>
5:1-12	<b>5:13-20</b>	5:21-48	6:1-24	6:25-7:29	8:1-18
Lesson 4	<b>Lesson 5</b>	<b>Lesson 6</b>	<b>Lesson 7</b>	<b>Lesson 8</b>	<b>Lesson 9</b>

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

**II.** In traditional Protestantism, and in my experience as a pastor, the relationship between the New Commandment delivered by Jesus and the 10 Commandments delivered by Moses never has been easy. Largely, this is true because of Christian prejudice and arrogance. Even the term “NEW Testament” vs. “OLD Testament” betrays this understanding. The general feeling is that the Christian Bible super cedes the Hebrew Bible; the NEW Testament must be better. Today’s reading exposes this as a Christian myth. Jesus is quite clear when he says, “I have not come to abolish [The Law] but to fulfill them.”

**One of the ways I’ve justified the difference between The Law and the New Commandment is to say Protestants believe The Law does not save us, but we practice the 10 Commandments because we are saved.**

Now, let me see if I can take this bundle of old Christian code words and transliterate them into human experiences. “The 10 Commandments do not **spiritually** awaken us, but we practice the 10 Commandments because we are **spiritually** awake.

**III.** Next, are two disturbing quotations from Jesus. See what you can to do ground them in your human experience.

A. **Vs. 5: 19** – What is the experience Jesus is pointing toward in his statement “Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven?” Remember, the “kingdom of heaven” is the experience of Perfect At-One-Ment. Now for a BIG HINT: How does breaking the least of the commandments prevent us from experiencing Perfect At-One-Ment?

**WS:** The Trinity Bible participants struggled to define what might be the “least commandment.” It appears to us that the first two are crucial. Perhaps, one of the least may be, “Do not covet.” Our experience of the 10th Commandment is that coveting drives a wedge into At-One-Ment. Desiring another person’s spouse, or his/her car—or whatever—defeats At-One-Ment.

B. **Vs. 5: 20** – What is the experience Jesus is pointing toward in his statement, “. . .unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven?” Remember, “righteousness” is “right living” with neighbor, self and Perfect At-One-Ment. How had the Pharisees and the teachers of the law practiced righteousness?

**WS:** “Righteousness” is experienced as being at-one with Perfect At-One-Ment. Often the Pharisees and Scribes get a bad rap in the New Testament, it is important to remember they were the ones who paid the bills and protected the status quo. They are like the present-day pillars of the church. The TRINITY BIBLE STUDY consensus was that the status quo often represents certain superficiality.

C. What does it mean for Awakened People to surpass the Pharisees and teachers of the law?

**WS:** The TRINITY BIBLE STUDY agreed that faithfulness to At-One-Ment depends less on ritual and more on the substance of the Law; i.e., Honor of Father and Mother is proven more in actions and less in keeping Father’s and Mother’s Day.

IV. Now, please turn to **Deuteronomy 5, or Exodus 20**. Take the summary sentences of each commandment and write out your human experience of it. This is called transliteration: **Exodus 20: 1 – 17**

## Tools for Teaching

### 1. Vs. 20: 1 - 3 -- No other gods before me

**WS:** By definition, it is impossible to have two Perfect At-One-Ments. In fact, human beings are not whole persons unless we are At-One-Ment with selves, neighbors and God who is the Perfect At-One-Ment.

### 2. Vs. 20: 4 – 6 -- No idols in any form

**WS:** An idol is a golden lie! Idols always are out to relieve us of our human situation, rather than transforming our relationship to reality. Idols make us victims to impossibility, because our human situations can seldom be changed: death is always death. However, our relationship to the reality of death can be a choice: we are victims or victors!

The example here is of the State Lottery. The lottery is an idol. It holds out the hope of changing our human situation, "If I can just win the lottery then I'll be happy." This is a faithless stance, because I can chose to be happy just as I am.

### 3. Vs. 20: 7 -- Do not misuse the Lord's name

**WS:** Doing things contrary to At-One-Ment, and naming it an activity of Perfect At-One-Ment is contradictory.

### 4. Vs. 20: 8 – 11 -- Keep the Sabbath holy

**WS:** It is the consensus of the Trinity Bible Study that Sunday is not necessarily The Sabbath. According to Jesus, the Sabbath is a day to do the work of Perfect At-One-Ment.

Jesus reminded the Jews that when an animal falls down the well in the middle of Sabbath it was permissible to remove the animal. However, according to Jewish Sabbath regulations, it was not permissible to help someone in need. The experience of helping others in need is an activity of keeping the real Sabbath.

### 5. Vs. 20: 12 -- Honor your father and mother

**WS:** Our primary relationships are reflections of our experience with At-One-Ment. How we relate to mom and dad are reflections of the way we relate to God.

### 6. Vs. 20: 13 -- Do not murder

**WS:** Murder is the antithesis of At-One-Ment.



**7. 20: 14 -- Do not commit adultery**

**WS:** Adultery is the antithesis of At-One-Ment.

**8. 20: 15 -- Do not steal**

**WS:** Stealing is the antithesis of At-One-Ment.

**9. 20: 16 -- Do not give false testimony**

**WS:** Giving false testimony is the antithesis of At-One-Ment.

**10. 20: 17 -- Do not covet**

**WS:** Desiring those things that do not belong to us is the antithesis of At-One-Ment.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE:** Material from Sermon Starter: There is no Lectionary Reading using this pericope.

## LESSON 6: INDICATIVE ETHICS OF WWJD

TOPIC: MATTHEW 5: 13 - 20, TRANSPARENT ETHICS

### Section II: Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life

#### The Teacher's Handbook – Part I: Transparent Ethics Lessons 4-9

Transparent happiness	Teacher's challenge	Indicative Ethics: WWJD	Watch your focus	Watch your priorities	The Transparent focus
5:1-12	5:13-20	5:21-48	6:1-24	6:25-7:29	8:1-18
Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6	Lesson 7	Lesson 8	Lesson 9

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

II. We are entering into one of the most amazing sections in the New Testament. From Matthew 5:1 to 11:19, the world as we know it gets turned upside down. This is fertile earth in which to till the ethical garden with the tools of our human experience.

III. **In the study of Indicative Ethics, there are five words that need definition:**

A. **The Indicative and TWLI (The Way Life Is)** is compared to its use in grammar as the Indicative Mode and the Ontological This mode speaks in the present tense, and describes reality as it is experienced as The Way Life Is or TWLI. Biblically, Moses describes the voice of God as "I am." This is an indicative expression. The opposite of the indicative mode is the "Imperative mode;" this is understood in the terms "ought" and "should." However, the overtones of this mode lean into moralism. The indicative never is moralistic.

B. **"Ethics"** describes a system for relating to TWLI. The ethic I espouse is summed up in the letters WWJD, or "What would Jesus do." This is based on the premise that Christians never have primary relationships, we have secondary relationships.

Speaking as a male, our Primary Relationships can lead into the misuse of things and of other humans. This is illustrated when a man desires his secretary to fulfill his own selfish purposes. This misuses his secretary and deflates her in to an object to be used, and this diminishes the male person into a temporary emotion. In this way, he dehumanizes himself.

On the other hand, Secondary Relationships place the Cross of Christ between the other and ourselves. In our human relationships we ask the questions “What would Jesus do?” This assumes that the Sacrificial Spirit does not misuse others but seeks to bring about At-One-Ment. The same holds true in our relationship to our toys. That new set of golf clubs is mighty attractive, but WWJD? This does not assume that we do not get the new golf clubs, it means we do deeper self-analysis and reflection before we do anything. This is **SELFCONSCIOUSNESS in operation; this is the result of At-One-Ment.**

C. “**Judgment,**” in our Christian understanding, is best experienced as unmerited love. However, any kind of love illuminates the final result of At-One-Ment. God never directly punishes us, except as we punish ourselves. In our human experience, the Judgment of God is love; it can be no other. God gives us free will, and this is what gets us in trouble with Perfect At-One-Ment. We can do things contrary to what At-One-Ment means.

Consequently, the JUDGMENT is understood in the formula: *“The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself.”* We do things (deeds) to hurt others and the reward we receive is the antithesis of At-One-Ment; people get mad at us. On the other hand, there is a price to be paid for doing helpful things. The reward is peaceful relationships, and we feel good about each other and ourselves. This is the experience of At-One-Ment.

There always is a price to be paid. The reward can end in further separation, or it can end in bringing us together in at-one-ment. *“The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself.”*

#### **IV. Issues that can result in the judgment 5: 21 to 26**

In this section there are three different human situations: murder, brother/ altar relationships; and adversary settlement. Use our Indicative Ethical model to overlay these three circumstances to reflect on what happens in these three human situations:

## Tools for Teaching

### A. Murder 5: 21 – 22:

**The Judgment:** murder is the ultimate wedge driven in our human relationships that defeats At-One-Ment.

**The indicative reward** for the deed is found in the deed itself: people are locked away in permanent separation from society. Jesus is quoted as saying that murderers are “in danger of Hell fire.” From an experiential point of view, hell is defined as living in the absence of Perfect At-One-Ment.

**WWJD:** this still puzzles me. Can anyone help? How do we apply the rule of Secondary Relationships? How do we put Jesus between the murderer and the one murdered?

**Bible Study participant response:** I suppose that the Sacrificial Spirit would raise an alarm, or to deliberately put itself in harm’s way. Maybe this is not such a bad answer after all.

**WS:** The Bible Study Participants talked briefly about the difference between “murder” and “killing.” Murder is prohibited in the 10 Commandments. We decided that “killing” as a state response to murder has an inherent danger of killing the wrong people. This is demonstrated in the work of the Illinois State Governor who set aside the death penalty of those on death row in his state. This was the result of several inmates being executed who were later proven innocent.

### B. Relationship to your brother before offering altar gifts 5: 23 – 24:

**The Judgment:** asking forgiveness heals the breach in our human relationships.

**The reward** for the deed is that separation and healing results in At-One-Ment. The failure to ask forgiveness results in deepening the separation that already exists.

**WWJD:** The presence of Jesus standing between our wounded brothers/sisters and ourselves demonstrates the courage needed to set our own wounds aside and to ask for forgiveness.

### C. Adversary settlement 5: 25 – 26:

**The Judgment:** making things right is the demonstration of “righteousness.”

**The Reward:** The failure to heal the separation prolongs the separation and is the antithesis of the At-One-Ment necessary to heal the wounds.

**WWJD:** The presence of Jesus standing between our wounded brothers/sisters and ourselves demonstrates the courage needed to set our own wounds aside and to ask to be made right.

**V. Issues that concern Spousal relationships 5: 27 to 32**

In this section are two topics:

**A. Adultery 5: 27 -- 30**

**The Judgment:** in our relationship with our spouses, adultery is the ultimate wedge that defeats At-One-Ment. Our relationship to our spouses deeply reflect our relationship to Perfect At-One-Ment. My axiom for this is, "The rights of a couple together are of more value than the rights of any of us as individuals."

**The reward** for the practice of adultery is that one spouse is profoundly hurt, and the other spouse can never fully be forgiven. Or, while it may be possible to be forgiven, but the deed can never be forgotten. Also, the individual lives with her/his deeds for the rest of their lives in the knowledge of what they've done.

**WWJD:** In this perspective, one spouse does not have the right to commit adultery. The spousal relationship, seen through the cross of Christ always subjugates the rights of individuals to the corporate rights of the couple.

**B. Divorce 5: 31 -- 32**

**The Judgment:** divorce is a legal wedge driven in the At-One-Ment of married life.

**The reward** for the failure of marriage is a legal wound that remains a sore spot for life. Again, my maxim that "The rights of a couple together are of more value than the rights of any of us as individuals."

**WWJD:** This applies the rule of secondary relationships. The experience is that each person in this family unit is asked to treat and respect the other in selfless ways. Divorce is the evidence of the failure to fully practice At-One-Ment.

**Bible Study participant response:** Jesus accusations that divorce makes a woman an "adulteress" is beyond me for the moment. Anyone want to help?

## Tools for Teaching

**WS:** My only stab-in-the-dark is this supports the contention that marriage is not meant to be broken. (OK, so I know vows are broken! Yet, the failure represents the failure of the individuals to work at their relationship.)

### **VI. Issues that concern Legal considerations**

#### **A. Oaths 5:33 – 37**

**The Judgment:** Not being clear in our opinions leads to misunderstandings. The result of misunderstanding is a wedge in At-One-Ment.

**The Reward:** On the other hand, the reward for our forthrightness is that people understand where we stand, even if they do not appreciate our point of view.

**WWJD:** Jesus is clear here. Christians practice our ethical stance when we are forthright and clear in our commitments. The BIBLE STUDY PARTICIPANTS engaged in a sidebar conversation about homosexuality. The result of our conversation applied the rule of At-One-Ment. If heterosexual relationships result in demonstrating At-One-Ment, then why couldn't loving and caring homosexual relationships do the same? No effort was made to get into the biblical or political/constitutional issues surrounding this current issue.

### **VII. Issues that concern Interpersonal relationships**

#### **A. Love of enemies 5: 42 – 48**

**The Judgment:** This is one of the easier issues to understand because it is so typical of Jesus and the Christian message.

**The reward** for the deed is obvious; the practice of an “eye for an eye” is a wedge that results in anti-At-One-Ment.

**WWJD:** Jesus spells out the practice of secondary relationships. We are to turn the other cheek, etc., so that we do not participate in any activity that results in the support of anti-At-One-Ment. The reward for practicing secondary relationships is the potential for healing angry relationships, and under any circumstances, we fulfill what it means to be a human being, even if the other party does not.

### **VIII. Reflect briefly—**

#### **A. What did you discover about the “Indicative”**

The Indicative plays the cards as they are dealt to us.

**B. What did you discover about “Ethics”**

The application of secondary relationships results in healing and humanizing life’s circumstances.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER: THERE IS NO  
LECTIONARY READING USING THIS PERICOPE.**

I’ve substituted the “The GOOD NEWS” section of a sermon notes given by pastor Barry Dundas on Matthew 5: 21 – 24:

**How do we overcome our anger – live out God’s will for us.**

**A. First Step: accept that life is not fair.**

Your team will not always win;

Bad things happen in life;

Life is not fair.

**B. Second Step: your value does not come from fairness.**

Being right or getting your way not always appropriate;

“Our WAYS are not ALWAYS JAWAHS;”

You have value as a child of God;

You can be secure in your worth – “God don’t make no junk.”

**C. Finally: God has given us a secret weapon against anger.**

## LESSON 7: WATCH YOUR FOCUS

### TOPIC: MATTHEW 6: 1 – 24 - TRANSPARENT ETHICS

Section II: Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life					
The Teacher's Handbook – Part I: Transparent Ethics Lessons 4-9					
Transparent happiness	Teacher's challenge	Indicative Ethics: WWJD	Watch your focus	Watch your priorities	The Transparent focus
5:1-12	5:13-20	5:21-48	6:1-24	6:25-7:29	8:1-18
<b>Lesson 4</b>	<b>Lesson 5</b>	<b>Lesson 6</b>	<b>Lesson 7</b>	<b>Lesson 8</b>	<b>Lesson 9</b>

- I. Read the assigned reading at one time.
- II. The theme of this lesson is "Watch your focus."

What is the "focus" Matthew is embracing? As I was chewing this over in my mind, the closing verse in last week's lesson caught my attention, "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is Perfect" (5:48).

**WS:** Always, this statement raises for me the questions of what is our human purpose. Our old catechisms answered this question using the style of our old Christian code words. "We are created to praise God." An experiential "Gut Trip Analysis" version replies, "Our purpose is to live in At-One-Ment with all things. In this way we fulfill our created purpose of living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy."

***Focus: an intimate relationship with Perfect At-One-Ment***

This statement is filled with old Christian code words. Perhaps a transliteration will suffice: "Live in an intimate relationship with Perfect At-One-Ment." This is the fundamental focus for Christians, in particular those seeking to experience their faith, rather than just understand it.



**WS:** Another way of saying the same thing is that human beings are here to please Perfect At-One-Ment. Our happiness is a secondary experience. Paradoxically, as we please Perfect At-One-Ment we will please ourselves. The way in which we make the relationship intimate is, “to do what we do for Jesus;” i.e., we make ourselves look good when we make Christ look good.

**Focus:** *In the soup of reality, it is the spiritual pieces that are the sweetest.*

**WS:** In reading the following, think “3-D Glasses.”

In lesson 6 we explored a little bit of this theme of the “one reality.” It is helpful to give it another go, because of our present day confusion in Christian circles about living in a parallel universe; i.e., heaven or the Kingdom of Heaven.

Much of Christian theology embraces two realities. One is the human/natural reality, the other is a spiritual reality that co-exists above or beyond the natural reality; i.e., in heaven. This dual universe is supported in the statement by some branches of Christianity that the world is only 5,000 years old, because this is what the Bible describes, and the Bible is infallible and is to be interpreted literally. This “infallibility” and inerrancy are gifts from the spiritual universe, and not the physical/natural universe.

The problem this causes for thinking people is that we live in an UNI-verse and not a parallel-verse.

*One reality and prescriptive lenses--*

The suggestion I make is to understand that we live in ONE REALITY. This reality is a soupy mixture of natural and spiritual elements. The only way to focus on these two simultaneous dynamics separately is to view them through a set of prescriptive lenses. One lens illumines the physical/natural and the other lens to illumine the spiritual.

*The sweetest pieces—*

The soup of the one reality has two tastes: the physical/human taste is characterized as The Way Life Is—“if it can happen it will.” It is not always so sweet, but it is meaty. The Spiritual taste is experienced when we live in harmony and peace, when we live At-One with all things. This is experienced as a peace that passes understanding. This is how the spiritual part of the soup is the sweetest.

## Tools for Teaching

***Focus: The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself.***

This axiom is based on the knowledge that God is only experienced as LOVE.

Yet, God is THE GUARANTOR of the reward for our deeds.

*God guarantees the reward of gravity.* We can drop a heavy non-Christian and a light Christian off the top of a 10-story building and both hit the ground at the same time; God Guarantee it. God is not the punisher, because the reward for our deed is found in the deed itself; God Guarantees it.

*God guarantees the reward of our social laws.* Individuals choose to drive the wrong way on I-135, and they will get a ticket. God is not the punisher, because the reward for our deeds is found in the deed itself. God Guarantees it.

*God guarantees the reward of our moral laws.* Individuals choose to abuse their children and their children will be taken from them. God is not the punisher, because the reward for our deeds is found in the deed itself. God Guarantees it.

**WS:** Sorry for the poor illustration. You can fill in the blanks. However, the axiom still is true, "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself."

**Bible Study participant's reflection:** Fortunately, this is not always true. There are more abused children that I dare guess. Threats and social codes to do affect or deter perpetrators; this is true especially in today's society. I may sound pessimistic, but I see it so much more in the classroom. I just turned in a suspected sexual abuse to SRS last week. All these are signs and I have strong doubt that anything of promise will be done for the child.

**WS:** Yes and my daughter brought us a story of a little girl in her pre-school class reporting she wanted to go visit mommy, because her boy friend (who watches her while mommy works) hurt her. My daughter will call the SRS on Monday!

**III. Now, apply these principles to the following:**

**WS:** To answer the following, begin by first asking, "What is the relationship to Perfect At-One-Ment?" Second, "Describe the physical/natural and then the 'spiritual' focus in this soup." Then, last ask, "What is the reward?"

**A. 6: 1 – 4 Acts of righteousness: giving to the needy.**

***What is the relationship to Perfect At-One-Ment?***

**WS:** Right living is associated with At-One-Ment. When we practice the ethical posture of “WWJD –Doing what we do for Jesus” results in right living.

**Bible Study participant reflection:** My sense of this is that the goal of giving to others with the goal of having others see what I do arises out of an attempt to impress upon others what I really do not believe about myself. If I can impress them, then maybe I can believe good about myself. Thus the acts of “almsgiving” are not charity but taxes that I pay to gain a sense of value. Thus, I am divided, i.e., not At-One with myself. Also, I am not giving, I am attempting to buy.

**WS:** This is an interesting analysis, but the acts you’ve described are related to unrighteousness and not righteousness. Using your analysis you used on a previous study, “social justice” is a righteous act.

***In the “soup of the one reality,” describe the physical/natural and the spiritual focus.***

**WS:** Hunger and physical needs drive a wedge in our At-One-Ment with self and others. Spiritual hunger does the same thing. These are the antithesis of At-One-Ment. In satisfying the needs of the hungry, we all experience the restoration of At-One-Ment.

**Bible Study participant’s reflection:** I suppose that one could say that there is a **spiritual focus** in this in that the almsgiver is troubled about how short s/he sees him/herself. This person does not live in a state of At-One-Ment. In this troubled self-evaluation s/he is attempting to do something to overcome the inner troubled-ness. Their **physical/natural focus** seems to be on how this person survives in the environment of self-depreciation. Unfortunately, the self-centered stance in which this person in living only exacerbates loneliness and self-depreciation.

**WS:** My intention is to relate the “physical/natural focus,” and both the “troubled self-evaluation” and “self-depreciation.” My relationship to the “spiritual focus” results in a “positive self-evaluation” and “self-appreciation.”

***What are the rewards found in the deed itself?***

**WS:** Giving results in At-One-Ment.

**Bible Study participant’s reflection:** The **physical/natural rewards** come in the various rewards that society hands out to people who indulge in these sorts of tax payments. I

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give large sums of money to the cause of snowshoe rabbits in Australia and those who are into this sort of cause give me plaques that I can hang on my wall.

Unfortunately, when I look at these plaques, I know that I am really no better for having done that because my reasons for doing it were **shallow**, as shallow as I feel about myself. I know that the people who really know me know how shallow all of this is. Thus, I slip into **further self-depreciation**. This is my reward.

**WS:** If the reward for the deed is found in the deed itself, can't the reward be associated with what is "deep" as well as with what is "shallow?"

**B. 6: 5 – 15 Praying in secret: not babble; forgiveness of sin (separation)**

***What is the relationship to Perfect At-One-Ment?***

**WS:** "Babbling" is the antithesis of At-One-Ment. Peacefulness is the result of living in At-One-Ment. **Vs. 14**—forgiveness achieves At-One-Ment.

**Bible Study participant's reflection:** This gets at the very essence of prayer. As I see it, prayer is more an attitude than a treatise of words. In the words of one of our hymns, "Prayer is soul's sincere desire, unuttered or expressed, the notion of a hidden fire that trembles in the breast." True prayer is an attempt to come into unity (At-One-Ment with Being). Praying for public approval is styled to impress others rather than to help find one's fulfillment in Being.

**WS:** Wow! This is beautiful and poetic. Thanks.

**Bible Study participant's reflection:** I agree. Prayer, I believe, also unites the intellect with our soul. . . *aka* our creator. And, prayer can be quite simple if it is truly from the heart. The other day I was driving in my car and just stopped at a stop sign and *really* read *S.T.O.P.* I asked the "I AM" to fill me with love so that I wouldn't feel wanting. It started to rain. . . Filled up? Opened up? Receiving? Receptive? What do you think?

**WS:** Absolutely wonderful. Recently I read a Buddhist author who reported that he used his time at stop lights to monitor his breathing. In this way, he looked forward to being slowed down and stopped so that he can perform this spiritual exercise.

***In the "soup of one reality" describe the physical/natural and the spiritual focus.***

**WS:** The natural and physical arena makes “me” the focus. This is the focus of Pride. Observe in the Lord’s Prayer that Jesus does not say, “My Father. . .” but rather, “Our Father. . . “

**Bible Study participant’s reflection:** I think this is identified above.

***What are the rewards found in the deed itself?***

**WS:** The natural/physical relationship results in separation, while the spiritual results in fulfillment of our intended human purpose of being authentically grounded humans (humane and gracious), and not inhuman (racist) or unhuman (self-depreciating.)

**Bible Study participant’s reflection:** The reward of praying in secret is that there we find ourselves and discover the Love of God. We discover that we are of value, and we learn how to truly reach out so that our life is fulfilled. We are At-One with others and with Being that we call God.

**WS:** Amen.

**C.        6: 16 – 18 Fasting in secret: Do it for Jesus.**

***What is the relationship to Perfect At-One-Ment?***

**WS:** Pridefulness is the antithesis of At-One-Ment. Fasting done with a spiritual perspective results in opening our spiritual eyes.

***In the “soup of the one reality” describe the physical/natural and the spiritual focus.***

**WS:** The physical/spiritual focus is on “me.” The spiritual focus fulfills our intended purpose of being fully human, and pleases Perfect At-One-Ment.

**Bible Study participant’s reflection:** I understand that when people deprive themselves of food long enough they have some hallucinatory experiences which sometimes are very meaningful to them as they reflect on them afterward. I suppose this releases some of the unconscious data to them. I just don’t have much to add to this.

***What are the rewards found in the deed itself?***

**WS:** The physical/natural reward results in deeper hunger. The spiritual reward results in fulfillment.

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**Bible Study participant's reflection:** This is one that eludes me. I have fasted for the purpose of beginning a weight loss program but never for the purpose of any spiritual development. I would suppose that it is closely related to the issues surrounding praying in secret.

**WS:** For several years I fasted 60 to 70 days a year as a spiritual exercise. My short course on fasting is that it is necessary to fast ABOUT something, and to fast OVER something; i.e., to fast ABOUT growing older, and to fast OVER turning 70.

Fasting doesn't make us spiritually better. That is an impossible goal. Fasting is done to sensitize us to life in the spirit. The focus changes from feeding our bodies to feeding our souls.

**Bible Study participant's reflection:** I've never fasted other than during Lent. I have a friend who is Orthodox and they fast all the time. . . I mean all the time. I think that they figured that they fast for half of the year when it's all added up. Most of the fasting is without food; this or that, depends on the fast. Some of the fasting is no sex. What's to gain? I respect the devotion, but would rather be more conscientious of healthy living, including eating and sex.

**WS:** Poverty, Chastity and Obedience – these are the markers of any “Personal Journey.” Sometime I will share with the users of this Commentary the “Journey Charts,” sometimes known as “The 144's.” These were developed by the Order Ecumenical as a part of their curriculum on *The Religious Mode*. These are charts that enable deep reflections. Chastity is not sexual abstinence but “single-mindedness,” as in “being chaste to the job at hand.” Maybe, when the occasion arises, I'll mentor those who are interested through a 3-day fast (water only). You'll know when you are ready.

### ***What are the rewards found in the deed itself?***

**WS:** The meaning of the word “hearts” is associated with the meaningfulness of living. Polishing the silver of our lives with nurturing things brings about more and more real authentic and genuine living as human and gracious people.

**Bible Study participant's reflection:** I suppose what we gain from the experience is its own reward?

**WS:** This is right on. But my experience with fasting did not result in anything hallucinogenic, at least not in any medical sense of that term. There is the experience of a clearer inner vision, which I suppose can be extrapolated being spiritually drugged.

**D. 6: 19 – 24 Treasurers in heaven** (*Watch this word “Heaven.” It is a parallel universe word. From our perspective it is translated as the experience of the Place of Perfect At-One-Ment.*)

**What is the relationship to Perfect At-One-Ment?**

**WS:** Storing up treasurers in At-One-Ment is a deed that creates full humanness.

**Bible Study participant’s Reflection:** I believe this is calling us to focus on those things that are of permanent value rather than being caught up in the accumulation of those things that are of temporal value. The permanent value matters are those things that help us to become fulfilled and At-One with ourselves, our neighbors and Being itself.

**WS:** Absolutely!

**In the “soup of the one reality” describe the physical/natural and the spiritual focus.**

**WS:** Storing up physical/natural treasures are subject to the laws of rust, moths, and mold. Spiritual treasures are not subject to physical/natural laws.

**Bible Study participant’s Reflection:** If one focuses on accumulation of things limited to this time and space, an addictive dynamic gets involved. As one seeks to gain value in this accumulation s/he finds that it is never enough and must always have more to be content and of value. Thus, we become possessed by them.

**WS:** In the association of “treasurers in heaven,” being “possessed by our possessions” is the result of a “physical/natural focus.”

**Bible Study participant’s Reflection:** A caveat here is that this scripture does not really decry having temporal things. It calls us to keep them in perspective. Our first call is to develop this At-One-Ment status. As we come to this, we discover that these things of this time and space do not possess us but we are its master. My dad taught me that when we could not share what we have it then possesses us. It is only as we are able to put away the things that rust can in any sense enjoy them.

**WS:** Ah, ha! This is what I mean by a “spiritual focus.”

**Bible Study participant’s Reflection:** Possessions can possess us. However, some possessions bring memories that I would otherwise forget. I love going through some

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things from my children and remember the stories behind the possession. Am I the master then, or is it possessing me?

**WS:** No! Our possessions have no power other than what we give to them. The goals to be achieved are in the axiom, "When we want nothing, we have everything." The goal of the spiritual life is to be able to say, "I am grateful for everything and for nothing"

Christian faith is both an "in spite of" faith and it is also a "because of" faith. This is illustrated in the statement, "I'm grateful to God in spite of what happened to me." However, Christian faith also is in the statement, "I'm grateful to God because of what's happened to me.

When shit happens we are not being taught a lesson! God is only a God of love! But The Way Life Is (TWLI) is full of shitty things. The next reflection says it better.

### *What are the rewards found in the deed itself?*

**WS:** The meaning of the word "hearts" is associated with the meaningfulness of living.

**Bible Study participant's Reflection:** It strikes me that the rewards found "in the deed itself" is in being able to truly have things and not be destroyed by them. While we would not want to lose them, we can lose them and not lose ourselves. We can live beyond them and that living is the finest reward we can have.

**WS:** Yes, yes, yes! This is super stuff.

## IV. Extra Credit: Ground the two terms "Good eyes" and "Bad Eyes." (6: 22, 23)

**WS:** "Bad eyes" only look through the physical/natural lenses and miss half of the picture that is "the sweetest" part. "Good eyes" look through both lenses to identify what is the real world and what is the world of the spirit.

In other places I have made statements about "The Real" and "The Really Real. "The Real" is The Way Life Is or TWLI. "The Really Real" is our intended humanity of living in AT-One-Ment with all things by living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy. TWLI can be described as the way in which we experience raw existence. The Really Real is the life of our intended creation.

### **Bible Study Participant's Reflection:**

This brings to mind the time when the fellow came to Jesus asking what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus responds with a question, "How do you read the scriptures?"



(KJV and RSV) The most important matter involves how we view matters. The fellow responded to Jesus with the Jewish Shema, "Love the Lord with all your heart, and soul and mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself." *The issue in life is not what we see so much as how we see it.* When people are going through various struggles with a therapist, one of the therapist's efforts is to help them "reframe" what has happened to them. The issue is not so much what has happened but what meaning can be attached to it.

**Bible Study participant's Reflection:** BAM! No different than Dan Brown's book, "Angels and Demons." I think. The *axis mundi* for example.

Going back to the 'code' words. Look from the other side of the stained glass. I've started doing that, one was with my father and the other with being interviewed for my position at school. **I have a choice! I do have a choice with what my response will be to the situation. I am a VICTOR! (Or is it VICT-ESS?)**

Choices are easier for me in the present tense. It's that past baggage that's the most difficult. I have turned around my thinking about the loss of my father to MS into what are the gifts that I have received because of that disease? I think I'm going to write a book on that one. If I would not ask *what happened* but rather ask what are the gifts of it, then I seem to be able to move forward and examine the situation from the *other side*. . . a better side and much better choice. This last divorce is another good tally mark. My gifts are many. . . from that. Good choice on not being a victim. I wouldn't have come this far if it hadn't been for that separation. Now to work on other stuff. . . (Do I ramble and take up too much of your reading time?)

**WS:** Your self-depreciation stepped into ruin one super reflection. Just share yourself girl. Your decision is if this dialogue is worthwhile for you to spend a little bit of your eternity sharing it with me. I find the time I take to dialogue with you is worthwhile for me to take a little bit of my eternity to share it with you.

**Bible Study participant's Reflection:** As we change our view of what happened, we change how we respond to TWLI. Nothing can separate us from the love of God but our own "darkness" that can be more than we can handle.

**WS:** Geez, man! Sometimes you knock my socks off. "Bad eyes" are those whose eyes are closed and the issue becomes WHAT WE SEE rather than HOW WE SEE IT. The interesting thing about "Open eyes" is that our situation (TWLI) does not change, but our relationship to TWLI changes.

**Ground the term, “Serving two masters.” (6: 24)**

**WS:** Why does money get such a bad rap? This question was raised at the TRINITY BIBLE STUDY meeting. The consensus was that money, in and of itself, is value free. However, money can enslave us, and this leads to dissatisfaction as we can never get enough.

**My axiom is that, “When we do not want anything, then we have everything.”**

Good stuff here. Thanks to all.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER: MT. 1 – 6, 16 – 21**

**The “Treasure” is described—** In today’s sermon, the title is found in Vs. 21, “Where your treasure is.” It is necessary for each preacher to be clear about just what this “treasure” is before beginning this sermon. In terms of Gut Trip Analysis, “this treasure is that which pleases God” and is only seen in secret by God when the deed is done in secret. So, what is it that pleases God?

From our experiential perspective, God is pleased when we experience At-One-Ment in all things. In Gut Trip Analysis, God is not an object but rather a relationship; this is why Jesus could call God “Father,” and this is why Gut Trip defines God as the experience of Perfect At-One-Ment. To this end, we humans are created naturally by Mother Nature, but it is God who gives us a soul. Consequently, we humans fulfill our creation as we live the humane and gracious life; i.e., to live in At-One-Ment.

**GUT TRIP ANALYSIS RECOMMENDS THAT YOU MEMORIZE THE FOLLOWING**

**“Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time,  
wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness  
and will expose the motives of men’s hearts.  
At this time each will receive his praise from God.”**

**1 Cor. 4: 5**

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER: MT. 6: 28 – 30**  
Phillips' Translation

*And why do you worry about clothes? Consider how the wild flowers grow. They neither work nor weave, but I tell you that even Solomon in all his glory was never arrayed like one of these! Now if God so clothes the flowers of the field, which are alive today and burnt in the stove tomorrow, is he not much more likely to clothe you, you 'little faith?'*

**WS:** The single most important underlying theme of the New Testament concerns SURRENDER. In order for humanity to live the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy is to GIVE UP our life of independence from God and Awaken to live dependent on God. The more we try it, the better our experience.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER: MT. 6: 1 – 6, 16 – 21**

**FOCUS:** "YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER. . . WILL REWARD YOU."

Um-m-m, what is your experience of the *reward* of the *heavenly Father*?

Try on "At-One-Ment" and "Living the Awakened Life," and see if it works.

**Principle:** "The Reward for the Deed is found in the Deed itself"

(see Table Next Page.)

**The Reward for the Deed:**

The Charge by Jesus	Negative Relationship to At-One-Ment	The soup of the One Reality	The Reward for the Deed
Vs. 2 – 4 Give to the needy	Attempting to buy respect. Failing to give to the needy	Not living in a state of At-One-Ment. Troubled self-evaluation; unrighteousness. Living by the Natural Laws. Self-depreciation. No grace without justice	Grace is <u>experienced</u> in justice. Self-appreciation. Righteousness <u>experienced</u> as living right with At-One-Ment
Vs. 5 – 6 Pray in secret	More attitude than honesty. Occasion to seek self-aggrandizement.	Secret prayer is the activity of living the Awakened life. Prayer is more doing than bowing a head	Hymn: "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire." (UMC-492) Experiencing the love of God. Reaching out to fulfillment. Living At-One with others, self and God. Self-discovery
Vs. 16 – 18 Fast	Living the undisciplined life. Compulsive and/or addictive life style	Running away to self-satisfaction. Addiction. Unable to see the activity of God that is all around us.	Spiritual Awakening. Living single-mindedness. Detached from obsessions. Experience self-fulfillment. And the pleasure of accomplishments.
Vs. 19 – 21 The authentic life is discovered in a living relationship to God; i.e., these are our "Treasures in Heaven"	Attachments to things. Finding fulfillment in having things. Living in a "storage unit" society.	Self-possession. Living out of our natural resources rather than our spiritual ones.	The call to keep temporal things in perspective. Our obsessions lose their power of us unless we grant them power. Christian faith (surrender) is an "in spite of" religion rather than just "because of" religion. God doesn't punish us, our punishment is discovered in the deeds we do or fail to do. We lose our possessions, but we do not lose our-selves.

## LESSON 8: WATCH YOUR PRIORITIES

TOPIC: MATTHEW 6: 25 – 7: 29, TRANSPARENT ETHICS

Section II: Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life					
The Teacher's Handbook – Part I: Transparent Ethics Lessons 4-9					
Transparent happiness	Teacher's challenge	Indicative Ethics: WWJD	Watch your focus	Watch your priorities	The Transparent focus
5:1-12	5:13-20	5:21-48	6:1-24	<b>6:25-7:29</b>	8:1-18
<b>Lesson 4</b>	<b>Lesson 5</b>	<b>Lesson 6</b>	<b>Lesson 7</b>	<b>Lesson 8</b>	<b>Lesson 9</b>

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

II. **Reflect on the following:**

First, it is helpful to note that Jesus is an experiential teacher; that is, he teaches by using our human experience. Here is a partial list from our assigned reading: giving children bread or rocks, fish or snakes; doing to others as you want them to do to you.

Second, Jesus teaches by using metaphors or similes, such as: lilies of the valley, birds of the air, wide and narrow gate, the tree is known by its fruit, wise and foolish builders.

III. **OUR PRIORITIES**— A summary of the scriptures in this assignment is the following:

When our **Operating Context** is **At-One-Ment**, then our priorities becomes 1) **avoiding** those actions and relationships that are the **antithesis of At-One-Ment**, and 2) **embracing** those relationships and experience that result in **At-One-Ment**.

**Our Operating Context:** *Watch out for the old Christian code words. You may need to write out your experience of these old words before you can work to answer the question.*

**Examine the following scriptures and summarize how you experience them as "the Context" for setting our Christian priorities:**

1. **Vs. 6: 33** – Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness

**WS:** The experience of living the surrendered life is the act of seeking the "Kingdom of God." In this way "righteousness" is living the awakened life for which we are put in synch—in the right—with our intended creation.

2. **Vs. 6: 30** -- Will he not much more clothe you?

**WS:** The operating metaphor here is that God, experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment, "clothes" us with our intended creation of living the humane and gracious life. This is done in the same way that a cow or a tree is "clothed" with "is-ness."

3. **Vs. 7: 11** -- Will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him?

**WS:** From the point-of-view of Gut Trip Analysis, God is unable to give anything but good gifts. Period.

4. **Vs. 7: 21b** -- Only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven

**WS:** Doing "God's will," or "the will of the Father" is nothing more or less than fulfilling our intended purpose. We do this by practicing the Divine Commandment of Jesus, the 10 Commandments, the Golden Rule, and the Great Commission.

**IV. Next, examine the following scriptures and summarize how you experience them as "the priorities" for ordering our work as "Gut-Trip Christians."**

1. **The priority of avoiding actions and relationships that led to the antithesis of At-One-Ment: The Christian ethic is summarized in the statement, "What would Jesus do?" WWJD?**

- a. **Vs. 7: 1** -- Do not judge

**WS:** How does a cow judge another cow? When animals, things, and people are fulfilling their intended purpose then there is nothing to judge. To judge is to step outside of our intended creation and become something other than what we are created to be; this leads to pride and seeks to be god in the place of God.

- b. **Vs. 7: 13a** -- wide gate that leads to destruction

## Tools for Teaching

**WS:** We can assume that animals, plants, earth, etc. have no consciousness of being self-consciousness. This is where humanity gets stuck with a special gift of self-consciousness. Humans have two natures within one reality. Our human nature is driven by nature and what is natural. Hence, our ego and our libido tend to rule this part of us. This is not to condemn our natural side, except to say that it can be characterized by selfishness.

The other human nature is the result of having a soul. The faith-story we tell is that God created us out of natural stuff but then breathed into us a soul. The purpose for the soul is to transform our natural/selfish inclinations into our better nature that is to live the humane and gracious life.

Jesus' point in this verse is that it is easy to assume that our natural/human inclinations are in charge. In fact our natural inclinations never leave us, they can be transformed to relate in humane and gracious ways.

### c. **Vs. 7: 15 -- False prophets [who bear bad fruit]**

**WS:** Gut Trip Analysis helps us to draw the distinction between righteous prophets and false prophets because we experience them differently. A righteous prophet never lets us off the hook of being what God created us to be; humane and gracious. False prophets lead us to blame our problems on others or our human situations.

For instance, almost universally, prisoners in the City Jail see themselves as victims, and this is what led them to victimize others; "I was abandoned," or "I was abused." It is no doubt they were. However, they give power to the notion that these things have taken away their freedom to decide.

The quickest way to cut to the chase in such situations is to ask, "Who's in charge of your attitude?" The usual reply is an indignant, "Well, I'm in charge of my attitude." My response then is, "OK, then you have the choice of either being a victim or a victor. Which is it going to be?"

In this kind of conversation, prisoners can be led to accept that they are as free behind bars as they are on the outside. Their freedom does not depend on their circumstances, but rather on their decision.

## 2. **The priority of embracing actions and relationship that leads to At-One-Ment:**

### a. **Vs. 7: 12 -- do to others what you would have them do to you**

**WS:** I believe it can be said that there is no better representation of religious belief than variations on this theme. Every major religion has such a statement:

Buddhism: "Hurt not other in ways that you yourself would find hurtful."

Judaism: "What is hateful to you; do not to your fellow man. That is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary."

Islam: "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself."

Baha'i Faith: "Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself."

**b. Vs. 7: 11 -- giving good gifts**

**WS:** The context here is the gifts that God gives us, as this is noted above. However, there is an implication that in our relationship to self and neighbor it is good only to give "good gifts." What does a "good gift" look like? Easy, it is the gift of a humane and gracious neighbor; this is the best gift of all.

In like manner, Awakened humane people need to relate to themselves in the same way. To do the opposite is to either live the in-humane life of racism or homophobia, and/or to live the un-humane life of self-depreciation. Either way is beyond what is expected of us as humane and gracious people.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER--- MT. 24 – 34**

*Concerning the "Spiritual Oasis:"*

It is this "revelation" of our return to the Garden of Eden that is a central theme of Jesus' message in Matthew. We cannot serve two masters—one Master is our ignorance about life in the Garden, and the other Master is living the Happy/Holy life fulfilling our intended purpose of the humane and gracious life working for justice and peace. Life outside the Garden is characterized by worry, while living the awakened life living in an oasis of peace and fulfillment characterizes the life God intends for us to live.

You'll want to note that today's lection falls in **Part I**, the teaching manual that awakens us to living and practicing "transparent ethics."



## Tools for Teaching

### ***The Transformed life—***

The Good News of the Gospels has a unique twist that frequently is obscure unless we train ourselves to look for it. My intuitions tell me that the Early Church did not have this problem. In fact, it may not have been a problem until the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Century during the invention of the Scientific Method. It was at this time that we were educated to drop our right-brained activity in exchange for a fully rational and objective approach to life. This approach profoundly affected our religious life during which we make objects out of our Christian Code words (God, Christ, Holy Spirit, etc.). What we lost was a Left-Brained approach that is characterized as relational, experiential and existential. Gut Trip Analysis promotes this understanding that Jesus used the latter method in his “teaching manuals.”

All this is preface to say that “worrying” characterizes a life that is unaware of the resources in The Garden. When we discover the spiritual altar in the middle of our Oasis, we discover the very resources available to Jesus, Moses, Abraham, Mother Teresa, M. Gandhi and your own local saint.

***The twist is this:*** It is an illusion of false hopes to believe that the things over which (or about which) we worry are simply The Way Life Is (TWLI). They don’t change. **So what is the variable for change?** It is us! We are the ones who can change. We are the ones transformed. When we awaken to life in The Garden, suddenly no longer are we victimized by the pot-holes of life; no longer are the pot-holes our enemy because we’ve been our own enemy all along. As the comic strip “Pogo” once quoted, “We have found the enemy and it is us!” When this transformation takes place, it is my testimony that the pot-holes don’t change, but I am no longer a victim. Now, isn’t this Good News?

### ***Heavenly Father—***

Another danger spot in this lection is Jesus’ reference to his Heavenly Father. The danger is not that Jesus used this term; the danger is how we reference this phrase. Matthew is writing to a Jewish audience; he is thinking like a Jew and not a Greek. The profound difference is that Greek dualism understood God as an objective image and Heaven as a place to which we could escape. For Christian’s this supported our understanding of baptism during which we die to this world and go to live with God. Jesus did not have such an understanding.

For Jesus, the Jew, he understood that God was inescapable; God was our breath! It is important as we develop our sermons to clarify this point for our hearers; God is not absent, but deeply involved in our everyday lives and the living of it.

***Jesus use of the term “pagans”---***

<sup>32</sup> For the **pagans** run after all these things, (NIV)

Why be like the **heathen**? (Living Bible)

<sup>32</sup> For after all these things do the **Gentiles** seek; (American Standard)

<sup>32</sup> (For after all these things do the **Gentiles** seek) (King James)

Since I’m not a Greek or Hebrew scholar, I can’t justify why these different Bible translations and transliterations choose different words. However, it is important that we all do our own research to satisfy ourselves. From one perspective, the choice of words from “pagan,” to “heathen,” to “Gentiles” doesn’t seem on the surface of things to make a lot of difference.

Observe: This is one of the beautiful things about Gut Trip Analysis. How do you experience these terms? My experience of these words is like being victimized by my situation, and in denial about living the surrendered life to Christ. Again, to make the point of this lection, “worry” describes those who are **theological pagans, heathens and Gentiles**.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER--- MT. 6: 24 – 34, YEAR A**

The only struggle I had in building this sermon was clarifying my experience of “Jesus having authority.” Also, give some thought to how you can describe The Will of God. (Leslie Weatherhead’s book, The Will of God is an excellent resource that provides three short and concise answers to this theological issue. This is one of the five books I’d take with me to a deserted island.)

The **ONE THING** to be said: The experience of entering the Kingdom of Heaven is like being able to stand in collapsing times and finding affirmation.

The **ONE EMOTION** to share: The inner peace and a deep sense of joy in coming through the tough times to stand as victors. At times like these we know God is near.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 7: 21 – 29, YEAR A.**

**THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW: A training manual for living the deeply satisfied life.**

It is helpful to remember Matthew's purpose as you prepare this sermon. Your treatment is to reveal something of the deeply satisfied life or how to awaken to it.

**The Key to this sermon:** My suggestion is to build this sermon around HYMN SINGING. A careful review of appropriate hymns can furnish good fodder to fuel the fires of good preaching. I've made suggestions for hymns I would like to use. Use those hymns that are meaningful to you and your congregation. Particular verses could be sung by a soloist, a quartet, or as congregational songs. Mix it up. Enjoy!

- Suggested hymns:
- Fanny Cosby: UMC 591, "Rescue the Perishing."
- Thomas Moore: UMC 510, "Come Ye Disconsolate"
- Martin Luther: UMC 515, "Out of the Depths I Cry To You"
- Afro-American Spiritual: UMC 375, "There is a Balm in Gilead"
- Charlotte Elliott: UMC 357, "Just As I Am, Without One Plea."
- Karen Lafferty: UMC 405, "Seek Ye First"
- Tokuo Yamaguchi: UMC 552, "Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather"

### **The authority of Jesus—**

Jesus gets his authority from the same place that any of us get it. We get it from fulfilling our "Is-ness." A cow gets its authority from being a cow; a tree gets its authority from being a tree. We get our authority from living the humane and grace life working for justice and mercy. Our authority is a reflection of our humanity, our being whole.

### **The Will of God—**

The will of God is for us to fulfill our intended creation. Leslie Weatherhead, writing in his book "The Will of God," provides three short and concise answers to this theological issue. The "Intentional will of God" for all creation to fulfill its "Is-ness." In his chapter on the "Circumstantial will of God," Weatherhead observes that life's circumstances come along to prevent us from this fulfillment like little boys who dam water running down the gutter. Yet it is God who rushes in to make good things come about after bad things happen; witness that after 9/11 there was the rebirth of patriotism and of national generosity; this is the Circumstantial will of God at work. His third description is

the **“Ultimate will of God,”** in which all creation finally fulfills its **“Is-ness.”** God’s will cannot be thwarted for long.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER: MATTHEW 6: 33**

In **Vs. 6: 33,** Jesus admonishes us to **“Seek first the Kingdom of God.”** The post-modern implications of these old Christian code phrases are to seek the surrendered life of living in At-One-Ment with everyone and with all things. In the same verse Jesus reports that by seeking the surrendered life, then living in At-One-Ment is the natural result. The Code Word here is **“righteousness.”**

The Good News is the life of surrender results in the humane and gracious life which is what it means to live in **“God’s Kingdom.”** It is to be noted that living the humane and gracious life does not change anything, but it does change us; it changes our relationship to what comes at us in life. Amen.

**Reflections by Pastor Bill at a Bible Study session** on the sermon, **“The Means of Grace,”** a theme of a sermon by John Wesley. This message was delivered by Pastor Barry Dundas at the (Salina, KS) Trinity United Methodist Church: **Matthew 7: 7 – 11.**

Pastor Barry gives the example that the Means of Grace is like playing in a storm canal. Most of the time while playing in it we stay dry. However, there are times when we do get our feet wet, and sometimes the amount of water can be overwhelming. The traditional Means of Grace are such places that the longer we play in them eventually we receive the goal for which the Means of Grace are meant to service

**And the question remains: What is the goal for which the Means of Grace are intended?**

Previously, Dundas gave us another Wesley sermon on our need for **“New Life.”** The next sermon in this series is material on, **“The Circumcision of the Heart,** and the following week will be **“Growing to Perfection.”**

**And the question remains: What is achieved in spiritual circumcision and to what do we grow in perfection?**

## Tools for Teaching

### The answer to my own question:

Because of free will, humans apparently are the only animals that struggle with fulfilling their intended creation. At the meeting mentioned above a new member identified himself as a Missouri Synod Lutheran who was raised in a literal interpretation of the Bible. He found strange my illustration concerning how a *Cow fulfills its intended creation without difficulty, yet humans struggle.*

It is not until I observed that Luther, in his "Little Catechism," asks the questions, "For what purpose are we created?" The answer is, "We are created to praise God." The push came when I asked my Lutheran colleague *how a cow praises God?*" The Lutheran's answer was that the cow fulfills its intended purpose by being a cow.

So, how do we humans fulfill our intended creation? We praise God by living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.

Then, I shared with my new friend the quote by Howard Thurman, the spiritual colleague of Martin Luther King, "We are not HUMAN BEINGS having a spiritual experience, rather we are SPIRITUAL BEINGS having a human experience. His response was, "I like this very much."

What we humans are seeking is how to awaken to living the humane and gracious life. Wesley claims that we are born blind to this reality and that we can not awaken ourselves. His answer is that the Means of Grace are the canals through which Awakening is poured.

So, what we are seeking is to WAKE UP to our intended purpose of living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.

Amen.

### ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER

#### Concerning the Authority of Jesus--

Matthew, in **Vs. 7: 29**, lays out the characteristics of those who have authority. Jesus gets his authority from the same place we get our authority; when we live the awakened life. When we are awake to the significance of living "at home in Awakening," then the experience is self-fulfilling. Our authority comes from representing the wholesome, healthy and authentic human being. Gut Trip Analysis

identifies such a human being as those living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.

**Commentary by John Wesley: Matthew 7: 19 - 23**

(Source: "Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the New Testament. *Editor's note: My apology for the ancient use of language.*)

**Verse 19.** Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire - *How dreadful then is the condition of that teacher who hath brought no sinners to God! [Italics mine.]*

**Verse 21.** Not every one - That is, no one that saith, Lord, Lord - That makes a mere profession of me and my religion, shall enter - Whatever their false teachers may assure them to the contrary: He that doth the will of my Father - as I have now declared it. Observe: every thing short of this is only saying, "Lord, Lord." Luke vi, 46.

**Verse 22.** We have prophesied - We have declared the mysteries of thy kingdom, wrote books; preached excellent sermons: In thy name done many wonderful works - *So that even the working of miracles is no proof that a man has saving faith. [Italics mine.]*

**Verse 23.** I never knew you - There never was a time that I approved of you: so that as many souls as they had saved, they were themselves never saved from their sins. Lord, is it my case? Luke xiii, 27.

## LESSON 9: THE TRANSPARENT FOCUS

TOPIC: MATTHEW 8: 1 – 18 - TRANSPARENT ETHICS

Section II: Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life					
The Teacher's Handbook – Part I: Transparent Ethics Lessons 4-9					
Transparent happiness	Teacher's challenge	Indicative Ethics: WWJD	Watch your focus	Watch your priorities	The Transparent focus
5:1-12	5:13-20	5:21-48	6:1-24	6:25-7:29	8:1-18
Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6	Lesson 7	Lesson 8	Lesson 9

I. Read the whole assigned reading at one time.

II. The terms "focus" and "transparency."

Perhaps, it is best to call to mind (again) two of the words in today's topic: "focus" and "transparency." "Focus"-- The focus of the Gospel of Matthew is to live in an intimate relationship to At-One-Ment. "Transparency" – Is to discover our essence, meaning or authenticity: In the study of **Matthew 5: 1 – 12**, "Transparent Happiness," the term "transparency" was 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.

The use of transparency does not make up something that is not already there. The use of these tools reveals something that is already there, but previously undisclosed to us. Transparency happens when the essence of something is made clear to us.

Let's see how this works.

The Trinity Bible Study began with a better formula for understanding this assignment. Please visualize a round target with a center and an Outside ring

In the center of the target are the words; **FOCUS, FULLY HUMAN, REALLY REAL, TRANSPARENCY** and **AT HOME**. Around the edges of the target are the words: **UN-HUMAN** (racism, sexism., homophobia), **IN-HUMAN** (self-depreciation, hubris, suicide) and **VACATION**.

After getting the target areas identified, the Bible Study participants spent time grounding these words in our human experience:

1. The **CENTER OF THE TARGET**: “The Really Real” is the kind of life God intends for humans to live: “Fully Human” describes this reality too;
  - a) “**FOCUS**” is to initiate an intimate relationship to At-One-Ment;
  - b) “**TRANSPARENCY**” is grounded in the experience that this good life is already available to us and to which we awaken more and more.
  - c) “**AT HOME**” is experienced as a sense of place.

**Observe:**

The **CENTER OF THE TARGET** is, “**AT HOME.**”

The **EDGES OF THE TARGET**: “**UN-HUMAN**” and **IN-HUMAN**” seem clear; “**VACATION**” is grounded in **THE WAY LIFE IS (TWLI)**. NOTE that TWLI is not “**AT HOME.**” It is God’s intention for us to live in the center of the target. However, because we spend our four score and ten in this physical body, we come to believe this is “**At Home**” and it is not! We are created to live in **AT-ONE-MENT** which is living “**At Home!**”

Now, let’s see what happens to these scriptures?

**III. Use the following scriptures to examine the essence of what it means to be a fully human person; i.e., a human being is one who is at-one with God, neighbor and self. How is this true in each of the following pericopes? Maybe it is helpful to note that Matthew uses these illustrations as metaphors or as similes.**



## Tools for Teaching

### 1. 8: 1 – 4 The Man with Leprosy

Ask this question concerning the man with leprosy. By our definition, is this man living “On Vacation” or “At Home?” Because leprosy is a condition of TWLI, then this man is living on vacation.

Next, ask the question of how the man is restored to the kind of health that characterizes becoming fully human. The answer is the man receives the touch of Jesus Christ. The name of “Jesus Christ” is a “Head Trip” word that is translated though “Gut Trip Analysis” as “The Little Picture” of Perfect At-One-Ment. The “Big Picture” is God, and is translated as, “The Big Picture of Perfect At-One-Ment.”

To summarize: When TWLI [The Way Life Is] is awakened to the intended purpose of being fully human (whole, healthy, at peace, living in At-One-Ment), then our relationship to “our leprosy” is transformed.

Note: The reality of *our leprosy is not transformed* because it is TWLI, but *our relationship to our leprosy is transformed!* In this way, the Really Real is transparent within our human experience at the center of the target.

### 2. Vs. 8: 5 – 13 The faith of the Centurion

What is the concern of the Centurion? His servant is sick! This is a characteristic of TWLI and is not the intended purpose of Perfect At-One-Ment. The servant is “on vacation.”

So, how is the servant brought back into a relationship to living “At Home?” The Centurion appreciates that Jesus has authority, Similar to the authority invested in the Centurion. The Centurion claims that all that is necessary is for Jesus to say the word! (The WORD is “The Good News!)

Jesus is astounded at the faith of the Centurion. The “Faith” being grounded in his surrender to the word of Jesus. At this moment, the servant is “Healed.” This way, to be awakened is to be to living “At home.” Sickness represents living “on vacation.” Health and healing represents living as God intends for people to be fully human.

### 3. 8: 14 – 18 Jesus heals many

Vs. 14 and 15 is the story of Peter’s mother-in-law. Again apply our formula. The woman is “on vacation,” and through the touch of Jesus she is restored to full humanness. The evidence is she “rose and served him.”

**Vs. 16 – 17**, is the story of the healing of many who are possessed of demons. The demons are “on vacation.” This scripture reports that Jesus heals them, “with his word!” This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah, “The little picture of wholeness took those whose condition indicated they were on vacation and demonstrated through his life the kind of life that illuminated living AT HOME.” (Isaiah 53: 4-- A transliteration, of course!)

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: THERE IS NO LECTIONARY READING ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PERICOPE.**

## LESSON 10: TEACHING STANDPOINT – CHANGING LIVES

TOPIC: MATTHEW 8: 18 – 9: 8, TRANSPARENT ETHICS

<b>Section II: Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life</b>					
<b>The Teacher’s Handbook – Part I: Transparent Ethics Lessons 10-14</b>					
<b>Teaching stand-point</b>	<b>Changing lives</b>	<b>Staff: qualification s</b>	<b>Trans- parent Task</b>	<b>Graduation Address</b>	<b>Affirming credentials</b>
<b>8:19-22</b>	<b>8:23-9:8</b>	<b>9:9-17</b>	<b>9:18-34</b>	<b>9:35-10:42</b>	<b>11:1-19</b>
<b>Lesson 10</b>		<b>Lesson 11</b>	<b>Lesson 12</b>	<b>Lesson 13</b>	<b>Lesson 14</b>

I. Read the assigned reading at one time.

II. “The Teaching Standpoint”

Vs. 8: 18 -- 22 “The cost of following Jesus.”

Vs. 8: 18, The inclusion of this little pericope in Matthew’s “Training Manual” reveals much about the standpoint Jesus uses as a teacher. Please review these few verses: The poignant words are, “he gave orders to cross to the other side.” When these words are used in any of the gospels they point to the place where the relationship to God is the closest. This “place” is experienced more than it is rationally understood. In this regard, “this side of the lake is on vacation.” Consequently, the **standpoint** Jesus uses is his perspective of representing the “other side of the lake,” or from living at home rather than living on vacation.

When this explanation is applied, then the following two characteristics are easily understood.

**Vs. 19 and 20**— Where does the Son of Man lay his head? From the point of view of the “standpoint” Jesus lays his head “at home!” Where else?

**Vs. 21 and 22**—The story of turning away the man who wanted to bury his father before he “went to the other side” is considered one of Jesus “hard stories.” When we experience, “living on vacation,” as opposed to “Living AT HOME,” then this story is made easy. How?

**Vs. 21 and 22**— burying his father is living on vacation!

### III. “Changing lives”

A. Now, in light of Jesus’ standpoint, read the following scripture assignments and share how your experience of this material illuminates the experience of “Changing lives.”

#### 1. Vs. 8: 23 – 27, Jesus Calms the Storm

WS: This scripture is a favorite of many preachers as it lends itself to several treatments. In our construct the boat is “on vacation” where life is experienced as TWLI. This is to say, the story reveals the experience of our natural lives. Is there anyone we know who does not identify with the disciples in the rocking boat that is about ready to sink? There is a distinct possibility we could drown. In this experience we confront our own death.

Now, look at Jesus. He is asleep! Why? Because he is “at home.” Jesus does not fear death because always he is “at home.” He represents the dynamic of faithfulness (surrender) to living in an eternal relationship to God who is experienced as the Perfect At-One-Ment. Because Jesus is our example, we need not fear death as well. So, the choice is ours. On which side of the lake do we choose to live?

What is the significance of Jesus’ accusation, “You of little faith?”

WS: Understood from Matthew’s stand point, this statement convicts the disciples of their spiritual blindness. This is demonstrated in their fear of dieing, and represents their spiritual blindness. The old code word “Faith” always can be translated as surrender. This statement could be transliterated as, “Ok, you guys, you’ve lost sight of the meaning of surrender to God!”

What is the significance of Jesus calming the storm?

WS: Interestingly, from our point of view, whenever Jesus speaks, he addresses the natural side of things. As noted above, his accusation calls into question our full surrender to God. From my point of view, what is calmed is my relationship to the

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stormy water rather than the (natural) water actually being calmed. When we have no fear of death, what difference does the storm really make? Once we surrender ourselves to God—the Perfect At-One-Ment—we already are At-One with the sea and we no longer fear it. This is Good News!

### 2. Vs. 8: 28 – 34, The Healing of Two Demon-possessed Men

Observe the change in the *sides of the lake*. On THIS side are tombs and demon possessed people. What is it these people sense in Jesus? Why would the people in this region plead for Jesus to leave?

WS: These statements regarding the “other side of the lake” always intrigue me. Perhaps, it is because they support my own and perspective. However, when these statements are understood metaphorically, they certainly support the experience of being “at home” or “on vacation. In the Bible, being “demon possessed” is easily associated with being a victim of a lie. What people sense in Jesus is the antithesis of the lie; in Jesus they experience wholeness or authenticity. This is the experience of being “at home.”

So, then why do they fear Jesus? This fear is based on being convicted that they are living “demonic” lives. That is, these are people who made the choice to “surrender themselves to a lie; thereby, they are victims.

We see this dynamic frequently. A fairly consistent message of Jesus can be summarized in the statement, “You are not really living. You are just existing.” From this experience, sometimes it is easier to kill the messenger than it is to accept the challenge of accepting the message. This is particularly true if we have an investment in the lie.

The interesting note in this story is the role of the pigs. Obviously, pigs represent living the unclean (on vacation) life. As the demons are exorcised, they take over the bodies of the pigs that dash off a cliff and die. Perhaps, a summary can be, when we live like pigs we'll die a pig's death.

The opposite also is true.

### 3. Vs. 9: 1 – 8, Jesus Heals a Paralytic

Again, this sections starts with a change of venue. Is this “on vacation” or “at home?” How can the “teachers of the law” accuse Jesus of blasphemy?

WS: Note that Jesus now is back in his own natural environment that is he is “on vacation.” A paralytic is brought to him who wants to live “at home.” Jesus tells him that his “sins are forgiven.”

When it is remembered that “sin” is separation, then it is easy to understand that as we live “on vacation” we are separated from, and crippled by, our absence from living “at home.” To live “on vacation” is to experience life as a cripple. However, it is the Teachers of the Law who accuse Jesus of blaspheme. This word is experienced as living a lie! The Teachers of The Law are not spiritually awake, but spiritually blind.

In light of Jesus’ standpoint which is easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven,” or “Pick up your bed and walk?”

WS: As Christians, we are people who believe in The Word. That is, The Word is the presence of The Christ, or health, or authenticity that is present in this Word. Jesus reminds us The Word is both a “Head Trip” and a “Gut Trip.” He can heal from a “Head Trip” information, or he can heal with a “Gut Trip” demonstration. Both of them get the job done. This Word awakens people to living “At Home.”

Why were the people “filled with awe?”

WS: Whenever we are confronted with authenticity we experience a little bit of “home.” The experience of “awe” is an indicator that we are “at home.”

From where does Jesus get his “authority?”

WS: Jesus gets his authority from the same place we all get our authority. When we are awake to the significance of living “at home,” the experience is self-fulfilling. Our authority comes from representing health, wholeness, and authenticity.

# LESSON 11: STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

## TOPIC: MATTHEW 9: 9 - 18, TRANSPARENT ETHICS

<b>Section II: Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life</b>					
<b>The Teacher’s Handbook – Part I: Transparent Ethics Lessons 10-14</b>					
<b>Teaching stand-point</b>	<b>Changing lives</b>	<b>Staff: quali-fications</b>	<b>Trans-parent Task</b>	<b>Graduation Address</b>	<b>Affirming credentials</b>
<b>8:19-22</b>	<b>8:23-9:8</b>	<b>9:9-17</b>	<b>9:18-34</b>	<b>9:35-10:42</b>	<b>11:1-19</b>
<b>Lesson 10</b>		<b>Lesson 11</b>	<b>Lesson 12</b>	<b>Lesson 13</b>	<b>Lesson 14</b>

I. Read the assigned reading at one time.

*Living the synthesized life is embracing our Outer Human experience that is modified and valued by our Inner Spiritual Resources. Living from the inside out is living the synthesized life.*

II. The Context for this lesson is to put into the Training Manual a list of the qualifications for being staff members (teachers) who utilize the, "Tools For Teaching The Methods for a Happy/Holy Life."

**Note:** The kind of staff-members Matthew looks for are those who are awake to the fact that they live before ONE REALITY that is like a soup containing particles representing both The Way Life Is (TWLI or the human/natural), and particles representing the Really Real (or spiritual reality). If necessary, turn to my book on "Decoding Our Traditional Code Words," and the concepts of TWLI and The Really Real are defined in it.

I’ve written this statement to draw attention to it. To appreciate this statement is to make sense of the qualifications necessary to be called to be one of Jesus’ teachers/staff members. For now, it is enough to know that Jesus is searching for staff that is awake to this one reality. These people are acknowledging both the physical/natural reality and the spiritual experience. The following characteristics can be added.

Vs. 9: 9 What are the operating words in this verse that suggest the kind of staff for which we are looking?

WS: The qualification for using Matthew's "Tool Box" is the relationship the staff member takes to Reality (TWLI).

First, they say, "Yes!" Those who follow Jesus are the "Yes" people. It is a distinguishing mark of Christians that they first say "yes," and then they can prioritize their response; i.e., "Yes, I'll go to Africa after I finish learning the native language." If we choose to say "No," then there is no opportunity to change our mind.

Second, Christians are qualified as "Tool Box Teachers" when we choose not to be victimized by our circumstances or situations in life. Instead, we are victors. For instance: If we are born with one leg, we have a choice either to be victims to our circumstances and chronic complainers, or we have the choice to be one-legged dancers and be victors over our circumstances.

Reality never changes. It is us who can change. This is the basis of the Good News! Our lives are transformed! Reality stays the same. To desire that we "grow another leg" is a wish dream, and this is unreality. One of my axioms is that "there is only one thing God hates, and that is a wish dream." The reason being is that God is in the reality and not in the lie of unreality. God only is found in the middle of what is real, or what can be called "The Really Real." In fact, one definition of God can be The Authentic!

Now, using this formula, observe the qualifications Matthew lays out for those who teach from the "Tool Box."

Vs. 9: 10, 11 Why does Jesus choose "sinners" as a qualified staff?

WS: Sinners are those who understand The Way Life Is. They are not living in a dream world. Those who believe they are created "righteous" are living a lie. Yes, we can be "made righteous" by living our life in the shadow of Jesus Christ. But we are still sinners made righteous. We are not The Righteous.

Trinity Bible Study participant's reflections: It seems to me that here Jesus identified people who knew what it meant to be looked down upon. They apparently exhibited a sense of mercy toward other people. He seems to juxtapose them over against the people who considered themselves righteous and were judgmental toward other people. When we can acknowledge our own sinfulness and can be merciful toward ourselves, then we can extend that mercy toward others.



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What is implied in choosing "Tax Collectors?"

WS: In Jesus' time, Tax Collectors were doing not only an unseemly activity, but were collaborators with their Roman captors; they were traitors! They were sinners, and they were traitors. How far down the social ladder can you go? The point at which they qualify as "Tool Box Teachers" is that they experienced their lives transformed. This does not change their REALITY, but it does change THEM! They knew the experience of transformation.

Trinity Bible Study participant's Reflections: Tax collectors were the really bad guys of that day. Even yet they are people who need the sense of being loved by God. They are still humans in need of concern and love.

Vs. 9: 12 What is implied in the necessity for our staff to be sick?

WS: Again, the sick are those who "have been there and done that." The qualifications to be "Tool Box Teachers" are that their lives are transformed!

Trinity Bible Study participant's Reflections: The "sick" are those who understand their need to be healed. Basically, it seems to me that this is not so much affirming sickness as it is affirming one's recognition of being sick. Recognition of our sickness is the first step toward healing.

WS: Amen!

What is implied in the quotation "I desire mercy, not sacrifice?"

Trinity Bible Study participant's Reflections: Sacrifice is an external. Mercy is an internal stance that reaches out to others. Sacrifice doesn't really change things whereas mercy does. For me this recalls the words in Micah, "do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God."

WS: Sacrifice is an "objective thing" while Mercy is an "experience thing." What we "experience" is the miracle of transformation. When we experience "forgiveness" we know the restoration of At-One-Ment, and the peace it brings to us.

In this regard, research the background of the Minor prophet Hosea. Find out the context Hosea used in writing his book in the Old Testament. Then, see if you can extrapolate from this story the characteristics representing "mercy" and not "sacrifices."

WS: Hosea is a minor prophet in the Old Testament. He spoke to his nation of Israel just prior to the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel to the Syrians around 722 B.C.E. (Before the Common Era.) He used his marriage to Gomer—a prostitute—as a metaphor for his nation who prostituted themselves in their relationship to God. He named his three children using similar metaphors: a son—“The defeat of Israel;” a daughter—“God will no longer show mercy;” a son—“For you are not God’s people.”

The point Matthew makes in referring to Hosea in 9:13 “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” is the miracle of transformation. We all have prostituted ourselves by believing we can change reality. This prevents God from transforming us. We are worthy of only being “stoned to death because of our prostitution.” It is when we awaken to the fact that we are prostitutes, and then we discover God is with us in this reality, and then can move to have our lives transformed! Ah-ha! Now we know MERCY! All of the sacrifices we lay on the altar are useless unless our lives are transformed.

Ah, yes. This will preach!

The qualification for using the “Tool Box of Teachers” is to EXPERIENCE MERCY! Then we have something to share because we’ve been there, done that, and experienced the transformation.

Vs. 9: 14 -- 15 What is implied concerning staff qualifications?

It is my suggestion not to be literal in these verses. Instead, see if you can push your thinking to the EXPERIENCE implied in this story. Share your reflections.

WS: The issue here is fasting. Matthew’s point is that there is nothing wrong with fasting. There is nothing wrong with John’s disciples fasting. The issue is when to fast. Is it appropriate to fast when we are attempting to solve relationships? What about fasting when life is in harmony, in synch, or we have it all together?

Think of it this way. Fasting is a spiritual activity for awaking our spiritual eyes to see in the ONE REALITY SOUP both our natural reality (TWLI) and our spiritual reality (the Really Real). Fasting is a spiritual exercise to clean our spiritual lens to see more spiritual specks in the soup of reality. Fasting is like “sacrifices,” it is an objective thing we do. *However, when we are in the middle of experiencing the transformed life we are living with our spiritual eyes already open. This is a time to celebrate. This is the time when the “bridegroom” is with us.*

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Trinity Bible Study participant's Reflections: Hosea's key themes were "faithful love" and "knowledge of God". This appears to me to be calling us to the relationship with Christ. Jesus seems to be saying that the relationship is more important than the rituals of one's religious expression. While Jesus was with them, the time spent with him was more important than doing religious stuff.

Vs. 9: 16 -- 17 What is implied concerning staff qualifications in 9: 16, 17?

Again, push your thinking to the EXPERIENCE implied in this story. Share your reflections.

WS: The Staff Members using Matthew's "Tool Box" are creating something new. The axiom, "God does not call the qualified, but qualifies the called," is descriptive. None of us are "qualified." However, those of us with our eyes open are called to be teachers and staff members. The teaching we are called to teach is THE ONE REALITY—this is the "new unshrunk cloth," this is the "new wineskin" into which we pour the new still-fermenting wine!

Those qualified to use Matthew's "Tool Box" are those whose eyes are open to the truth of the WHOLE REALITY—the human/natural part of the soup of reality, and the spiritual part of this soup.

Trinity Bible Study participant's Reflections: It seems to me that Jesus is calling us to *think outside the box* for that which is creative. It is a call to experience life and extrapolate from that rather than trying to make life fit into various ideological (head trip) boxes.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT 9: 9 –13, 18 – 25**

The healing stories in Matthew represent the transparent task. The transparency can be likened to a photographic slide transparency. "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; that is, to be mute. 2) When this material is passed through the transparency of the Good News (or The Christ), then we speak of this stage of "passing through Jesus, or the Cross. 3) On the other side of the transparency a transformation occurs" in which TWLI is not changed, but we see our human frailty in new light, and we are changed! We are no longer victims to TWLI, but now we are victors.

Note that our human situation remains the same while everything is transformed. When this happens, we experience Good News. This is one of The Teacher's tools in Matthew's Teacher's Tool box.

"There is one caveat in this process. These transparent experiences are not experienced as two different realities. This is experienced as one reality that is like a "Reality Soup." The "human/natural" and "the spiritual" part are of ONE REALITY in which the human and the spiritual 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—a UNI-VERSE—of ONE WORLD with two experiences." Consequently, the sermon is about seeing through the sickness of these two women in order to experience the Good News of Jesus Christ that is present here, and allow it to address the sickness in our own lives.

The Key to this sermon: In order to make your way through this sermon take time to define in your own mind the following experiences: 1) righteous, 2) sinners, 3) faith and 4) healing. From the point of view of Gut Trip Analysis these words are experienced as a) the awakened, b) those that are asleep, c) surrender, and d) the awakening.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 9: 9 –13, 18 – 25**

The Grabber: What happens when Jesus comes calling? Share a time in your life, or the life of another, when a "light goes on." Hint: think of a visit to the Cave of the Winds in Colorado Springs when the guide turns off the light so you experience profound darkness. What does it mean for Jesus to come calling during these times in our lives?

## LESSON 12: TRANSPARENT TASKS

TOPIC: MATTHEW 9: 18 - 34, TRANSPARENT ETHICS

<b>Section II: Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life</b>					
<b>The Teacher's Handbook – Part I: Transparent Ethics Lessons 10-14</b>					
Teaching stand-point	Changing lives	Staff: quali- fications	Trans- parent Task	Graduation Address	Affirming credentials
8:19-22	8:23-9:8	9:9-17	9:18-34	9:35-10:42	11:1-19
Lesson 10		Lesson 11	Lesson 12	Lesson 13	Lesson 14

I. Read the assigned reading at one time.

Living the synthesized life is embracing our Outer Human experience that is modified and valued by our Inner Spiritual Resources. Living from the inside out is living the synthesized life.

II. The Transparent Task: A transparency is like a photographic positive film or like a color 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.

WS: 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. Vs. 9: 18 to 9: 34 -- There are *four little healing stories (go back and count them. Two are hidden)* that turn on the light of the Transparent Task. This task is illustrated in the following construction.

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

**WS:** It is important to remind ourselves that The Good News does not transform TWLI. Rather, the Good News transforms our relationship to TWLI. Observe that we are the ones changed; our human situation is not altered. 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 him. 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

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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.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 9: 9 – 13,  
18 - 25**

The Key to this sermon: In order to make your way through this sermon take time to define in your own mind the following experiences:

Traditional Word	Gut Trip Analysis
1) righteous	the awakened
2) sinners	those that are asleep
3) faith	to surrender
4) healing	the awakening

The EXISTENTIAL AIM: As we awaken we experience a deep joy, a profound sense of gratitude, a willingness to share ourselves with others in peace, and to live on behalf of others through works of justice and mercy.

## LESSON 13: GRADUATION ADDRESS

TOPIC: MATTHEW 9: 36 – 10:42, TRANSPARENT ETHICS

<b>Section II: Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life</b>					
<b>The Teacher's Handbook – Part I: Transparent Ethics Lessons 10-14</b>					
<b>Teaching stand-point</b>	<b>Changing lives</b>	<b>Staff: quali- fications</b>	<b>Trans- parent Task</b>	<b>Graduation Address</b>	<b>Affirming credentials</b>
<b>8:19-22</b>	<b>8:23-9:8</b>	<b>9:9-17</b>	<b>9:18-34</b>	<b>9:35-10:42</b>	<b>11:1-19</b>
<b>Lesson 10</b>		<b>Lesson 11</b>	<b>Lesson 12</b>	<b>Lesson 13</b>	<b>Lesson 14</b>

- I. Read the assigned reading at one time.
- II. The Graduation Address -- Vs. 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. Jesus addresses this question by reminding his graduates of their "Transparent Task." Vs. 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 whom these 12 graduates are sent is to the Jews.

- 1). The "lost sheep of Israel" was their target. Their activity was to bring hope to the sick, dead or dying, and cleanse the lepers. Vs. 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. Vs. 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?

Reflection of Kylee Rudkin—A Western Kansas Art Teacher: The "lesson" that I am picking for response in this study is Mt. 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—The Way Life Is) 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."

WS: Thanks Kylee, you write about “Tough Love.”

Title “Be on your Guard.”

A. Three themes: The most important: “Living on vacation or at Home” with ten scripture references.

B. Second theme: “When the Son of Man Comes” with 5 references.

C. Third, “The results of living the Good News” with 2 references.

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II. A Rational Chart of Jesus' Graduation Address

<b>Jesus' Graduation Address:                  "Be On Your Guard" - Matthew 10: 17 – 42</b>					
<b>C: The Results Of Living The Good News</b>					
<b>B: Living When The "Son Of Man" Comes</b>					
<b>A: The Results Of Living On Vacation or At Home</b>					
<b>C: 1</b> Good News not compromised with the political process	<b>B: 2</b> When the "Son of Man" comes	<b>A: 4</b> Living "On Vacation" is the antithesis of living "At Home"	<b>A: 6</b> The benefits of living At Home in At-One-Ment	<b>B: 3</b> The Affects of living with Jesus	<b>C: 1</b> The four promised rewards
Vs. 10: 18	Vs. 10: 23 Vs. 10: 24 - 25	Vs. 10: 19A Vs. 10: 19B Vs. 10: 21A Vs. 10: 21B	Vs. 10:22 Vs. 10:30-31 Vs. 10:32 -33 Vs. 10:34 – 36 Vs. 10: 37 Vs. 10: 38 – 39	Vs. 10: 26 Vs. 10: 27 Vs. 10: 28	Vs. 10:40 – 42

III. Jesus addresses the BIG QUESTION as he turns to the body of his address. The essence of Vs. 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.

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."

WS: 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."

WS: 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 is that the fundamentals never change. It is the situation in which the context is applied that changes. For example, our context is always EXPERIENCE 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 what to say, for it will not be you that is speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

WS: 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."

WS: This is what happens when we depend exclusively on "things of the flesh." (My, I haven't used 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."

WS: 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."

WS: 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

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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 to 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?"

WS: 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."

WS: 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 why 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."

WS: 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 10 X 15 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."

WS: 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."

WS: 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."

WS: My Confession: This is a curious statement, and I've struggled to identify the danger is 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"

WS: 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

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dissatisfaction. In these situations God is The Guarantor; that is, God guarantees the reward for everyone and 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."

WS: 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, then 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."

WS: This statement continues the "hard sayings" Matthew uses on several occasions. The worldly danger in this pair of sayings is not in that our 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 relations ships. 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.

It is important to keep in the forefront of our understanding that we live in one human experience and that we view this experience from two perspectives. We never can escape the world (Vacation), but we can Awaken to living At Home. As we Awaken we transform our "Vacation" experience into a transformed existence. When we experience this, then we live whole lives; i.e., our reality soup exists in a unified bowl, but now we live a more meaningful, peaceful, hopeful and Awakened experience.

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

WS: 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 receives 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 my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

WS: 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.

D. The last question to answer is this. In light of this work, when is it The Son of Man comes?

WS: See # 7 above. Do you agree or not?

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 9: 35 – 10: 10**

### **The Gospel of Matthew--**

One of the unique revelations that the charting revealed about the Gospel of Matthew is that Jesus created three "Training Manuals For Teaching The Transparent Life." It is this "revelation" of our return to the Garden of Eden that is a central theme of Jesus'

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message in Matthew. We cannot serve two masters—one Master is our ignorance about life in the Garden, and the other Master is living the Happy/Holy life fulfilling our intended purpose of the humane and gracious life working for justice and peace. Life outside the Garden is characterized by worry, while living the awakened life in an oasis of peace and fulfillment characterizes the life God intends for us to live.

You'll want to note that today's lection falls in Part I, the teaching manual that awakens us to living and practicing "transparent ethics."

Authority—Where does the pastor get her/his authority. Well, we get it from the same place everyone gets it. As Shakespeare reports, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings." *Julius Caesar* (I, ii, 140-141). The point being, in Gut Trip Analysis our authority is not something given to us from without, but rather it is discovered we have all the authority we'll ever need within us. It is the same authority that Jesus had within him. The unfortunate aspect of this is that most of the time most of us are in denial, ignorant, or obstinate in accepting it. Obviously, Jesus was profoundly in tune with his; he described it as coming from his Father whom we experience as Perfect At-One-Ment; Jesus always is the demonstration or the demonstrator. This is the same source as our authority. "The Kingdom of God is within us. (Luke 17: 21)." The Jewish worldview is that God is our breath.

Ethically, Gut Trip Analysis understands this as a transparent experience. We are what we are created to be. A cow gets its authority from its cow-NESS. A Tree its authority from its tree-NESS. In other words, our authority is a part of our IS-NESS. In other places you may see this concept in the metaphors, "Our Spiritual Oasis," and/or as, "Our Inner Spiritual Altars.

The message of Jesus—

Matthew summarizes Jesus' message as to, "Teach/preach the Kingdom of God." The Kingdom of God is nothing more than our experience of fulfilling our intended creation in living the humane and gracious life working for justice and peace. *Victims or victors:*

Fundamental to this message is the human condition that is illustrated as living the victimized life; life victimizes us! However, the demonstration of Jesus is that we can choose to either be victims or to live as victors. Choosing to be victors is to live the resurrected life.



Preaching to the choir—

Unless this scripture is carefully read, it is easy to miss Jesus' instruction that neither are we to go to the Gentiles (i.e., the Un-awakened), nor to the Samaritans (i.e., those in denial about living the resurrected awakened life as victors). Our instructions are to go to "the lost sheep of Israel;" i.e., those who are supposed to be the awakened/enlightened People Of God. Alas, we find "the sheep" are in denial, gone back to sleep, burned out, forgetful, and/or obstinate about what it means to demonstrate the awakened and surrendered life. Opps! We are the sheep! Jesus tells us that the harvest is ripe, but the laborers are few. *The task of the church is to live as the demonstration of the surrendered people. The diseased, the sick, harassed, and helpless-*

It is helpful to understand that these words are all metaphors for the un-awakened sheep that have gone to sleep; these are the harvesters who can be awakened again to the surrendered life. We need to pick up our task and to start weeding The Garden.

Father's Day—

This holiday can be an added value to the preacher. This is an opportunity to challenge the men to awaken to the surrendered life. In the movie/video, "Joe Vs. the Volcano," Joe is challenged to go on an adventure to throw himself into a volcano on behalf of a people to whom he owes nothing. Obviously, in this sense, he is a Christ figure. The challenge is presented to him to, "live like a king and die like a man." While this can be interpreted as bravado, there is a foundation of steel hidden below it. To live like a king can be construed to live like Jesus the Fully Awakened; to die like a man can be interpreted as to embrace our baptism through which we are awakened to live fully, authentically, humane and gracious life. Or, this can be interpreted as an instruction for us to intentionally die to the things preventing us from living the fulfillment of our intended creation; i.e., the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy.

The EXISTENTIAL AIM: WAKE UP! The Kingdom of God is near! But, what is our experience of the Kingdom?

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 9: 35 – 10: 10

First, carefully reread this scripture and look at all of the imagery. Before starting to write this sermon, brood carefully on:

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- 1) who is the target to whom we are called to go—the “lost sheep,”
- 2) how will you describe the Kingdom of God that is near? How is this the hope we are to bring?
- 3) in light of our task, how do you experience healing, raising the dead, cleansing the lepers, and driving out demons?
- 4) what is the gold, silver and copper, no bags, tunics, sandals and staff we are not to use in our work,
- 5) why is the worker worth his/her keep?

The ONE THING to be said: The awakened are called to awaken the awakened who have gone back to sleep. This is why the harvest is plentiful.

## ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 10: 24 – 39

The Key to this sermon: If your experience is like mine, I struggled to define this material because there are too many little parts; 17 as a matter of fact. Today’s scripture is located in the larger context of the “Graduation Event.” As you’ll discover, a review of this commentary will be helpful! It was to me, and it will be for you!

The context for this lection reading—

A Gut Trip Analysis of this lection reveals that the Bible interpreter’s missed the point that Matthew is sharing the pedagogy notes of Jesus. Matthew provides us with three full lesson plans:

The Teacher’s Handbook—Part I: Transparent Ethics (Vs. 5: 1 – 11: 19.)

This first handbook ends with graduation exercises in Vs. 9: 9 – 11: 19.

The Second Teacher’s Handbook – Part II: The Spiritual Oasis that reveals our ministry of transparency. (Vs. 12: 1 – 20: 16.)

The Third Teacher’s Handbook – Part II: Moral Lessons that identifies the Always-Coming In-breaking of the Spiritual Oasis; The KOG. (Vs. 20:17 – 25: 46.)

Because the Bible interpreters miss this significance of this material, the Common lectionary divides Jesus’ Commencement Address into several sessions. What a shame, eh? Because of the use of The Lowery Loop, the attempt is made to pick up these threads and to set the larger context.

Do a little research on the Greek word for “Afraid”—

The Greek word, “phobos” is exclusively used by all of the Gospel writers (with two exceptions in Mark 9: 6 --

*Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) Greek: ekphobos – Frightened out of our wits.*

Luke 24: 5 –

*While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? Greek: emphobos – Alarmed, in fear.*

The way we misconstrue the word is in angst, anxiety or fear. This switch makes Jesus admonition difficult to understand, in particular when he references those who can kill the body and/or the work of the demon. How are we to stand in awe or reverence of the antithesis of At-One-Ment?

Jesus’ commencement theme—

“Be on your guard” is the theme of Jesus’ message. Using The Lowery Loop, the Itch is, “What is it we are to be on our guard against?”

The Son of Man –

It is important that you are clear about this topic. This is a reference from Daniel, and always is used by the Gospel writers to illuminate the human nature of Jesus as the Christ; God became incarnate!

When does the Son of Man come? He comes whenever people fulfill their intended creation of living the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy! In other words, The Son of Man comes all of the time; it is just that we need to open our eyes to see how frequently he/she appears.

The One who can destroy both the body and soul in hell—

This is one of the most controversial parts of Christian theology. In Gut Trip Analysis, the Demonic always is the experience of living the Lie that, while we are victimized, we must

## Tools for Teaching

be victims and not victors. The experience of Jesus Christ calls this a lie! What do you think? Please get this clear in your mind before starting to use this sermon.

### ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 10: 24 – 39

The ONE THING to get said: What does it mean to be worthy? Jesus lays out the guidelines!

Who is the One who can kill both the body and the soul in hell?

First, we have a problem to solve about this word “hell.” It is one of our Old Christian code words into which we have made objects to be studied rather than a relationship to be lived. Hell is not a place but the experience of living without God in your life. If life is a living hell, then you must ask yourself, “Where is God in my life?”

Or, better yet, “Am I in God’s life?”

1. Who are those that can kill the body but not the soul? Well, the Wichita gangs come to mind, so does the war in Iraq. Also, the events of 9/11 were terrorist activities that could kill the body but not the soul. Where was God when 9/11 happened? God was in the airplanes. God was in the Twin Towers, the Pennsylvania field, and at the Pentagon. Then, God rushed in to make good happen. The result is the rebirth of patriotism, nationalism and generosity.

2. Each of these things can kill the body but not the soul! The reason? We have a choice to either be victims or to be victors. This is the lesson of the crucifixion and the resurrection. We are victors in Christ!

B. When our son, Wesley, was dying of leukemia at the age of 21, I was assigned by our mission institute to be his constant companion while his mother had an important job in Chicago.

1. During this time, for my own mental health, I ran training for 10 K’s and marathons. One day while running, I became aware of another runner behind me with an unusual galloping gate. (I never was very fast!) As he passed me I noticed he was running on prosthesis.

2. Later, at the YMCA, as we shared the men’s shower room. I asked him, “Why do you run?” He replied, “if I told you, you’d never believe me.” I said, “Listen, I’m a United Methodist pastor and I’ve about heard it all.” He concluded, “Well, I use my

running time as a prayer time.” I added, “Well, I use this time to pray too. However, doesn’t it hurt to run on that steel leg?” He thought for a long moment and said, “Yes, it does. But I use the pain to remind me to pray.”

Do you hear the switch?

3. We are worthy when we experience the choice either to be the worst old one-legged grouch, or the best one-legged dancer we’ve ever seen.

In verse 37, Jesus says, “Anyone who loves dad and mom more than me is not worthy of me.” This is another hard saying.

Look at the scripture again. It doesn’t say that we are to deny our moms and pops. Rather, Jesus tells us we are to prioritize every relationship we have to any person and to anything. Always, we are to ask WWJD?

Christians never have an immediate relationship to anyone. When a man looks at his secretary and thinks, wow, I’d like an immediate relationship with her. This is not possible for a Christian man, because his secretary needs Christ more than someone who is going to use her. The same is true when we relate to that new BMW, or a new shotgun. This doesn’t mean we can’t have it. It means we stop to ask, WWJD? In this way, we live the more HUMANE life?

I serve as a Saline Co. Jail chaplain. On one evening I was called very late in the evening to visit with a women prisoner. Her first words were, “Chaplain, I’m so sad. I’m so very sad.” I looked at her and said, “Oh that’s terrible. That makes God cry!”

Perhaps, it was my unusual reply, but she stopped to consider the statement. Then, she asked, “Then, how do I make God happy?” “That’s easy,” I said. “You make God smile when you live At-One with your neighbor, yourself, and finally with Perfect At-One-Ment.”

Later, I learned that this woman returned to the woman’s cell block and began a daily Bible Study, a daily Prayer Group, and a woman’s support group.

Can you believe she is not worthy?

4. Observe three things about this exchange. First, the woman prisoner accepted the fact that she is not a victim. Instead, she is a victor. Second, make note of the fact

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that her life circumstances did not change; she is still a prisoner in a jail cell. However, now her life is transformed, and she is about the business of transforming other lives.

To be worthy is to live the transformed life. This is what makes God smile!

What does it mean to be worthy?

First, it is the defeat of victimization and the decision to live victoriously. Jesus did! Second, it is to make God smile. Jesus did. Third, it is the defeat of hell to live and die intentionally. Jesus did. What we have just completed is a Christian definition of what it means to be a worthy humane human being. This is what defines us as being worthy.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 10: 40 - 42**

It is important to ground in your own thinking what the reward is. From the perspective of Gut Trip Analysis the reward has two dimensions. *The first defines authenticity*—As we surrender our lives to God the evidence is we are more and more authentically human/humane. *The second defines our relationship to At-One-Ment*---“*The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself.*” (Hint: the reward for driving within the speed limit is a life of no tickets or guilt about speeding. The reward for doing drugs or being unfaithful is a life of duplicity and guilt.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 10: 40 - 42**

The ONE THING to get said: Our “reward” is living the life God created for us to live in authenticity. The proof this authenticity is demonstrated in our actions that either lead to At-One-Ment with God, neighbor and self, or they prove to be the antithesis of it.

# LESSON 14: DO THE WILL OF GOD – PART I

TOPIC: MATTHEW 11: 20 – 12: 21 - TRANSPARENT ETHICS

<b>Section II: Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life</b>					
<b>The Teacher’s Handbook – Part I: Transparent Ethics Lessons 10-14</b>					
Teaching stand-point	Changing lives	Staff: quali- fications	Trans- parent Task	Graduation Address	Affirming credentials
8:19-22	8:23-9:8	9:9-17	9:18-34	9:35-10:42	<b>11:1-19</b>
Lesson 10		Lesson 11	Lesson 12	Lesson 13	Lesson 14

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

**II. The context for this lesson begins with the statement, “After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples. . .” This affirms the conclusion of the Teacher’s Handbook on Transparent Ethics.”** The writer of Matthew’s gospel is making a concluding observation. The last item to put into the Teacher’s Tool Box is a checklist for affirming credentials for those aspiring to use this “tool box.”

The fundamental affirmation is found in the last statement is verse **11:19B** –“But wisdom is proved right by her actions.” The conclusion we come to is that what they do, rather than what they say, characterizes the awakened. Jesus makes this point two times in these 19 verses: 1) **11: 4 – 10**; Action is illuminated in the story concerning John’s disciples coming to ask Jesus who he is; Jesus’ answer is, “What do you hear and see?” 2) **11: 18, 19**; “Wisdom is proved right by her actions.”

**III. The assignment for this study:**

**First--**Take a piece of paper and divide it into two columns. Name one column **AT HOME** (That part of our REALITY SOUP that is living in the shadow of Perfect At-One-Ment; the place where humans are intended to live in peace and harmony with neighbor, self, and with Perfect At-One-Ment; in a relationship with eternity). Name the other column **ON**

**VACATION** (That part of our REALITY SOUP that is The Way Life Is –TWLI; the human/natural part of being human).

**Matthew 11: 1 to 19**

<b>ON VACATION</b>	<b>AT HOME</b>
Blind	Receive sight
Lame	Walk
Lepers	Cured
Deaf	Hear
To the poor	Good News preached
In desert	Not fall away from Jesus
Reed shaken	
Man dressed in fine clothes	Prophet (Malachi 3:1)
King's Palace	Least in the kingdom

**Second**—What do these things reveal about our *teaching credentials* as Awakened Teachers?

**WS:** First of all, Awakened Teachers are those who can distinguish between living “on vacation” and “at home.” Implied in this proposition is that awakening presupposes the awakened one lives with these experiences all of the time.

**Second,** Awakened Teachers are those who have a passion for sharing their awakening with the unawakened as well as others who are awake. To be awake is to experience the Good News of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**A. Reflect on Jesus assertion that John the Baptizer is “Elijah.”**

Use your Study Bible or other resource in your library or On-line to see what the commentators say about Elijah in this context.

**WS:** My personal observation is that Elijah, by tradition, is the one who is to announce the coming of the Messiah (Jewish), or the Christ (Greek). Elijah and John are associated in Matthew, Mark and Luke. The figure of John the Baptizer embodies the role of Elijah and is one of the affirmations needed by the Jewish community to identify Jesus as the Christ, “the one who is to come.”



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**B. Vs. 11: 10B – Malachi 3: 1 – Why would Matthew use this reference? What was the purpose and who were the audience for Malachi’s prophecy? What does this say about why this reference is used?**

**WS:** Malachi is the last of the Hebrew Testament prophets mentioned in the Hebrew canon. He wrote around 430 B.C.E. (Before the Common Era.) His book is written to the ungrateful people and unfaithful leaders of Jerusalem. Probably, Malachi is a contemporary of Nehemiah, writing after the return of the Jews from Exile. He uses a literary format of writing about the “Dark Side of the Picture” (Malachi 1: 1 – 3:14) and the “Light Side of the Picture” (Malachi 3:1 to 4:6).

The reference in **Matthew 11: 10B**. Matthew uses this reference to foreshadow the role of John the Baptizer as Elijah who is the one to prepare the way of the Messiah. “See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me.” (Malachi 3: 1.)

Again, all this is proof-texting.

**C. Vs. 11: 17--** This is the “little ditty” for a children’s game. Again, use your commentaries and share with us why Matthew uses this material in this place.

**WS:** Vs. 11:17, “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.” Any number of commentaries are available. I found useful information in the *Bible Gateway Commentaries* at [www.bible.gospelcom.net](http://www.bible.gospelcom.net). This reference notes two things about the role of John the Baptizer and his identification as Elijah.

First, this reference observes, “. . .the children’s complaint is true: Jesus and John approached the generation from two angles, but the other children would not play either game. Jesus scandalously paints the kingdom in terms of children’s play. But this assumes an exact analogy that among other things would require two groups of children, one piping and the other mourning, a picture not explicit in this text. (REF. Dodd 1961.)

The second interpretation I found a little more likely, and the commentary writer confirms this. “These spoiled children thus resemble Jesus’ opponents, who are dissatisfied no matter what. . . They piped to John and he would not dance, they wailed to Jesus, but he refused to mourn.” I guess it is take your pick for the interpretation that matches your expectation or analysis.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 11: 16 – 19,  
25**

**The key to the sermon is:** What is “God’s good purposes?” This is the question that will help define your message around this assigned scripture. Review in your mind the significance of The Good News. In Gut Trip Analysis the Good News is, 1) we are not victims, 2) we are victors, and 3) in this way our burdens are never changed, but our relationship to them is transformed.

**ONE THING to get said:** Our Christian credentials come from surrendering ourselves to God.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 11: 2 – 11**

According to the Matthew chart, at this point Jesus is instructing his twelve disciples about “transparent ethics. (11: 4 – 10) Jesus makes the point that ethics are better understood in action; “What do you see?” Then, in this wonderful list Jesus demonstrates what it means to live the ethical life: 1) Being blind characterizes living “as Human Beings having a spiritual life,” but receiving sight characterizes living “as Spiritual Beings having a humane experience. What is the “sight” we receive? It is in-sight that comes to us as an awakening event; we Awaken! The same format can be applied to the other characteristics as well.

The new insight for me is the last characteristic in Jesus’ list. When we awaken to live as “Spiritual Beings,” this is what gives us the privilege of “preaching good news to the poor.”

Who are the poor? This is not an economic, nor a social, question. It is a spiritual question. The poor are those who are unawake; it those who are thirsty.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 11: 2 – 11**

**Affirming the credentials of the Awakened---**

Matthew’s gospel is a “Teacher’s Manual” for teaching the Deeply Satisfied Life. At this point Matthew puts in a series of items in a “tool box” to be used by each teacher. The last item into the tool box are the credentials for those aspiring to use this “tool box.”

## Tools for Teaching

The role model for Matthew is Jesus who is the Master Teacher. The phrase “the Deeply Satisfied Life” is a transliteration of the theological term sanctification.

**ONE THING to be said:** Christmas is waking up time.

**THE EXISTENTIAL AIM:** Expose your prisons and deserts to the transforming power of the Manger.

**I. Describe how this scripture begins in odd places of discomfort.**

**A. Vs. 2A,** John is in prison.

**B. Vs. 7B,** As if prison is not bad enough, Jesus raises the specter of living in the desert.

Gut Trip Analysis treats all such references as metaphors. They represent living the antithesis of our intended creation as humane and gracious people working for justice and mercy. They represent living as victims rather than victors.

It is important to observe that humanity always lives in prisons or deserts of our own making; these are The Way Life Is (TWLI). The Good News of Jesus is that we cannot change our human situations—we can’t grow another leg—but we can transform the way we relate and react to our situations—we can be the best one-legged dancers!

This is good Good News: We do not need to be victims. Jesus came to demonstrate that we each can deliberately choose to die to the barriers preventing us from living as victors. When we embrace this Good News, then we experience a resurrection and/or rebirth.

Christmas is the story of Jesus coming to live in our human prisons and deserts. Holy Week is the story of the intentionality of Jesus’ crucifixion and death; Jesus chooses to die as a demonstration of his freedom and ours. Easter is the story of living in New Birth.

## SECTION III: THE MORAL IMPERATIVES

### LESSON 15: DO THE WILL OF GOD – PART II

TOPIC: MATTHEW 11: 20 – 12: 21 - THE FOUNDATIONS OF MORALITY

<b>Section III: The Moral Imperatives</b>
<b>Foundations of Morality</b>
<b>Do the Will of God</b> <b>Matthew 11: 20 – 12: 21</b>
<b>Lesson 15</b>

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

**A contextual statement:**

A review of the Matthew Chart reveals that the Gospel of Matthew is a training manual. It can be assumed that Matthew used the lesson plans developed by Jesus and/or the Early Church for this purpose. The result is three “handbooks” that teach **1) Transparent Ethics** [Matthew 5:1 – 11: 19]; **2) The resources of the Spiritual Oasis**, [Matthew 12: 22 – 20: 16]; and **3) Moral Lessons concerning The Will of God** [Matthew 20:17 -25: 46].

It can not be avoided that the material for this lesson is at the very center of Matthew’s gospel. This is no mistake. There are 14 lessons on one side and another 14 lessons on the other. Also, it is not a mistake that the topic is, “The Foundations of Morality.” *Doing the Will of God* is the foundation on which the three Teacher’s Handbooks rests.

This interpretation is the invention of Gut Trip Analysis, and is revealed only through the gift of charting. If you haven’t already done so, take the time to carefully follow the development of the chart and come to your own conclusions.

## II. REFLECT ON THE FOLLOWING –

The question to be answered is, “What is the moral imperative for those who are awake?” To answer this question it is necessary to review a bit of Christian philosophy concerning truth vs. goodness, experience vs. knowledge, and the role quality plays.

**A: TRUTH vs. GOODNESS**— Socrates had an argument with those in the Sophists’ School about the nature of TRUTH. The Sophists embraced the idea that Goodness is of more value than truth. Socrates embraced the idea that Truth was of more value than goodness.

Finally, Socrates won the argument: the result is humanity is set on the pursuit of the truth. We are the beneficiaries of this pursuit: medicine, industry, science, space, communications are all the result of our pursuit of THE TRUTH. Observe that the result of our search for truth leads us into “Head Trip Analysis.”

**B: EXPERIENCE vs. KNOWLEDGE**— Not surprisingly, it is my belief that the Sophists are right. GOODNESS is of more value than TRUTH. My position is that our experience is supported as “Gut Trip Analysis.” The term goodness can have a similar meaning to the “word” God uses in Genesis 1 where it is recorded, “God said. . . and it was good.” From the point of view of philosophy is it of more value? For example: is it of more value to sit on a cold stove instead of a hot one? For me, the value is found in the experience, rather than the knowledge. This kind of experience is about doing the will of God.

**C: QUALITY IS DOING THE WILL OF GOD** --- Webster’s Dictionary defines “quality” as, 1) a characteristic, property, or attribute; 2) character of nature, as belonging to or distinguishing a thing.

*The essence of something is QUALITY:* the essence of a tree is its quality; the authenticity of a human being is our quality. The essence of wholesome human beings is associated with authentic humanness. In the jargon of Gut Trip Analysis, authentic humanness is to live in At-One-Ment with everyone and with all things. Also, it means to fulfill our intended creation of living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy. The quality experience is to live at home, rather than on vacation. *Important conclusions:*

## The Moral Imperatives

1). When we do QUALITY WORK, we are exposing the essence for which we are born and/or trained. Authenticity is a God given attribute. The experience of fulfilling our human attribute (Quality) is doing the will of God.

2) The moral imperative for those who are awake is first to fulfill the essence for which they were created. This is doing the Will of God. We humans are created to be human. We fulfill our essence when we are authentic humans; i.e., to be humane.

3) The antithesis of being human is either to be un-human or in-human. a) To be Un-human is to be self-depreciating or prideful; b) to be In-human is to be racist or sexist in putting others down in order to elevate ourselves.

Leslie D. Weatherhead wrote the definitive book about the will of God (*The Will of God – 1944*). The author identifies three elements in The Will of God: the Intentional Will of God (in our jargon: To Live At Home); The Circumstantial Will of God (in our jargon: To Live At Home in spite of The Way Life Is); The Ultimate Will of God (in our jargon: we Get Home because of our actions in Free Will.)

Doing God's Will leads JUSTICE to victory! (Isaiah 42: 1 – 4). Webster defines "justice" as 1) the *quality* of being just; righteousness, equitableness, or moral rightness; 3) the oral principle determining just conduct.

### III. In summary---

**WS:** The moral imperative for those who are awake as authentic human beings is to conduct ourselves so that our authentic life enhances the lives of others. In fact, this is what makes being human authentic.

### RIGHT AND WRONG:

The study of ethics is done in a lot of ambiguity. Seldom are choices we have made between just Right and Wrong. Most decisions are not clear.

### RIGHT AND RIGHT:

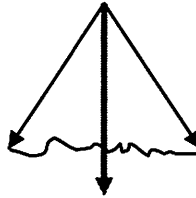
Sometimes our choices are made between Right and Right; i.e., it is both right to order eggs for breakfast, or to choose pancakes.

**WRONG AND WRONG:**

However, our choices are complicated when we make choices between Wrong and Wrong; i.e., pulling the life-support plug on a terminal patient is difficult; i.e., it is wrong to make this decision to play God; also, it is wrong to let a suffering person linger.

**The Awakened Person**

(Bonhoeffer: The Responsible Person)



**Obedient**

**Irresponsible**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a 20th Century theologian, wrote about Christian ethics. He defines **THE RESPONSIBLE PERSON** as the one who stands in the tension between **OBEDIENCE** and **IRRESPONSIBLE GENIUS**.

What this means is that we make a decision, and to some people this decision may look like blind obedience. To others, this decision may look like total irresponsibility.

However, what Bonhoeffer recommends we do with the decision once it is made intrigues me. We are to give it up. We are to throw our decision into the arms of God. We are to surrender the deed to God. The implication is that we let God worry about the consequences, and we stop worrying about it.

Another way of saying this is that we make the decision as if we are in **DEPENDENCE ON GOD** rather than on our own **INDEPENDENCE!** This is "Hearing the Word!"

**III. Now, in light of this discussion, answer the following questions:**

**1. Vs. 11: 20 – 24:** What is the message missed by the cities of Korazin, Bethsaida, Tyre and Sidon, Capernaum and Sodom? Why are they cursed?

**WS:** They heard The Word and made the choice to ignore it. This is the reward for the deed that is found in the deed itself. When they choose to ignore The Word, the

## The Moral Imperatives

reward for this deed is the seed of their destruction. “The Word” is experienced in the statement; “You can live abundantly the essence for which you were created.” As we choose to embrace this axiom, we find peace and joy. As we ignore this axiom, we are “cursed,” not by some Mysterious Power, but by the choice we made.

**2. Vs. 11: 25 – 27: What is it, “the son chooses to reveal?”**

**WS:** The Good News is revealed. The experience of the Good News is that I am given a choice to be a victim or to be a victor. The decision is mine.

**3. Vs. 11: 25 – 27: What is the “yoke” Jesus gives to the weary and burdened?**

Why is it lighter than other burdens? (Please avoid the “Footprints in the sand” analogy.)

**WS:** Actually, it is the same burdens transformed because my relationship to them is changed. The important element is now I’ve changed while the burdens remain the same. I am no longer a victim to them. Instead, I’m a victor!

**4. Vs. 12: 1 – 8: When is it lawful for hungry people to pick grain to eat on the Sabbath?**

**WS:** The quick answer is “when they are hungry.” The underlying question here is just what is the Sabbath? The “Sabbath” is when justice is done! This is the real “Sabbath.”

**5. Vs. 12: 9 – 14: When is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?**

**WS:** The answer in scripture is that the “Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” The experience of the term “Jesus” is that of the “Little Picture” of God as Perfect At-One-Ment. The term “Christ” is experienced as the Sacrificial Spirit.” “Lord of the Sabbath” is experienced as authentic justice that restores broken things into wholeness.

**6. Vs. 12: 15 – 21: Speculate on the relationship of Jesus’ request “not to tell who he was” and the Isaiah 42: 1 – 4 passage. It may be helpful to recall that Isaiah 42 is called Second Isaiah because it was written after the return of the Hebrew Exiles from slavery in Iraq.**

**WS:** This is a stab in the darkness, but I’ll try. The Isaiah passage is a testimony to the restoration of the nation of Israel through an ethic of care and gentleness: “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not extinguish.” Jesus’



request for others not to spread the word is the decision to focus on the deed rather than the doer.

What do you think? Even the commentaries are confused on this question.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER—MATTHEW 11: 16 – 19, 25**

**The key to the sermon is:**

**Bible interpreters miss the interpretive boat!**

Those using Sermon Starter will remember from last week the note that bible interpreters miss the nature of Jesus' "Commencement Address." Again, it is true for this Gospel lection.

The periscope includes Jesus' note following his address concerning the credentials for certifying the graduates. Then, the periscope adds an unrelated section concerning Jesus instructions on the Moral Imperatives.

So, what's so wrong by doing this? The big problem is the confusion of the message that results is making an unnecessary stretch for the pastor preparing this sermon. I believe that this is the only place in all four gospels where I've run into this problem.

**Defining the moral imperatives**

1) *We are victimized:*

It is crucial to make this affirmation. Life victimizes us. Contrary to what the insurance industry might claim, it is not God's will for humans to live painful lives, but we do. Instead of blaming God it is more useful to blame Mother Nature. Our bodies fail us because Mother Nature has limited our life span along with the usefulness of many of our organs.

So, what is God's will concerning us? God's will is for us to fulfill our intended creation of living humane and gracious lives. God never lets us off the hook of fulfilling this purpose. There are two things that happen when we don't live in At-One-Ment with everyone and everything.

## The Moral Imperatives

The first thing that happens is God's Wrath is experienced as Tough Love; it is expected for humans to live humanely. The second thing that happens is that we get "problems;" this is the early warning that we are getting out of synch with our intended purpose.

### 2) *We are victors:*

The two lessons here are: 1) Mother Nature is to blame for much of our painful experiences. Often we wish to blame our circumstances or our situations are what comes at us as bad luck or ill health. However, nature always is a-moral; it is just doing its thing. Even cancer cells are not out to get us; it is not the enemy. When we affirm that our circumstances are the enemy, always it will defeat us.

The second lesson is that we are in charge of our attitude or the relationship we choose to take to the circumstances that come at us. When we decide we are the victims of our circumstances, then we have set aside our freedom of choice; in this way we are our own enemy! The alternative is to choose to be victors, in spite of—or even because of—our situation.

Our freedom is to choose to be obedient to our intended purpose. Even on our death bed we can choose to live the humane and gracious life. The decision is ours, and no one can make the decision for us.

The foundation for such an attitude is discovered in the story of the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus. He deliberately, and intentionally, chose to die on the cross in order to demonstrate that we too can die to the barriers preventing us from living the abundant life. To choose to take any other relationship to our personal circumstances makes a mockery of Jesus' sacrifice. We are victors!

### 3) Our circumstances do not change but our relationship to them is transformed; in a word, we are changed.

While our son, Wesley, was dying of leukemia at the age of 21, I kept my sanity by running. On one occasion while running I was passed by a man running on prosthesis. Later, I had the occasion to ask him why he ran. He said it was his praying time. Then, I asked if it was difficult to run on a metal leg and foot. Thoughtfully, he replied, "Yes, it is, but I use the pain to remind me to pray."

Do you hear the switch? Is painful to run on a prosthesis; this is his life circumstance.

However, this runner decided not to define himself by his situation, but rather to define himself by his prayer life. He is choosing not to be a victim but to be a victor. In his choice he experiences a resurrection.

**The ONE THING to get said:** Our Christian credentials come from surrendering ourselves to God.

**The EXISTENTIAL AIM:** We have the happy experience of being burdened with the yoke of Christ.

**Capital Verse: Vs. 26, “Yes, Father, for this was for your good pleasure.”**

**A. Chapter 11 is Jesus’ requirements to be credentialed as a teacher**

**Vs. 25, Credentials are given to those Awake**

**Vs. 27A, Jesus says of God, “All things are committed to Jesus by my Father.”**

**Vs. 27B, The significance that the Big Picture (God) is mirrored in the Little Picture (Jesus). .**

**B. Credentials are given to those who understand the moral imperative in the statement, “Jesus’ rest,” in vs. 29b.**

In Gut Trip Analysis, the yoke of Jesus does not change our burden or circumstances; this yoke transforms our relationship to our burdens: while victimized, we no longer are victims, but victors. This is the kind of “rest” that Jesus demonstrates is ours. The “yoke” Jesus offers is the demonstration of the cross that, like Jesus, we can die to the barriers preventing us from living the abundant life. While death itself victimizes us, Jesus’ yoke is the demonstration of our freedom to decide to live the victorious life.

**C. Vs. 25, 26, Credentials given to those who do God’s will for “God’s good pleasure.”**

The “pleasure of God” always is that we fulfill our intended creation; this is how we make God happy. It is when we fail to live the humane and gracious life that we immediately experience being “out of sorts.” On the other hand, when we fulfill God’s expectations for us, we get the feeling of living in touch with the abundant life.

## SECTION IV: LIFE IN THE SPIRITUAL OASIS

### LESSON 16: TEACHING LIFE IN THE SPIRITUAL OASIS

TOPIC COVERS TWO SUB-LESSONS: MATTHEW 12:22 – 50 AND MATTHEW 13:1 – 43 - LIFE IN THE SPIRITUAL OASIS

Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life					
The Teacher's Handbook – Part II: Life in the Spiritual Oasis					
Teaching life in the Spiritual Oasis	The high cost of teaching	Demonstrating the power of the Good News	Demonstrating the new directions for ministry	Lesson Series: The Spiritual Oasis	Growing to perfection
12:22 – 13:52	13:53-14:12	14:13-16:20	16:21-17:27	18:1-18:35	19:1-20:16
Lesson 16	Lesson 17	Lesson 18	Lesson 19	Lesson 20	Lesson 21

#### I. Read the assigned readings at one time.

Today's lesson introduces the Teacher's Second Handbook concerning living the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy; i.e., teaching us how to live in the Spiritual Oasis. It is helpful to remember that we humans are created to live in the Spiritual Oasis – this is HOME represented by living **dependently on God**. The human experience is represented in the story of Adam and Eve who are created to live in the Spiritual Oasis, but who choose to live **independently from God**. The result is we live ON VACATION but believe we are living AT HOME. Our need is to re-awaken to our intended creation.

The purpose of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Teacher's Handbook is to teach this lesson, and it is focused on, "Life in the Spiritual Oasis." The Third Handbook embraces "Moral Lessons."

I. **Matthew 12: 22 – 37 – Jesus and Beelzebub**

A. **Some Terms to define:**

*Baal-zebul: [Heb. lord of flies],*

This is a deliberate Hebrew distortion of the name of the god of Ekron in 2 Kings. See Baal and Satan. In ancient contexts, there appears to have been little, if any, meaningful distinction between Beelzebub and the polytheistic Semitic god named Ba'al. Monotheistic Jewish reference to Baal was almost certainly pejorative, and grew to be used among other terms for Satan. The name later appears as the name of a demon or devil, often interchanged with Baal-ze-bul. (*From Wikipedia*).

*Son of David:*

As the Son of David, Jesus Christ was heir to the throne of the Kingdom of Israel. King David was promised by God that his seed would build a temple to the Lord, and the throne of this son would be established forever. David's son Solomon built a magnificent temple to the LORD, established his father's kingdom in peace, and had wisdom above all other men of the earth. However, Solomon's temple was eventually topped, and his kingdom destroyed – testifying that Solomon did not fulfill God's promise to David.

Jesus built another temple to the LORD (his resurrected body), had wisdom greater than Solomon (he was able to discern the thoughts of people's hearts), and will establish the kingdom of his Father when he returns to earth again to complete fulfillment of God's promise to David that, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son."

*(Internet: Answers.com/topic/Beelzebub)*

**WS:** This material makes the common assumption that Jesus' return is a physical event and misses the point that Jesus, as the Christ, is already present in our experience of the Spiritual Oasis; when we experience spiritual refreshment found in the middle of the aridity of our human experience, then this is to know The Christ; to know that while victimized we can live as victors and this is the experience of The Resurrection.

## Life in the Spiritual Oasis

Often it is very hard to conceptualize the *Spiritual Oasis*:

It is important to note that the Spiritual Oasis is not a place, but rather the experience of living refreshed, fed, healed, and to have whatever needs supplied. This term is an invention of mine as a paradigmatic coat-hook on which to hang any number of expressions that point to the reality of this experience.

Perhaps, this is best said by Howard Thurman, a colleague and mentor of Martin Luther King who wrote the following:

Often it is very hard to realize that that I am one. The outer life seems utterly outer. It seems a part of a separate order. It is made up of the things I do, of my relationship of one kind or another with work, play, job, people, and things. The standard by which the outer is judged tends to be an artificial standard, made up of that which is convenient, practical, and expedient. The outer seems public; it seems ever to be an external net of physical relationships.

The inward sanctuary is my sanctuary. It is a place where I keep my trust with all my meanings and my values. It is the quiet place where the ultimate issues of my life are determined. What I know of myself, my meaning; what I know of God, His meaning; all this, and much more is made clear in my secret place. It seems strangely incongruous, often, to bring into my secret place the rasping, gritty noises of my outer life. Again, this may be for me merely an alibi. For I know that in the searching light of my inward sanctuary all the faults, limitations and evil of my outer life stand clearly revealed for what they are.

**I am determined to live the outer life in the inward sanctuary. The outer life must find its meaning, the source of its strength in the inward sanctuary. As this is done, the gulf between outer and inner will narrow and my life will be increasingly whole and of one piece. What I do in the outer will be blessed by the holiness of the inward sanctuary; for indeed it shall be one. (Editor: Emphasis is mine.)**

*(Thurman, Meditations of the Heart, "The Outer Life and the Inward Sanctuary," p. 173.)*

**WS:** Forgive me for highlighting the last paragraph, but this is the key to life in the Spiritual Oasis.

It is helpful to reiterate that the preceding material is the center piece of Matthew's Gospel, and it concerns the "Moral Imperatives" on which the foundations of morality are constructed. Immediately following begins the second of three Teacher's Handbooks containing the lesson plans used by Jesus. This material is focused on teachings about "The Spiritual Oasis."

**A. What is it we find in the Spiritual Garden?**

**1. Vs. 12: 22 – 26, We find the power of At-One-Ment.**

**WS:** The power of Beelzebub (Satan) is the antithesis of At-One-Ment. Jesus makes the point that the work of Satan and the work of Jesus cannot be the same. The work of Satan results in the antithesis of At-One-Ment; people are separated, things lie in "ruin" and "will not stand." Not so with Jesus because with him we experience healing, wholeness and the experience of living the humane and gracious life.

**2. Vs. 12: 27 – 28, We experience the universality of the Spiritual Garden.**

**WS:** Jesus counters the argument of the Pharisees by noting that there are those among the Pharisees who also are effective at healing, that is, in bringing people into At-One-Ment experienced as a sense of wholeness, health, and inner peace. As Howard Thurman might describe it, the outer and the inner experiences are synthesized; **the outer is judged by the inner, and the inner is made relevant by the outer.** Again, excuse my need to emphasize this sentence, but it is an important insight that is relevant and useful.

*The universality of The Christ--*

It is this universality that occasionally gets people into theological trouble, in particular with those who make the assumption that only Christians live out of the resources of Jesus. This is not the case just as Jesus emphasized at this point. Jews do it, and if them, then why not anyone and everyone at the moment in which they bring healing, health, wholeness and meaning to the lives of others. Yes, even atheists and non-monotheistic believers are capable of doing the work of God. We know this is a fact because we are able to pull these acts of goodness through the life of Jesus as the Christ; that is to pull our actions through the meaning of the Cross. Suddenly we discover that The Christ is universal. As the gospel writer John notes, "In the beginning was the Logos and the Logos was God and the Logos is God." The logos is experienced as Good News; i.e., At-

## Life in the Spiritual Oasis

One-Ment. Doing Bad News is the antithesis of At-One-Ment. All good is done in Jesus' name whether that name is used or not! Praise God!

### 3. Vs. 12: 29, We find the possessions of the strong man

**WS:** The strong man is in possession of the Kingdom of God, that is, s/he lives out of the resources of the Spiritual Oasis or of At-One-Ment.

### 4. Vs. 12: 30 – 32, We find forgiveness and synthesized meaning.

One of the key features of the Spiritual Oasis is the experience of forgiveness. Jesus makes it clear that there is nothing from which we are not already forgiven. Sin, blasphemy, cursing the Son of Man (*an image from Daniel used to emphasize the human nature of Jesus*): All this is forgiven.

This point frequently is overlooked by those in the pew. Their question becomes, "What is the difference between license to be nasty and what is required to live in the Spiritual Oasis?" Jesus' answer is that our actions have nothing to do with our forgiveness; WE ARE FORGIVEN, and have been since the creation of the world. Do we think a cow lives unforgiven because it butts heads with the neighbor's bull? No, the cow lives without conscience because this is its natural state of being; this is its "IS-ness."

Then, what is our problem? Our problem is a SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS; it is a problem with our EGO that comes to believe that the meaning of life is ME. This is not true. The meaning of life is not based on our human nature, nor is it all based on our spiritual resources. Rather, the meaning of our life is the synthesis by which we bring our human nature to be sorted out—to be judged—by our spiritual resources. This is life lived in the Spiritual Oasis.

### 5. Vs. 12: 30 – 36, We find the "unforgiven sin."

**WS:** There is no more controversial or misunderstood phrase used by Jesus than this, Vs. 32, ". . . anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come."

It is controversial because it is used as a hammer by many from the pulpit to promote their own version of righteousness. "It is my way or the highway," kind of attitude, and "my way" is a profaning of the Holy Spirit that results in eternal damnation. Such admonishments are misguided.



*The Nature of the Holy Spirit--*

A second problem with the unforgiven sin is that many preachers are not clear on the nature of the Holy Spirit. The basic problem is that the Holy Spirit becomes an object to be observed rather than an experience.

*The Holy Spirit as Freedom--*

Familiarity of the Holy Spirit is experienced as Freedom, but it is not just any old wishy-washy freedom but the freedom to choose to be obedient to God-in-Christ. Do we have the Freedom not to be obedient? Yes, of course we do.

My example is in the question, "How do fish know they swim in water?" Probably, they don't know, until they find themselves out of the water. Then, the fish begins to gasp for air and to flop around struggling to get back into a familiar environment. This is the experience of those choosing to be disobedient to our intended creation. We are created with the purpose of living in the water of obedience to our intended creation which is to live the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy. Living the "Fish Tank" life is living in the Spiritual Oasis.

Observe that either way there is a price to pay. When we choose to be obedient to this purpose, then we are not free to live the antithesis of At-One-Ment. On the contrary, there is the expectation of living obedient to the model of Jesus. When we choose to live disobedient to this purpose, then we experience the gasping for air and thrashing around. I tell prisoners, when you are having a bad time, you can know that you are out of synch with your intended creation as human and gracious people. Also I tell them that their freedom is not determined by the jail cell, rather their freedom is discovered within themselves. When they do embrace this freedom to be obedient, then they are truly free.

*The unpardonable sin?--*

The unpardonable sin is an empirical reality rather than moral. Being naughty is living as though we are *not forgiven*. God, experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment sees this all the time; sometimes we are naughty when we don't intend to be; these are the sins of *omission*. Sin is nothing more than the experience of separation or the antithesis of At-One-Ment. The Roman Catholic Church observes six unforgivable sins: despair, presumption, impenitence, obstinacy, resisting truth, and envy of another's spiritual welfare. From the perspective of Gut Trip Analysis, these are sins of *co-mission*.

## Life in the Spiritual Oasis

What God, experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment, cannot forgive is the failure to fulfill our intended creation. The reason it is unforgivable is that it is impossible to do; the sin comes in the assumption that it can be possible. For instance, a cow can not be anything other than a cow which is its Is-ness. In like manner, we recognize in the tree its tree-ness, never mind if it is deciduous or an evergreen tree or a bush; tree-ness is its Is-ness. In this same way, humanity fulfills its Is-ness when we live the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.

*How is punishment meted out by God?--*

Any review of commentaries that deal with this passage (**Vs. 32**), struggles with the issue of being punished by God. How can a loving God deliberately punish anyone when forgiveness is so prevalent. Some commentators claim that there is “no salvation” for such people, that is, the unforgiven live now and for eternity in the absence of God.

How is this possible?

My answer is, that it is not possible to live out of the gracious and forgiving love of God. Is this universal salvation? Not at all! *The Wrath of God always is the love of God: The Guarantor--*

At this point my axiom is most helpful. “The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself.” What makes this helpful is that God never has to punish us because we punish ourselves when we chose to live away from the resources of the Spiritual Oasis. In such situations I’ve found that God is identified as The Guarantor. God guarantees the scientific law of gravity that is universal. God guarantees the civil law of obedient or disobedient driving on the highway: “Click it or Ticket.” God guarantees moral law when we do dumb things in the back of a car, it can be called Parenthood.” God is the guarantor of the reward for the deed that is found in the deed itself.

*Judgment--*

It is to be clearly understood that life is not without judgment. We know when we are out of compliance by the way we gasp for air and flop around. On the other hand, when we live in compliance then there is a sense of peace, of harmony, of living in synch. In other words we experience living in At-One-Ment.

Now, on to the next part of our lesson in **Matthew 12: 38 – 45**.

## 5. The “Sign of Jonah”

How do we awaken to the Spiritual Oasis already within us?

**WS:** Isn't this the question of the Pharisees and Teachers, “Show us miraculous signs.” Isn't this the question we all ask of our spiritual leaders? As usual Jesus' answer throws us over into a totally new experience. “I'll give you two signs, “ Jesus replies.” The first is the Sign of Jonah and the second is the sign of the Queen of the South; one sign concerns righteousness and the other sign is about wisdom.

Righteousness and wisdom. Two good signs concerning the Spiritual Oasis, don't you think? Well, we'll soon see.

Pharisees and Teachers want Jesus to perform miraculous signs:

Reasonable request, it seems. After all it is the business of the Pharisees and the Teachers who are dedicated to protecting the things of God. Why does Jesus address them by associating their request with wickedness and adultery? Is it possible that God needs our surrendered lives rather than our protection.

**Vs. 39B - 41, The sign of Jonah—**

Jesus gives these learned protectors of the *status quo* “The sign of Jonah.” What an interesting choice, after all, each and every *Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement—the* Hebrews read the entire short story of Jonah. Why? What is in the story that would remind the Jews of their need for repentance and gratitude?

Not enough is made out of the Big Fish. Because this story is all metaphor and allegory, it is inaccurate to not dwell on the symbolism of this symbol. The Big Fish is nothing more than the spiritual nation of Israel, just as it is for The Church of Christ Jesus.

I'll dwell on neither Nineveh nor Jonah's sermon. Suffice it to say that Nineveh and Israel were like cross-town high school competitors, and Jonah's sermon is likened to be the worst sermon ever preached, yet the most effective.

At this point, Jesus is making a sarcastic remark about what Judaism did to the religious experience of its ordinary citizens; it swallowed them up to keep them from doing their work of evangelization. Previously, Isaiah identified their evangelical task to tell the story of God's love to all people, and “ALL means ALL.” Even today, we have trouble

## Life in the Spiritual Oasis

fulfilling the meaning of the word ALL. Perhaps, this still is why the story of Jonah is so relevant.

The way to awaken to the Spiritual Oasis that is already within us is to surrender to the message of *agape* love and then go practice it to ALL PEOPLE, and ALL means ALL.

**Vs. 42, The sign of the Queen from the South—**

If Jonah is about *righteousness as surrender*, then the story of the Queen of the South is about *wisdom*.

Solomon, David's son, developed a reputation for "splitting the baby." Because of this his reputation for wise judgment spread throughout the then known world. Far South and to the East lays the country of Yemen. The Queen of Sheba—named for the town in which she reigned—came to Solomon to sit at his feet and to engage in the process of learning and dialogue. It would seem that *knowledge* and *wisdom* are fine characteristics to prepare us to awaken to the realm of our inner kingdom; don't you think? Apparently, Jesus has other ideas. His response is, ". . . and now one greater than Solomon is here."

OK, if righteousness and wisdom don't cut it concerning the Spiritual Oasis, what is it that Jesus has to offer that's so unique? What is it about such things that convict us as a wicked and adulterous generation?

Let's answer the last question first. Apparently, this is what Jesus did too.

**Vs. 43 – 45, House invasion!--**

Every time I write about evil I get in trouble. Most people want to make evil an objective reality; there is something evil that takes away our power to combat it. Of course, this is hog-wash! Evil, like every other theological word in the Christian lexicon is a metaphor. Evil is the Big Lie that while we certainly know that we are victimized (live in the arid land of the living dead), we have the choice to either be victims or victors. Jesus' birth, ministry, death and crucifixion demonstrate that we too can die to living as victims. In fact, our entire freedom is to choose to be obedient to dying to our barriers preventing us from living in Freedom. Yes, We Can!

This is why those nice folks like the Pharisees and Teachers get into so much trouble, yet they are the salt of the earth, and the ones who pay the bills. They believed they were trapped in a life of aridity with "No Exit." (*Thank you Mr. Sartre!*) As hard as they tried to get into the Spiritual Oasis, they were blocked by their self-righteousness and moralism.

“Say, Mr. Jesus, show us a miracle.” “Are you looking for a miracle? I’m He!” “Oh, yes, I Am sent me.”

**Vs. 43 - 45**, The Big Lie will get you every time. The Big Liar goes on R&R and comes back to see the HOUSE cleaned, swept, and unoccupied. Ah, the HOUSE of Israel, of course, it’s Our HOUSE! But now the Big Lie brings seven (the perfect number) and makes it much more difficult for people to REPENT.

Let’s see, what is it the Ninevites did? They repented!

Like Alice in Wonderland who sees the Red Queen across the valley and wishes to go visit, the Red Rose instructs her to “Turn around, Alice.” When Alice finally complies, she turns around and there is the Red Queen.

How did that happen? All she did was to *turn around*.

Turning around to see life in a new direction—although from the same spot—is the only way into the sanctuary of the Spiritual Oasis.

Where can we take this next? OK, on to Matthew 12: 46 – 50.

## **6. Jesus’ Mother and Brothers—**

How does this introduce us to the Spiritual Oasis? The Spiritual Oasis is opened to us when we “hear the word of God” and then do it; it is walking the walk and talking the talk. Recently, my favorite bumper sticker reminds us, “Less TALK and more WALK.” Amen.

First off, how many people know about Jesus’ brothers? This in itself is interesting conjecture we’ll leave for another time. The significance we want to mine from this message is what it reveals about the inner kingdom of the Spiritual Oasis.

**The following is from the material in Luke 8: 19 – 21.**

*Tough Love--*

NOTE: In each of the “Hard Sayings” the underlying theme is “Judgment.” For many Christians, the judgment of God is not easily understood, if at all. The reason for this lapse is that we forget that God is incapable of being mean. Consequently, God’s judgment always represents tough love that we experience as the “wrath of God.

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First, it is helpful to think of God's Wrath in terms of relationships. Second, it is helpful to apply the axiom "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself." An illustration is helpful. When we do things that please others as well as ourselves, the reward for our deeds is the experience of deep satisfaction and a sense of peace. Conversely, when we do things that hurt, and drive others away, the reward for our deed is the experience that people are hurt and are separated from us.

Now apply this principle to the following questions.

1. What is the lesson Jesus is teaching in this story?

**WS:** The Bible Study participants struggled with this for awhile. One Bible Study participant observed the following, "By this time Jesus' father, Joseph, was dead. Also, the "brothers" mentioned would be half brothers, because they were the offspring of Joseph, while Jesus is the offspring of God."

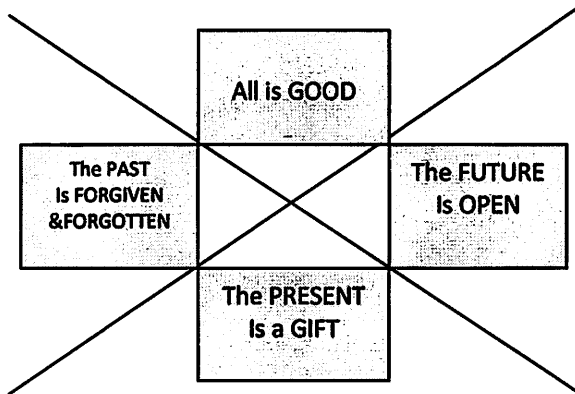
I share this with you because it illustrates how easily we fall into Head Trip Analysis. In this kind of thinking, Jesus is an object to be studied, rather than a relationship or an experience. To make Jesus an object is to get into abstract thinking about the human dimensions of family relationships.

From a Gut Trip Analysis, this event describes the special relationship of Christians as those who are awake spiritually and as human/humane individuals. In this way, we fulfill both our intended purposes for which we are created—to be human/humane—and our purpose as spiritual families.

Again, not to make too much of this, but it intrigues me concerning the frequency of the gospel writer's use of the term "outside;" "your mother and brothers are standing outside. (Vs. 20b.) According to Gut Trip Analysis, "outside" is the place of spiritual sleep." On the other hand, inside with Jesus always is the place of awakenment.

2. What is the significance of Vs. 21?

**WS:** The Bible Study participants struggled for several minutes defining what it means to be "those who hear God's word and put it into practice." Then, the group went back to our Gut Trip roots to define **The Good News** as: **God does not make no junk;** our **PRESENT** is received as a gift, and this is why we call it the Present; our **PAST** is not only forgiven but it is forgotten; when these things are affirmed then our **FUTURE** is open and hopeful. This is **THE GOOD NEWS** that we are not victims, but victors!



How do we put this into practice? We be it! We embody this truth. We embrace this experience.

Note this caveat: In 1964 I had the profound experience of being deeply awakened to the reality and truth of Gut Trip Analysis. My excitement was unbounded. I wanted to be unleashed to share the sense of enlightenment with others. Shortly afterward, I returned home to meet my wife with whom I wanted to both share my new enthusiasm as well as to experience it. I had what I thought was a profound conversation with her, which for a time only alienated the two of us. The danger in using family relationships to demonstrate profound awakenment can result in separation instead of At-One-Ment.

Did this happen to Jesus as the result of this experience? I'm going to side with tradition and say no. I say this because the apparent purpose for which Matthew includes this story is to illuminate the judgment that is associated with not fulfilling our intended purpose. When we live the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy, then we are listening "to hear God's word."

**Please go on to the second sub-lesson!**

<p><b>Chart of</b>  <b>THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW</b>  <i>A Training Manual For Teaching The Transparent Life</i>                  The Teacher's Handbook – Part II                  The Spiritual Oasis</p>	
<p><b>Teaching Life in the Spiritual Oasis</b>  <b>Matthew 13: 1 – 52</b></p>	
<p><b>Parable of the Weeds</b>  <b>(on the Kingdom of Heaven)</b>  <b>Matthew 13: 1 – 23</b></p>	<p><b>The Parable of the Weeds Explained</b>  <b>Matthew 13: 24 – 30</b>  <b>Matthew 13: 36 – 43</b></p>

## Life in the Spiritual Oasis

### I. Read the assigned reading at one time.

#### Kingdom of Heaven defined

What is the EXPERIENCE of the Kingdom of Heaven? Well, Jesus provides eight examples in **chapter 13**. We will look at each of them in more detail. However, it is necessary to make a contextual statement to get us into the topic.

1. **The word “heaven” is understood**—from a “Head Trip Analysis” as the place where God lives. Heaven is experienced as familiarity with Perfect At-One-Ment. Our old Christian code words have little, if any, connection with *places*, but it has everything to do with *relationships*. In speaking about the “Kingdom of Heaven,” Jesus is speaking about our relationship to God. For Jesus this relationship was so personal that he called God “Father.” Using “Gut Trip Analysis” we call God Perfect At-One-Ment, because this describes *our experience of God*; when we feel At-One with neighbor and self, we are experiencing a little bit of Perfect At-One-Ment.

As a personal testimony, the more I awaken to this experience, the more events, happenings, occasions, conversations, become revelations. For instance, a young college student’s music major from a Kansas university on occasion plays during our church services of worship. His music resonates deeply within me. While he plays I experience a deep peace. This is what I mean by experiencing a relationship to the Kingdom of Heaven. The same can be said for the organ music, or the Brass Choir, or listening to a modern jazz combo. Nearly anything and everything becomes a revelation of this Kingdom.

So, what is the Spiritual Oasis? Ah, it is the Kingdom of Heaven. In **chapter 13: 10 and 11**, Matthew reports, “The disciples came to him and asked, ‘Why do you speak to the people in parables?’ He replied, ‘The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them [the crowd].’”

This is the Spiritual Oasis. It is the experience of the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. **The key verses in this chapter are 13: 9, 16, and 43b: “He who has ears, let him hear.” What is it we are supposed to hear if we have the ears to hear it?**

To explain: Teilhard de Chardin, the contemporary Christian mystic, writes about the “Diaphanous Divine.” What a beautiful phrase. The word “diaphanous” means “gossamer,” like the wings of a butterfly. Also, it means “transparent.” Jesus statement concerning “ears” refers to the ability to *hear* through to the meaning of things. That is,



*to experience through* to the significance of things. Chardin *hears* what Jesus is pointing to: it is something that is transparent, deep and meaningful; it is something that is the diaphanous divine. Jesus speaks about what is heard as the Kingdom of Heaven. We speak of it as The Spiritual Oasis

**III. With this context, let us turn to study the eight “parables,” or metaphors, Jesus shares with us. In these lessons, Jesus teaches us the first lesson in The Teacher’s Handbook – Part II.**

**A. Vs. 1 – 23: The parable of The Sower --** What do we learn about the Spiritual Oasis in this story? Remember: the Kingdom of Heaven is a place, while the Spiritual Oasis is an experience! So, tell us how you experience the story. What does the story reveal about you?

**WS:** The interpretation of the message is of more interest to us at this time beginning in **13: 11 - 23**. Jesus reminds us of things concerning, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God.” Remember, the foundational question is, “What are we supposed to hear or experience?”

First, Jesus tells us that if we already have ears to hear, then more is given us. If we fail to develop our spiritual hearing, what we have is taken away. Then, he tells us, “This is the reason I speak in parables.” For me, the implication is that parables are the language that takes us into The Spiritual Oasis.

Second, from this perspective, we can transliterate **Vs. 16.**, Those who have spiritual eyes and ears experience living At-One (blessed).

Third, in **Vs. 18 to 23**, Jesus gives us the interpretation of the parable of the Sower.

**1. Vs. 19—**those who fail to experience the meaning are subject to the work of The Liar – the Great Illusioner—the “evil one.” What the Word sows in our heart in the experience of abundant peace that is the reward for opening our ears and eyes: we are living the Good News that we are not victims. When this message is not deeply settled into our human experience, we are subject to being made victims instead of victors.

**2. Vs. 20 and 21—**the rocky ground represents the Word falling into shallow ground; this is the experience of getting all excited about a new insight that makes sense to us, and then fail to associate with a mentor, or another group or community, to help us stay awake. Then, when trouble comes, our original insight is not enough to sustain us.

## Life in the Spiritual Oasis

3. **Vs. 22** – the word sown among the thorns of worries and deceitfulness of wealth. The experience of “worry” always worries me. Worry is an early indication of closing off our relationship to the Spiritual Oasis. This is not to say that those in the Spiritual Oasis do not worry. It does say that we are not victims to our worries; our worry does not define us.

4. **Vs. 23**—obviously, the good soil, and the multiplying crops, are the experience of abundant living in the Spiritual Oasis.

**B. Vs. 24 – 30: The parable of the Weeds** – As you read this parable, what is your experience of the “Enemy?” What is the message of the “Enemy?” It is helpful to recall that the “enemy” is a liar. The enemy is out to convince you that we are victims and not victors.

**What does the parable of the Weeds reveal about The Spiritual Oasis? What is it we are supposed “to hear?”**

**WS:** A couple of things come to mind as I reflect on my experience. First is to be careful about what we consider “weeds” and “wheat.” The experience of something is not known until the fruit can be identified. Frequently, in my experience, I throw out the baby with the bathwater. (OK, I know this mixes the metaphors, but the point is the same.)

The second thing is the process of discernment. Those who have “eyes” to see discover that patience produces deeper insights into the nature of things. So does maturity.

**C.** Note: the section is out of order according to Matthew. However, the Parables of the Mustard and Yeast obviously are redacted (inserted by subsequent reorganizers for some obscure reason. For our purposes, Jesus’ explanation is reinserted here for our purposes.)

**Vs. 36 – 43: The parable of the Weeds explained** – I can count ten little metaphors identified in this section. How many do you count? One good approach is to divide a sheet of paper into two columns. The Left column label it “the word,” in the Right column label it “Explained.”

**THE WORD**

Field The way life is  
Good seed The Really Real  
Weeds Victimization  
Enemy Victimizers  
Harvest Transforming awakening  
Weeds pulled up Victors awakened  
Send out angels The Awakened  
  
Righteousness shines like the sun

**EXPLAINED**

world "on vacation"  
sons of the kingdom "At home!"  
sons of the evil one The Liars  
the Devil The Big Liar  
end of the age Perfect At-One-Ment  
burned in fire Destruction of Hopelessness  
sin and evil Separation the result of  
lies and illusion  
In the kingdom of the Father Spiritual Oasis

**Radiate a Peace**

Most of these comparisons will be a snap to relate to The Spiritual Oasis (an experience. Remember?) However, struggle with the words "evil one," "the end of the age," and "sin and evil."

What is your experience of these things?

**D. Vs. 31 – 32: The parable of the Mustard Seed** – What does this parable reveal about The Spiritual Oasis?

**WS:** If knowledge about the Spiritual Oasis is one of the tiniest "seeds," this affirms that the Kingdom of God is not seen but experienced. When it grows within us, it becomes something with deep roots and can be useful to others (the birds of the air).

**E. Vs. 33 – 35: The parable of the Yeast** – Recall an experience in which something you heard opened your eyes in such a way that you believe your life is different; it was as powerful as yeast in dough.

**WS:** Frequently, I talk to prisoners at the Saline County jail. One of our persistent themes is their sense of feeling empty and lost. After we establish a relationship I'll give them my own personal testimony concerning my emptiness and when I discovered this emptiness is where God lives within me; in my innards. Learning to embrace our sense of emptiness and loss transforms me! The emptiness and loss may remain, but I am no longer a victim, but now I'm a victor.

**F. Vs. 44 – 46: The Parable of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl.** What is your experience of these metaphors, and what do they reveal about The Spiritual Oasis? What is it we hear in this experience?

## Life in the Spiritual Oasis

**WS:** Experiencing the Spiritual Oasis is such a treasure that if it were possible to buy into it, the experience is worth everything we have or own.

### **G. Vs. 47 – 52: The parable of the Net.**

**WS:** This is another “end of the age” parable. This “end of the age” I define happens when we renew our dependence on the Kingdom of God (Spiritual Oasis). This end of the age is not a physical experience. It is an eschatological experience; i.e., it is the defining of a spiritual reality when something dies and something is birthed. As we grow more confident of living in the Spiritual Oasis, we learn to separate the bad fish (those things leading to hopelessness) from the good fish (those things that free us to live At-One with all things.). As we do these things, we are living in our eschatological existence.

**The curious statement Jesus makes is in vs. 52:** “Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.” As Jesus is teaching us to be teachers, what is our “storeroom,” and what are the old treasurers and the new?

**WS:** This goes back to **13: 11 and 12** concerning “Whoever has will be given more.” The source of the “more” is the Spiritual Oasis. A close association is my image of My Altar of Spiritual Resources that is the resources given to us at our birth. Everything we need is ours to have, we need only to open our eyes to see it, and to make use of it.

**A reflection written by Han Lankhorst, a seminary trained church member, on Matthew 12: 39 – 40**

I would like to touch on just a couple of issues.

1) I like the connection you make between the story of Jonah and that of Lazarus, but especially to the death/resurrection of Jesus. However, since these are often associated with a judgmental God, it would be necessary to believe in a God of wrath. You suggest this is unfortunate, and I agree. God is not wrathful or judgmental. To believe in a wrathful God is, as you also suggest, self-contradictory. I presume to the belief of God as a loving God. Yet, I would suggest that inherent in the death/resurrection experience of Jesus is the notion of judgment. We are judged to the extent that we continue to cling to our inauthentic self; the extent that we continue to run from the call to be read, to be authentic, to be in At-One-Ment. To put it another way, we are judged to the extent that we refuse Jesus’ invitation to be transformed. Or, as the old-time religion would proclaim: only when we die to our old self are we born again.

2) In addition to the important issues you reflect on in your essay, there is another significant theme in the book. It is the image of Yahweh as more than the local, tribal deity of much of the pre-exilic period. The book, which was written in the post-exilic period, shows a tremendous development in Hebrew thought. God actually has regard for people other than the people of Israel! Of course, the 8<sup>th</sup> century prophets had already spoken about God's activities on the lane of history and the involvement of Israel's neighbors in God's acts of social justice. And that was certainly transformational in the Hebrew experience. But in Jonah we see God actually caring for the inhabitants of "wicked" Nineveh, their women and children and even the animals. More significantly, God apparently cares for Israel's enemies. "Unbelievable," the people of Israel might have said about this revolutionary idea. 'Believe it," Jesus said two centuries later—and we might add—because it is consistent with God being a loving God.

In many ways Jonah is no "minor" prophet and one of the lessons we may learn from the Jonah story is that God is always bigger than our preconceived notions about God.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER— MT. 13:1 - 9, 18 - 23.**

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 in Head Trip Analysis) . . . This lesson still is under the banner associated with "Teaching the Transparent Sanctified Life" . . . This is related to Matthew's material on, "The Teacher's Handbook: Part II – The Spiritual Oasis." The Spiritual Oasis 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 is the crucial difference between Head Trip Analysis and Gut Trip Analysis."

**The key to the sermon is:**

Think through what sanctification means to you. For me, it is living the deeply satisfied life – the Good News of Jesus Christ. Isn't this what the Sower (Jesus Christ) is spreading around. His problem is that we humans are in different places on our spiritual journey; we experience life as living in different types of soil. The lesson to be learned is to use Jesus' teaching on how to listen intuitively to where people are on their journey; Jesus illustrates that every one of us is somewhere on our spiritual journeys. The important focus is on "Life in the Spiritual Oasis."

## Life in the Spiritual Oasis

### *A contextual background—*

Each of the following words are grounded in Gut Trip Analysis. It is important to remind ourselves that all of our old Christian code words are not objects, but rather are relationships to be experienced. This is the basic fault line in Christian theology. It is a product of our Greek foundation in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century and the Scientific Revolution in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries. In other words, we lost our ability to think intuitively, experientially, existentially, and relationally. Second, it is important for your own preaching that you run these words through your own gut, i.e., through your own experience. I've shared the result of my work as my desire to inspire you to make this effort.

### *The Kingdom of God—*

The KOG is the experience of living the authentic human life. This is the life that fulfills our creation for the humane and gracious life. In this scripture lesson, Jesus refers to it both as the KOG, as the Sons of the Kingdom, and as The Barn into which we are to bring the harvest.

### *The Son of Man—*

This is a reference to the Book of Daniel who envisioned the Messiah coming as the Son of Man in the clouds. The Gospel writers universally use this image to emphasize the human nature of Jesus as the Christ. In Gut Trip Analysis, the Son of Man is the Awakened One who demonstrates authentic living as the humane and gracious life. Also, it is the life of living dependently on God who is experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment.

### *The Enemy: also the Devil and/or the Demon, and by inference, Hell--*

It is crucial that these terms be run through our human experience or they quickly drift off into something objective as "an evil power" to which we are subject, or into "moralism" in which we are bad people.

In light of Gut Trip Analysis, The Enemy is none of these explanations. Evil is experienced as The Big Lie; it demonstrates that we are victimized and hopeless to do anything about it; this is a LIE. Jesus' intentional death on the cross is the demonstration that we can die to the barriers preventing us from living the abundant and meaningful life. Jesus' resurrection is proof of this possibility. Jesus was victimized by the political and religious establishments of his time—we too are victimized by life. Jesus' death and resurrection

is the demonstration that we can intentionally choose to die to the barriers preventing us from fulfilling our intended creation to live the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy.

The Enemy is The Big Lie. Always, The Lie seeks to convince us that because our circumstances can't be changed; there is no hope for us. My illustration is of the one-legged runner who had the choice of being a one-legged grouch, or the best one-legged dancer. This choice always is our choice too.

Evil wants to convict us with the false hope—the Illusion—that our circumstances can be changed. We look forward for a Lone Ranger to ride into our lives, heal us from our brokenness, leave a silver bullet for a souvenir, and ride off into the sunset singing, “Heigh Ho, Silver. A-way!” This is the work of the Demon who comes to us as the Great Illusioner. Jesus’ message is that there is no Lone Ranger! At least not this kind of savior; this is a false savior. What intrigues me is that the one who comes to tells us, “There is no Lone Ranger, IS THE LONE RANGER.” This is our Savior, the one who comes to deliver us from our false hopes and illusions. This is the way in which we Beat the Devil. This is the way in which we “Get the hell out of Dodge;” what else do you want “out of Dodge, but to get the Hell out it?”

*Sons of the Evil One—*

Any of the helpers who spread the message of hopelessness are the Sons of the Evil One. It is helpful to remember that these sons are legion! Media Advertising is geared to “making believe” that a Botox treatment, or a new car, or a new dolly (no matter how young or how old), is the answer to our prayers. Nationalism can also become idolatrous and a son of the Evil One.

The only anecdote is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who is the illustrator or how to die to these barriers that lead to false hopes. *End of the Age, and The Harvest---*

Jesus is the End of the Age. Jesus is The Harvest. Jesus is the Fully Awakened One. It is when we finally awaken to the Good News that, while victimized, we have a choice to either be victims or victors; it is at this moment that we experience the Christ Event in our lives.

We experience this relationship as a death and resurrection. We die to the Old Covenant (represented as the 10 Commandments), and are reborn to a New Covenant (the Divine Commandment of Jesus Christ). In this relationship we die to the barriers preventing us

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from embracing life's circumstances and claim this new relationship as living the victorious life.

The Bus Stop story is illustrative of this. A person waits for the bus that is supposed to come by "Every 15 minutes." He/She waits 15, 30 and then 45 minutes. Finally, a neighbor comes to ask, "Are you waiting for the bus?" After an affirmative response, the neighbor concludes, "Well, I've got **GOOD NEWS** for you. The bus doesn't come by here anymore." Why is this Good News? It is Good News because we can stop waiting and start walking.

The point is that this Good News does not change our circumstances. The bus is not going to come. However, this Good News changes us! We can cry and whine hoping the bus will still come by, or we can whistle while we walk. The choice is up to us.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER—MT.3: 1 – 9, 18 – 23**

**The ONE THING to get said:** Everyone of us is somewhere on our spiritual journeys illustrated by Jesus. Sometimes, we are all of them at once. However, the important thing is to open our spiritual ears to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER—MT. 13: 24–30, 36-40**

**The key to the sermon is:** The theme of this sermon is the Kingdom of Heaven, **Vs. 24**. Of course, this is one of our old Christian code words that we need to clarify in our thinking. Before we begin, create illustrations that thoroughly ground your theology about the following list of words: **Vs. 24**, the Kingdom of Heaven; **Vs. 39B**, the End of the Age; **Vs. 38B**, The Sons and daughters of the Kingdom; **Vs. 39**, the Enemy and the Sons and daughters of the Evil One; **Vs. 37**, the Sower and the Son of Man (use a commentary to draw the distinction between Son of God and Son of Man; **Vs. 39B**, Harvesters and Angels.

Unless this work is done, the danger we experience is falling into moralism. Theology is not moralistic. Theology promotes an ethic that deals with the indicative or The Way Life Is; it is ontological. This is why it is important that we ground each of these terms in



our human experience. Our experience promotes the indicative ethic and avoids moralism.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 13: 24 – 30, 36 – 40**

**The key to the sermon:** This exercise moves us away from Head Trip Analysis into Gut Trip Analysis, and makes our sermon relevant and understood by our listeners because they can relate to your experience.

*Discernment—*

This sermon is about discernment, or the process of “seeing through” to the significance of things. For example, by looking at the movie, “Remember the Titans,” we can, on one hand, see a corny feel-good movie that immediately we can forget. Or, on the other hand, we can see a movie using a racial theme illuminate the building of The Team. Looking through this movie we can discern the dimensions of Christian community.

The question George McClain raises in Chapter 8, “Discerning is the yearning of God,” (McClain, George D. *Claim All Things for God.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1998, pp. 82, 82.), is

“I find myself asking whether we do enough to make space for God in our meetings.” Then, he goes on to say that the question church meetings can ask is not, “What shall we do?” Rather it is, “What is God’s yearning for us?” Among the things he identifies the key ingredient of discernment is intentionality. Then [he used] a formula he was given by others called the Prayer-Action Cycle. This involves four phases: Awareness (“ . . . sharpen your sensitivity”), Social Analysis (“ . . . the historical, social and power issues”), Faith Reflection (the UMC calls this the quadrilateral), and Action (“ . . . specific action alternatives”).

In the Trinity Bible Study material appearing in this lesson on page 96 and 97 you’ll find a wonderful quote from Teilhard de Chardin who writes about, “the Diaphanous Divine.” In order to appreciate this phrase we need to apply theological discernment. The experience of “quality” is what Jesus means about the experience of the Kingdom of Heaven.

## Life in the Spiritual Oasis

### **The Mustard Seed and the Yeast--**

Jesus' parables always cause me trouble because my first inclination is a Head Trip Analysis; the Mustard Seed is tiny but finally becomes a big tree. Therefore, the Kingdom of God does great things. My problem with this statement is that 1) it is true because the KOG does great things. But 2) this does not examine my human experience. The Jews are the Mustard Seed. The Early Church is the Mustard Seed. I am the Mustard Seed who has a personal relationship to the "Jesus Life." When my life is pulled through the demonstration of Jesus, Christ does great things **through me**. 3)

My third difficulty is the change that takes place from community to individualism. Also, in like manner, the Jews are The Yeast.

### **The Kingdom of God—**

The problem with the Kingdom of God, like all of our other Old Christian code words, is our attempt to make it an object, or a place; you know: "You can't get to heaven in a Ford V-8, 'cause the dog-gone thing won't cross the grate." It's all rubbish because it leads people away from an examination of their experience of the KOG. We can lay this difficulty at the feet of the Greek mindset of the Early Church, and at the feet of Copernicus, Galileo, Newton and Einstein. The Scientific Revolution of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries turned humanity away from the Jewish mindset that is relational, experiential, existential, and intuitional.

The Kingdom of God is the experience of something old ending and something new beginning. Jesus marks the end of the Kingdom of God as obedience to the 10 Commandments. These 10 guidelines are only meaningful after we discover that obedience is not what saves us. What saves us is regaining our dependence on God that is so clearly illustrated in the stories of the Garden of Eden. The evidence of humanity choosing to live *independently from God* is that we "weep" and "gnash" our teeth.

Embracing the example of the "Jesus Life," of pulling our lives through Christ, returns us to living *dependently on God*. The result always is living with a deep sense of satisfaction. In this way, Jesus is the End of the Old Age of living independently from God, and the resurrectional experience of living in the New Age of living dependently on God. When we do, then we experience living in The Kingdom of God!

### **The Experience of Sin as un-humaneness and in-humaneness—**

Jesus very wisely describes for us the affects of living independently from God. He relates the evidence first to “sin.” Again, the old problem rears its ugly head. We want to make sin an object rather than a relationship; sin is not something we do, but something we do because of who we ARE: WE ARE SINNERS. We live is a STATE OF SIN that cannot be overcome; we are hopelessly sinners. Our gender and race are the prime evidence of this reality. We live in the anti-thesis of At-One-Ment. It is only when we pull our lives through Christ can we achieve unity, to live in unison, to experience At-One-Ment, and/or to live in the Kingdom of God.

Two major expressions of the antitheses of At-One-Ment are the twins of un-humaneness and in-humaneness. *Un-humaneness* is experienced as racism, sexism, and homophobia. Anything that attempts to push others down so that we can elevate ourselves is living un-humanely, and this is evidence of sin.

*In-humaneness* is experienced as self-depreciation and/or self-aggrandizement.

Because self-depreciation is so common it is seldom thought of as sin, but it is. It is because the result is the separation of ourselves from our-selves; “I’m no good,” is a confession that can’t be recognized by God who created us Good. The evidence is found in the Garden of Eden when Eve and Adam chose to live independently from God.

Self-aggrandizement is the opposite side of the same coin. God did not make us better than anyone else. Such a choice is the result of our failure to fulfill our intended purpose of living the humane and gracious life working for Justice and Mercy.

You’ll be able to recognize Jesus’ “Divine Commandment” at work here. When we choose to pull our lives through Christ, then we take on the burden of loving God, neighbor and our-selves.

### **The Experience of Evil—**

It seems I can never write enough on this topic. Also, it is a subject that brings me the most grief. With few exceptions, even my best colleagues have trouble making the transition from defining Evil as an objective reality to defining it as The Big Lie.

If Evil is a reality, a power to which we are subject, then Christ’s death on the cross is meaningless; we live without hope. However, it is easy for us to accept that there is SOMETHING OUT THERE that causes us to do mean things, even to the ones we love the

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most. The only problem with this statement is that it is not true! There is no power that leads us astray. Unfortunately, we choose—out of our free will—to practice living independently from God.

## LESSON 17: THE HIGH COST OF TEACHING

TOPIC: MATTHEW 13: 53 – 14: 12, LIFE IN THE SPIRITUAL OASIS

<b>A Partial Summary Chart of the Gospel of Matthew</b>					
<b>Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life</b>					
<b>The Teacher's Handbook – Part II: Life in the Spiritual Oasis</b>					
<b>Teaching life in the Spiritual Oasis</b>	<b>The high cost of teaching</b>	<b>Demonstrating the power of the Good News</b>	<b>Demonstrating the new directions for ministry</b>	<b>Lesson Series: The Spiritual Oasis</b>	<b>Growing to perfection</b>
12:22 – 13:52	13:53-14:12	14:13-16:20	16:21-17:27	18:1-18:35	19:1-20:16
Lesson 16	Lesson 17	Lesson 18	Lesson 19	Lesson 20	Lesson 21

### I. Read the assigned reading at one time.

Today's lesson continues the Teacher's Second Handbook concerning living the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy; i.e., teaching us how to live in the Spiritual Oasis. It is helpful to remember that we humans are created to live in the Spiritual Oasis – this is HOME represented by living **dependently on God**. The human experience is represented in the story of Adam and Eve who are created to live in the Spiritual Oasis, but who choose to live **independently from God**. The result is they live ON VACATION but believe they are living AT HOME. Our situation is defined by their circumstances. Our need is to re-awaken to our intended creation of living dependently on God.

The purpose of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Teacher's Handbook is to teach this lesson, and it is focused on "Life in the Spiritual Oasis." The Third Handbook embraces "Moral Lessons."

**Matthew 13: 53 – 58, “A Prophet Without Honor”**

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 it is related to Matthew’s material on “The Teacher’s Handbook: Part II.” The Spiritual Oasis 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.”

This section of our study is the shortest reading of any preceding material. It is just two pericopes: A prophet without honor and John the Baptist Beheaded. Obviously, there is a high cost to teaching The Kingdom of Heaven which is The Spiritual Oasis. The cost of teaching life in the Spiritual Oasis—*First, teaching this concept is likely to be misunderstood. Second, it is possible to “lose one’s head.”*

**The assignment—**

1. Using what you know about Gut Trip Analysis and the Spiritual Oasis, how would you answer the question raised in **13: 54B and 56B**? “Where did this man get this wisdom?”

**WS:** Jesus is profoundly tuned in to the Kingdom of Heaven. He is fully aware of these things: his “hole in his middle’ (his call and/or mission), his Inner Cathedral (spiritual awareness), his Altar of Spiritual Resources (work of the Holy Spirit), and The Spiritual Oasis (The Kingdom of Heaven).

2. **Chapter 14: 1 – 12--**This story about Herod, his wife Herodias and her daughter, desiring the head of John the Baptist is horrific. What was Matthew’s purpose in including this material in his gospel at this place? Do some research in your commentaries, or on-line, and write a short paper of your conjectures

**WS:** John the baptizer got himself in trouble by raising moral questions with the political leader of his time. Herod was fooling around with his brother’s (Philip) wife Herodias. John’s persistence concerning this issue angered Herodias, and when her daughter pleased Herod by dancing at Herod’s party, then Herod put himself in a bad position by promising anything to the dancer. In consultation with her mother (Herodias), she asked for the head of John the baptizer. Herod made a political decision to honor her request. Beheading is the easiest and quickest death the Romans provided.

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It is noted that Herod believed Jesus might be the resurrected John. It is interesting to observe that Herod, like the Jews, believed in the possibility of an intermediate resurrection of an individual; perhaps, like some kind of resuscitation, in this instance “headless” resuscitation. The Jews in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century C.E. never believe in an individual resurrection, rather they believed in a national or community resurrection of the dead.

For me, the question to be answered is, “Why did Matthew include this episode at this time in his gospel?” Is it redactive material, or is it something misplaced or out-of-order? Perhaps both?. In light of the experience of The Spiritual Oasis it can be said that, “being called into question” is experienced as a “thin place,” like that expressed by Marcus Borg; that is, this provides an intersection of the world and the experience of authenticity. In this case, Herod’s authenticity is called into question.

This is a typical reaction, and one I experience many times a week. My wife calls me into question when I’m slopping through life, and my reaction is to stop the message by killing the messenger. I do this by getting angry and saying inappropriate things.

However, the lesson is that at the time my life is addressed and awakened, I am confronted by my own authenticity. When this happens it is a desert experience quickly followed by an experience of The Spiritual Oasis.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter: There is no Sermon Starter material associated with this lesson.**

## LESSON 18: DEMONSTRATING THE POWER OF THE GOOD NEWS

TOPIC: MATTHEW 14: 13 TO 16:20, LIFE IN THE SPIRITUAL OASIS

Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life					
The Teacher's Handbook – Part II: Life in the Spiritual Oasis					
Teaching life in the Spiritual Oasis	The high cost of teaching	Demonstrating the power of the Good News	Demonstrating the new directions for ministry	Lesson Series: The Spiritual Oasis	Growing to perfection
12:22 – 13:52	13:53-14:12	14:13-16:20	16:21-17:27	18:1-18:35	19:1-20:16
<b>Lesson 16</b>	<b>Lesson 17</b>	<b>Lesson 18</b>	<b>Lesson 19</b>	<b>Lesson 20</b>	<b>Lesson 21</b>

### I. Read the assigned reading at one time.

Today's lesson continues the Teacher's Second Handbook concerning living the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy; i.e., teaching us how to live in the Spiritual Oasis. It is helpful to remember that we humans are created to live in the Spiritual Oasis – this is HOME represented by living **dependently on God**. The human experience is represented in the story of Adam and Eve who are created to live in the Spiritual Oasis, but who choose to live **independently from God**. The result is they live ON VACATION but believe they are living AT HOME. Our situation is defined by their circumstances. Our need is to re-awaken to our intended creation of living dependently on God.

The purpose of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Teacher's Handbook is to teach this lesson, and it is focused on "Life in the Spiritual Oasis." The Third Handbook embraces "Moral Lessons."

As you read, observe the many new directions for ministry offered as we become aware of living in the Spiritual Oasis. We know it is to the "other side" that we are called in **Vs. 14: 22**. It is learning to live with the resources of the "other side" that is our challenge.



1. **Vs. 14: 13 – 21**, Living in the Spiritual Oasis is the experience of compassion and servanthood. The result of our experience is that people are fed and healed. Those with whom we live and work “eat and were satisfied.” It is this sense of satisfaction that is the sign we are operating out of the Spiritual Oasis.

2. **Vs. 14: 22 – 36**, Living in the Spiritual Oasis is the experience of living over the storms of life. I like this story because it reminds us that the Spiritual Oasis is found in the midst of the storms of life; we do not escape tragedy, pain or suffering just because we’ve found the Spiritual Oasis. However, those who live in the Spiritual Oasis are those who know how to embrace The Way Life Is (TWLI) because we are transformed by life in the Spiritual Oasis and not the storms of life.

**WS:** In our discussions about this passage, an interesting speculation was raised about the place, and use of, anger. The conversation ranged around the topic of “anger at injustice.” Anger is another “storm of life,” and the focus is on righteous anger; i.e., anger to bring about At-One-Ment.

As we embrace the storms, we are no longer victims but victors. Again, this section ends with the healing of many who “touch his cloak” (NIV). Those who live in the Spiritual Oasis experience the power of Jesus’ cloak.

### **What is this “power” and where does Jesus get it?**

**WS:** Jesus “power” is that of At-One-Ment. That is, the result of the use of this power heals divisions and separations. Jesus got his power from the same place we get it, from his Spiritual Oasis, and his Altar of Spiritual Resources. For some reason, Jesus is profoundly turned in to his spiritual center (Spiritual Oasis). It is interesting to note that this same power is available to us. As a consequence, the more we are “tuned in” to The Christ (revealed in Jesus), the more “turned in” we are to our spiritual resources. The result is the more awakened we become to living in our Spiritual Oasis.

3. **Vs. 15: 1 – 20**, Those living off of the resources of the Spiritual Oasis live by a different set of values. These values are based on the formula of WWJD (What would Jesus do?) The reward for choosing these values is that people experience *a new sense of freedom from a life that degrades humanity*, in exchange for a freedom for a life that brings us into At-One-Ment.

The key words in this section are in **Vs. 15: 10**, “Listen and understand.” The demonstration of new ministries in these scriptures points to the difference between

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the role of tradition and “command of God” (Vs. 15: 3b). This command of God is to live in At-One-Ment! As long as tradition assists us toward this goal, then tradition serves God. When tradition stands in the way of this goal, then tradition becomes the antithesis of At-One-Ment.

As Jesus explains to his disciples, it is “the things that come from the heart” (Vs. 15: 18) that make the difference between being clean and unclean.

4. **Vs. 15: 29 to 39**, The structure of this set of scriptures is interesting. Observe that Matthew bookends this section (14:13 – 16:20) between two amazing feedings of the 5,000 and the 4,000. Note that the people bring the lame, blind, cripples, mutes and many others. Who are these people? I recognize my face among them. Can you recognize yours? We come hungry to the Spiritual Oasis but we leave satisfied (Vs. 15:37), and we leave with an overabundance of spiritual food.

### II. The assignment—

1. **Vs. 15: 21 – 28**, In light of the Spiritual Oasis, why does Matthew put in this story of the Canaanite woman. Obviously, she is not an Israelite. What are the “crumbs” she’ll take from Jesus?

**WS:** The use of the diminutive word “little” offers a metaphorical play: little dog, little crumbs, little woman. (Our English translations do not reveal this to us. I’m told the Hebrew/Aramaic language does.) In biblical Israel, dogs ate scrapes of leftovers outside the house. Puppies, and little dogs, stayed under the table and could eat the little crumbs that fell to the floor. The little woman made the wise observation that these crumbs would not waste any food prepared for the Jews, because it was just little crumbs.

The region of this story takes place around Tyre and Sidon in northern Palestine (Israel). The woman is an outsider—a non-Jew, or a gentile. The little crumbs are a simile for the Good News that we are not victims but victors. For additional commentary, an interesting resource is [www.crystalinks.com/canaan](http://www.crystalinks.com/canaan).

2. **Vs. 16: 1 – 4**, What is the new ministry suggested? What does it mean to live in the Spiritual Oasis and be able to interpret the signs of the times?

**WS:** The experience of Jonah is an interesting speculation. Those who rebel against doing God’s Will (Perfect At-One-Ment) pay a price for their actions. (Remember the axiom: The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself.) Jonah paid the price of his

disobedience by being swallowed up by his decision and then became vomit. Jonah's new ministry is to awaken others to the resources of their Spiritual Oasis. The work of The Church of the Awakened is to do likewise.

**3. Vs. 16: 5 – 12, What is the “yeast” of the Pharisees and the Sadducees?**

**WS:** The yeast of the Pharisees is the experience of allowing tradition and “rules” to stand in the way of preaching the Good News (victim/victor).

**4. Vs. 16: 13 – 20, Answer the question, “Who do people say the Son of Man is? Do a little research on the use of the term “Son of Man” as opposed to “Son of God.” Why would Matthew choose to make this difference?**

**WS:** SON OF MAN—In this instance, Jesus as the Christ is experienced as the 2nd Adam—the New Creature (the Awakened). This term is used in Ezekiel whose mission is to do the work of God. Ezekiel may use this term to describe himself. Here in Matthew, it is used to prefigure Jesus as the Christ, the New Awakened Creature.

The most frequent use in the New Testament of the term “Son of Man” is in Daniel 7:3. This is Daniel's Apocalyptic vision or revelation/epiphany in which the symbols of the Eagle, Bear, 4-Headed Leopard, and the 100-Headed Monster, apparently point to the powers of separation (evil) that rules the earth, to be replaced by the 5th symbol of “The Son of Man,” the power of At-One-Ment.

Jesus use of this title represents his consciousness of his prophetic role as “The Son of Man” whose purpose is to bring about At-One-Ment and to illuminate the Good News (Victim/Victor).

The use of the term “Son of Man” also may be associated with Jesus' concern of the Pharisees concerning blaspheme. In 16:20, Matthew closes this section with the statement, “Then he [Jesus] warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.”

The following is for those who want to know the difference between the use of “Son of Man” and “Son of God.” The use of “Son of Man” refers to Jesus identification as the 2nd Adam. The use of “Son of God” refers to him as the Messiah.

For more on these two topics, an interesting view point in provide at:  
[www.searchgodsword.org/enc/isb/view.cgi?word=Son+of+Man&action=Lookup](http://www.searchgodsword.org/enc/isb/view.cgi?word=Son+of+Man&action=Lookup).

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Probably, the first part of this address will take you there if the information gets garbled for some reason. I usually don't have much luck with long website addresses.

**Then, in light of the Spiritual Oasis, who do YOU say the Son of Man is?**

**WS:** In light of The Spiritual Oasis, Jesus is a Guide and a Caretaker of the Spiritual Oasis. As Guide—Jesus demonstrates the experience of awakening to the Spiritual Oasis with which we all are born. As Caretaker—Jesus demonstrates how to continue our awakenment through compassion and works of justice.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 14: 13 – 21**

**This is a “Teaching moment”**

Because Matthew is a composite of three Teaching Manuals, always it is necessary to think of what Jesus is out to teach. In this case it is, “The Cost of Teaching.” The question to keep before us is, “What is it the teacher must give up in order to clearly communicate living in the Spiritual Oasis of the Kingdom of Heaven?” The Gut Trip answer is *the suspension of their disbelief. Jesus’ teachers always pull their metaphors through Jesus.*

**Sanctification**

This sermon is about the experience of sanctification, or leading the Holy Life, or the Awakened Life. The significance of sanctification is found in the experience of eating and being satisfied; i.e., being made holy. Ground in your own experience what it means to eat at Jesus table. In Gut Trip Analysis, whenever Jesus goes over to the other side, or “withdrew to a solitary place” (**Vs. 13**), this is the gospel writer’s code telling us this is where Jesus is fed and from which Jesus feeds us. In other words, the “other side” is the Kingdom of Heaven.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 14: 13 – 21**

**About today’s scripture.** Often this lesson gets lost in the attempt to apply the physical or literal interpretation of these events (Head Trip Analysis). It is NOT the event or the experience that is transformed; rather we are transformed in our relationship to these experiences and events. For example, it is not necessary that we walk on water like Jesus. What is important is that *we transform the impossible into the possible.*

While we can be victimized, we are not victims. We are victors. In this way, we are transformed in our relationship to The Way Life Is (TWLI).

***Jesus' kingdom from "another place"---***

In **Vs. 18: 36**, Jesus supports this position, "But now my kingdom is **from another place.**" Where is this "other place?" It is on the other side of the coin while the worldly side is on the obverse. Howard Thurman, the mentor of Martin Luther King who carried Thurman's book on ethics during his march at Selma. Thurman reminds us, "We are not Human Beings having a *spiritual experience*. Rather, we are Spiritual Beings having a *human experience*. (*Emphasis mine*).

**In other words, the coin was created as spiritual but lives boldly in the world. Until this is fully embraced, then the death and resurrection always will be a problem, to say nothing about the problem of the birth of Jesus.**

The Human Side is characterized by the world and our possessions. The Spiritual side is characterized by being possessed by God who is experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment. The human side is characterized by political, social and religious customs and organizations. The spiritual side is characterized by self surrender of our possessions so that we live in the Perfect At-One-Ment of God; that is our meager attempts to live in At-One-Ment with self and neighbor are completed by God who is experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment.

***What is "the Truth?"—***

It is necessary that we have a clear grounding of what the Truth is. In this scripture three views of truth are given:

- ***Political Truth based on Roman and a Greek*** institutional and civil law represented in Pilate;
- ***Religious Truth*** represented in the Jews and the Law of Moses. These are the ones who want Jesus crucified;
- ***Spiritual Truth*** represented in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. ***Spiritual Truth, when*** viewed through the Christian experience is,

1) the Awakened who surrender to being possessed by their possessions;

2) who follow Jesus' example and die to that which is preventing them from living the surrendered life of practicing At-One-Ment; and

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3) who experience the profound joy of fulfilling our human intended purpose of doing pleasurable things (i.e., righteous things including “tough love”) for the sake of God through Christ.

This is the way Gut Trip Analysis views the Spiritual Truth that is embraced by Jesus in this scripture.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter---Matthew 14: 13 – 21**

**The key to the sermon is:** This sermon is about the experience of sanctification, or leading the Holy Life. The significance of sanctification is found in the experience of eating and being satisfied; i.e., being made holy. Ground in your own experience what it means to eat at Jesus table.

In Gut Trip Analysis, whenever Jesus goes over to the other side, or “withdrew to a solitary place” (vs. 13), this is the gospel writer’s code telling us this is where Jesus is fed and from which Jesus feeds us. In other words, the “other side” is the Kingdom of Heaven. Note, however, that it is the same lake, just a different experience.

**The ONE THING to get said:** We awaken to the experience that our spiritual life is discovered with our worldly life. This awakening comes from the new perspective demonstrated by Jesus. As we awaken, then we experience being fed spiritually.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER---MT. 14: 13 – 21**

**The key to the sermon is: Living on the “other side”---**

This is an easy sermon to preach because the storms of life are so readily experienced. The struggle here is going to be grounding what it means to “go on ahead to the other side.” I have never seen any commentary take seriously this little phrase, yet the Gospel writers use it frequently. It is my own interpretation but I find it useful for drawing the distinction between living in the world where we drown, and living in the world where we swim eternally in peace. This is the difference between living on this side “in the desert vacation” in this world, and living on the other side “in the spiritual oasis.” Note however, that the other side is not somewhere else. It is the spiritual dimension that is experienced in the middle of our “desert vacation;” we find “Home/Oasis in the midst of—in the middle of--our human experience, only our perspective is transformed. In the one we are victims, in the other we are victors. It is the same world but the perspective is worlds apart!

Unfortunately, this lection reading stops too soon. It misses the result of “crossing over” found in **14: 34 – 36**. The result is that people are healed! Our lection picks up a different result that ends in worshipping Jesus as the “Son of God” (**Vs. 33B**).

### **Worshipping the Son of God—**

In order to be obedient to the lection reading, and because the lection stops too soon, it is necessary to think through the significance of “worshipping the Son of God.” *To “worship” is to “awaken”* to living the intended purpose for which we are created; i.e., to live the humane and gracious life working for Justice and Mercy. This is authentic worship!

*The “Son of God”* is experienced as the demonstration of what it means to turn away from, i.e., to die to the barriers preventing us from fulfilling our intended purpose. In sum, to worship the Son of God is to live the awakened life so as to fulfill our intended purpose.

Please note the direct reference to “God.” Matthew is noted for this statement. The other Gospels use “Son of Man,” which is a reference to the humanity of Jesus; *this is Jesus’ purpose* that demonstrates the humane quality of living the Awakened life (sanctification). Matthew’s use of the statement, “Son of God,” highlights *Jesus’ function* that demonstrates how to die to the barriers preventing our fulfillment (glorification).

## LESSON 19: DEMONSTRATING NEW DIRECTIONS FOR MINISTRY

TOPIC: MATTHEW 16: 21 – 17: 27, LIFE IN THE SPIRITUAL OASIS

Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life					
The Teacher's Handbook – Part II: Life in the Spiritual Oasis					
Teaching life in the Spiritual Oasis	The high cost of teaching	Demonstrating the power of the Good News	<b>Demonstrating the new directions for ministry</b>	Lesson Series: The Spiritual Oasis	Growing to perfection
12:22 – 13:52	13:53-14:12	14:13-16:20	<b>16:21-17:27</b>	18:1-18:35	19:1-20:16
<b>Lesson 16</b>	<b>Lesson 17</b>	<b>Lesson 18</b>	<b>Lesson 19</b>	<b>Lesson 20</b>	<b>Lesson 21</b>

### I. Read the whole assigned reading at one time.

Today's lesson moves us deeper into the Teacher's Second Handbook concerning living the **humane and gracious** life working for justice and mercy; i.e., teaching us how to live in the Spiritual Oasis. It is helpful to remember that we humans are created to live in the Spiritual Oasis – this is HOME represented by living **dependently on God**. The human experience is represented in the story of Adam and Eve who are created to live in the Spiritual Oasis, but who choose to live **independently from God**. The result is they live ON VACATION but believe they are living AT HOME. Our situation is defined by our circumstances. Our need is to re-awaken to our intended creation of living dependently on God; that is, to live AT HOME.

How do we know that we are living out of our Spiritual Oasis? We know because we have a problem. Living in our Spiritual Oasis never is a problem. Recently, I've been using the metaphor of the fish and water. Does a fish know that it is swimming in water? Probably not, until it is out of the water. Then the fish thrashes around gasping for air.

How do we know that we are living out of our Spiritual Oasis? It is when we are thrashing around and gasping for air!



The purpose of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Teacher's Handbook is to teach this lesson, and it is focused on "Life in the Spiritual Oasis." The Third Handbook embraces "Moral Lessons."

**Note:** the use of the terms emanate and immanent frequently are used in this lesson.

*Emanate = to flow out of, or to come out from a source.*

*Immanent = inherent; subjective or transparent; in-breaking*

## 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." Also, 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!

**WS:** 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 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 "immanence" 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 imminent.

So, what is impending? What can we anticipate?

The answer is we can anticipate our own death to the things of this world, to die to living ON VACATION and independently from God. This is in anticipation of our own transfiguration. Marcus Borg 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

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bodies. (For a deeper discussion, see Borg, Marcus, *The Heart of Christianity*, 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.

**WS:** It is helpful to recall that what is changed is us! Life and reality are the same, but we are transformed.

**Vs. 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 3rd day "be raised to life." What is the imperative? **Why must Jesus die?**

**WS:** 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, even unto death.

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 that illuminates The Way Home. Do 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.

**WS:** "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 Christ Jesus is the 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.

**Vs. 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.

**WS:** 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.

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

**WS:** This event represents one of the three great theological doctrines of faith as "Glorification." The other two doctrines 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.

**WS:** 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 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?

**WS:** 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!

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

**WS:** “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. 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 as 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.

### ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER—MT. 16: 21 - 28

The theme of Kingdomtide is to preach the message of Jesus: repent and believe. In Gut Trip Analysis, this theme is described in the following formula: When God don’t make no junk, then every moment is a precious gift, and this is why it is called “the Present.” When we affirm these two things, then our Past is not only forgiven, it is forgotten. And when these three things are affirmed, then our Future is an open possibility. I submit to you, this formula is THE GOOD NEWS!

**The key to the sermon is:** Think through the following: For you, what is the significance of sanctification? Research the key point of a theology of Immanence. Define the term

“Satan.” Answer for yourself the question, “Why must Jesus die?” What does it mean to “Lose life for Christ?” How do we, “Take up a cross to follow Jesus?”

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER—MT. 17: 1 – 9.**

Two theological concepts merge in the event of Transfiguration. These are the ministries of **immanence** and that of **transparency**.

1. *The ministry of immanence* is always about to fulfill itself; it stands on the brink of a chasm into which the audience is invited to surrender themselves.

2. *The ministry of transparency* is illustrated in a recent book by Marcus Borg, “The Heart of Christianity,” where he describes the “thin places” as where the human and the spirit intersect. This intersection always is about to happen; it is immanent.

No other event in the gospels so clearly illuminates this experience as The Transfiguration. The Resurrection also illuminates this reality, but carries a lot of other expectations to cloud this reality. We’ll deal with this around Easter.

One other point needs to be made for background. In this story we embrace the third of three great theological doctrines, the doctrine of “glorification. The other two are justification and sanctification. In Gut Trip Analysis, glorification is the embodiment of Awakening; we BE Awakening. This is what is happening in this scripture as Jesus embodies his awakening to the living presence of God as Perfect At-One-Ment. He is glorified, luminous, and transparent.

**The Key:** Always, it is helpful to remember that the stories about Jesus are also stories about us living as awakened human/humane friends, neighbors, spouses and partners, The Church.

**LESSON 20: LESSONS FROM THE SPIRITUAL OASIS**

**TOPIC: MATTHEW 18: 1 – 35, LIFE IN THE SPIRITUAL OASIS**

**A Partial Summary Chart of the Gospel of Matthew**

**Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life**

**The Teacher’s Handbook – Part II: Life in the Spiritual Oasis**

Teaching life in the Spiritual Oasis	The high cost of teaching	Demonstrating the power of the Good News	Demonstrating the new directions for ministry	<b>Lesson Series: The Spiritual Oasis</b>	Growing to perfection
12:22 – 13:52	13:53-14:12	14:13-16:20	16:21-17:27	<b>18:1-18:35</b>	19:1-20:16
<b>Lesson 16</b>	<b>Lesson 17</b>	<b>Lesson 18</b>	<b>Lesson 19</b>	<b>Lesson 20</b>	<b>Lesson 21</b>

- I. **Read the assigned reading at one time.**
- II. **What is life like in the Spiritual Oasis?**

**Vs. 18: 1 – 5:** Living in the Spiritual Oasis is living as the greatest in the Kingdom of God. The one caveat is that we are asked to become like children: humble, trusting, surrendered. Perhaps, it is helpful to remind ourselves that living in the Spiritual Oasis is living AT HOME—i.e., living our human existence with a sense of place. What we give up is living ON VACATION—i.e., living our human existence without a sense of place.

**WS:** What is the difference between living at home and living on vacation? Living “at home” is where humans are intended to live in At-One-Ment with neighbor, self and Perfect At-One-Ment. This is living in the Spiritual Oasis. Living “on vacation” is to live blind to the reality of the Spiritual Oasis.

**Vs. 18: 6 – 9:** Jesus gives his disciples (and us) two warnings about preventing others from living in the Spiritual Oasis.

**1. Vs. 18: 6:** The operating word here is “sin.” Remember, our use of this word means to cause separation, or the antithesis of At-One-Ment. If anyone causes any of “these children” to be separated from the experience of At-One-Ment, Jesus reports that it is better this person be drowned (suffering permanent separation!).

**WS:** How is “sin” experienced? Sin is the experience of living in a state of separation from neighbor, self and Perfect At-One-Ment.

**2. Vs. 18: 7 – 9:** In **Vs. 7**, Jesus reminds us that in the natural world there is the experience of separation. “Such things must come.” However, the one (man or woman) through whom it comes will himself or herself end up in separation.

**WS:** Why “must such things” come to us? The axiom “The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself” helps here. I prefer to use the indicative phrase “will come” instead of the imperative “must come.” The reward always is found in the deed itself!

Then Jesus tells us how to “enter life.” By this Jesus means entering the Spiritual Oasis. He reminds us of the “eternal fire” and the “fire of hell” which is a metaphor for permanent separation.”

**WS:** How is this “the judgment? The judgment is built into the deed itself. God is not in the business of punishing us. We punish ourselves through our choices. Sometimes the reward is experienced harshly; sometimes it comes to us as grace. So, how are we to “enter life?” We enter “life in the Spiritual Oasis” by surrendering our deeds and our lives before Perfect At-One-Ment.

The conditions for putting ourselves in such jeopardy is that if our hands or foot or eyes are the cause for hurting others and causing their separation, it would be better that we enter the Spiritual Oasis maimed.

**WS:** Why is this true? Hurting others prevents us from living in the Spiritual Oasis. Thus, it would be better to enter the Spiritual Oasis maimed than to be prevented from entering it because of our tongue, finger, hand, foot, other any other body part.

**III. Now, see what you can do with the following—**

**1. Vs. 18: 10 – 14: The parable of the Lost Sheep**

Living in the Spiritual Oasis is accomplished how?

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**WS:** Helping a “lost one who is on vacation” to awaken to the deep satisfaction of living in the Spiritual Oasis is a very pleasing experience.

### 2. **Vs. 18: 15 - 20: A brother who sins against you**

There are three little lessons here:

1. How we are to treat our wayward brothers and sisters;
2. Binding and loosening;
3. Consensing with two or three.

How does this inform us on how to live in the Spiritual Oasis?

**WS:** **Vs. 18: 15 – 17**— The obligation of those who live awake is to care for our brothers and sisters who are asleep or who are returning to spiritual sleep. This is the work of The Church—the Awakened Ones.

**Vs. 18: 18**— Bound and loosed. In the Early Church, these terms referred to a judicial activity. In our context, “binding” is the reward for the deed. “Loosing” is likewise a reward for the deed, but loosing refers to enabling At-One-Ment.

**WS:** **Vs. 18: 19 – 20**— The consensus of two or three together, on the basis of WWJD, results in the experience of wholeness and authenticity of life.

### 3. **Vs. 18: 21 - 35: The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant**

What is the lesson to be learned? How does this inform us on how to live in the Spiritual Oasis?

**WS:** We live as the Awakened through our experience of gratitude. The failure to extend forgiveness to other results in further separation and the denial of our own Awakening.

Do a little commentary research on the significance of forgiving others seventy-seven times.

**WS:** The Internet is full of commentary. One source I frequently use is Bible Gateway Commentaries at [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com).

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER—MT. 18: 15 – 20**



The Season of KINGDOMTIDE (the 16th Sunday after Pentecost). The theme of Kingdomtide is to preach the message of Jesus: repent and believe. In Gut Trip Analysis, this theme is described in the following formula: When God don't make no junk then every moment is a precious gift, and this is why it is called "the Present." When we affirm these two things, then our Past is not only forgiven, it is forgotten. And when these three things are affirmed, then our Future is an open possibility. I submit to you, this formula is THE GOOD NEWS!

**The ONE THING to get said:** When Christ is made the center of our community life, the result of deep listening is a care for the unawakened that brings friends and neighbors into At-one-Ment that is an expression of wholeness and authenticity. Provide an illustration: (Hint: my wife accuses me of selective listening. Consequently, our decision making frequently ends up in arguments or increased separation.) The point to make is that many of us really do not do deep listening. Jesus has some help for us. Share your experience of what this means. (Hint: Living out of the ethic of WWJD.)

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER—MT. 18: 21 - 35**

**The Key to this sermon is:** To prepare this sermon, ground in your own human experience the following:

- 1) What is the experience of living in the Kingdom of Heaven? (Hint: Gut Trip Analysis identifies this experience as the inner peace that comes when we return home from vacation. This is our sense of place.)
- 2) Ground your experience of forgiveness.
- 3) Ground your experience of gratitude.
- 4) Ground your understanding of God's Judgment or accountability.

(Hint: Gut Trip Analysis uses the axiom, "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself." In this way, the judgment is associated with the deed. When we experience accountability, it is an expression of **God's grace**. Traditionally, this is associated with God's wrath.)

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER—MT. 18: 21 – 35**

**The Season of KINGDOMTIDE (the 18th Sunday after Pentecost).** The emphasis during Kingdomtide is on sanctification, or on how to live the Awakened life; sometimes

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sanctification is about living the holy life **which is the Spiritual Oasis**. Gut Trip Analysis prefers “the Awakened Life” because it immediately grounds it in our indicative behavior; we **ARE** humane and gracious citizens fulfilling the expectations of the Kingdom of God. Head Trip Analysis uses the awkward interpretation about living the moral life of naughty and nice. Sanctification defines the Spiritual Oasis.

**The Key to this sermon is:** To prepare this sermon, ground in your own human experience the following:

- 1) **What is the experience of living in the Kingdom of Heaven?** (*Hint: Think like a Jew by asking how do we experience Heaven, rather than a Greek who wants to know about heaven.*) Gut Trip Analysis identifies this experience as the inner peace that comes when we return “home” from a “vacation.” This is our sense of place.
- 2) **Ground your experience of forgiveness.** The experience is that of being brought into harmony with self, neighbor and the Experience of Perfect At-One-Ment. In this way we experience the Divine Commandment.
- 3) **Ground your experience of gratitude.** This is our acceptance of living out of our experience of harmony and unity.
- 4) **Identifying the innumerable # 7 and 77.** The Disciples question implies a moral issue. Jesus response implies an indicative statement; i.e., we don’t DO forgiveness, we **ARE FORGIVENESS**. Luther implies this in his theology that we all are little Christs. We **ARE** what Christ is, all that is necessary is to awaken to it. The Disciples and the Pharisee always want to talk about naughty and nice. Jesus’ response always pushes us to fulfill our intended creation: we **ARE HUMANE AND GRACIOUS**, and because of this, it is necessary to **BE** what we **ARE CREATED TO BE**.
- 5) **God’s Judgment:** God’s judgment always is God’s love; it is tough love. It is helpful to remember that God never punishes us, we already to a good job of that on our own. What God does is to **GUARANTEE** that all our actions have consequences. We obey the law, and the consequence is that we are not free to drive on the wrong side of the street. We can choose to disobey the law but when we do the consequence is likely to be a ticket! When we experience accountability it is an expression of **God’s grace**. Traditionally, this is associated with God’s wrath.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER—MT. 18: 21 - 35**

**WISE WORDS TO THE WISE:** Recently, I heard one of the best sermons I ever heard, perhaps the best. The characteristic that made it the best was the use of **passion and emotion**. This was not the kind of emotion that manipulated people; rather it was a testimony of the pastor to his unique experience of going mountain climbing with a group of men whom he had grown to respect. As the sermon took us higher up the mountain, the deeper the bond between the men grew, and the deeper we were led on a journey of faith. At the top of the mountain, while taking Holy Communion, and attempting to sing with lungs deprived of oxygen, the men discovered themselves to be in tears; and so were we.

I want to share with you some of my ruminations with this wise pastor. We have a weekly exchange of “ruminant” that we call “cud.” I wrote the following”

**The key is “emotion.”**

*“Is this as good as it gets?” Holy Smoke! If this is keeping our expectations low, then how much lower can we get? That is, how much deeper can we fall into contact with the EXPERIENCE of QUALITY. Good Grief, Charley Brown! You dig it deep. Thanks.*

*Today’s sermon was the most complete sermon you’ve preached since you been here. It made super use of The Lowery Loop, you expressed your unique brand of self-effacing humor, and you dropped into a touch with the Deeps of Life itself. This is what the addition of EMOTION does. You chose the right story, for the right time, in the right place. The photos just took us deeper, and the higher we climbed, the deeper we got.*

**The key is “passion.”**

*First, passion is the missing link in 98% of the sermons I’ve heard, and most of which I’ve given, at least, until recently.*

*Second, this sermon supports my axiom, “Teach the preach, rather than preach the teach.” People are aching to be taught. This sermon can be the proto-type for the ingredients that go into feeding the 4,000, or it is the 5,000?*

**The key to the sermon is:** Before you begin writing this sermon, define the following words using your own experience of them. (I’ve provided how Gut Trip Analysis experiences them.)

**1). Sin.** In Gut Trip Analysis, sin is not a moral category but descriptive of our relationship to separation;

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2). **The authentic life.** In Gut Trip Analysis, authenticity is the life that asks WWJD. It is the surrendered life. It is life that is lived joyful and free to be obedient to God/Love/Perfect At-One-Ment/Goodness. The authentic life practices *dependence on God* while forsaking *personal independence*.

3). **Matthew's use of heaven and earth.** In Gut Trip Analysis, heaven is not a place but a relationship to God. Earth also is not a place but a relationship we take to our created, or intended purpose, which is to be HUMANE.

4). **Doing the Will of God. (See verse 18.)** In Gut Trip Analysis doing the Will of God is to live out of the ethic of WWJD.

5). **Binding and loosening.**

This is a real sticking point to explain when using Head Trip Analysis, but Gut Trip Analysis comes to our rescue. **Vs. 19B, "Whatever is bound on earth is bound in heaven.** The Awakened Community (the Church) has within its awareness the power to remind people that the human/natural is not all there is to life, there is the spiritual dimension of this same reality. The Church is called to rescue all of creation and all of humanity from missing out on the fullness of our intended creation; all things human and the inanimate are to live in harmony, in unity, and in At-One-Ment with each other.

**Vs. 16: 19C, "Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.** First, they are not objects but metaphors. Neither Matthew nor Jesus is referring to dirt, but to the conditions that human/natural existence experiences. Second, the same is true for the reference to heaven. Heaven is not a place to which we escape, but rather it represents the relationship we take to the meaning and significance of our living in harmony and wonder with all things and with everyone. Consequently, when we experience the human/natural experiences that lead us into wonder, i.e., a beautiful landscape, or the birth of a puppy, then it is possible to see through these experiences to the true experience that already IS present in all things, but to which we are mostly blind.

## LESSON 21: GROWING TO PERFECTION

TOPIC: MATTHEW 19: 1 – 20: 16, LIFE IN THE SPIRITUAL OASIS

<b>Tools for teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life</b>					
<b>The Teacher's Handbook – Part II: Life in the Spiritual Oasis</b>					
<b>Teaching life in the Spiritual Oasis</b>	<b>The high cost of teaching</b>	<b>Demonstrating the power of the Good News</b>	<b>Demonstrating the new directions for ministry</b>	<b>Lesson Series: The Spiritual Oasis</b>	<b>Growing to perfection</b>
12:22 – 13:52	13:53-14:12	14:13-16:20	16:21-17:27	18:1-18:35	<b>19:1-20:16</b>
<b>Lesson 16</b>	<b>Lesson 17</b>	<b>Lesson 18</b>	<b>Lesson 19</b>	<b>Lesson 20</b>	<b>Lesson 21</b>

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

Because our topic is "Growing to Perfection," we can associate this with John Wesley's material on the same topic. From Wesley's perspective, growing to perfection is not a goal but a process. The theological concern is that of sanctification, or in our terms the experience of deep satisfaction. With this in mind, consider the next four pericopes in light of how they illuminate our experience of deep satisfaction and our relationship to the Spiritual Oasis.

#### 1. **Vs. 19: 1 – 12, Divorce---**

At first glance, the topic of divorce seems an unlikely place to begin a discussion about "growing to perfection." However, when this whole section is taken seriously, the topic is apropos.

#### 2. **Vs. 19:1B—is rather interesting.**

Again, Jesus is "going to the other side." Matthew uses this figure of speech a lot. In each instance a healing takes place. From our perspective of either living "on vacation"

or living "at home," this little statement points us toward "home" where things are brought together and support our understanding of At-One-Ment.

**WS:** "Going to the other side" is the place of deep satisfaction, or the Spiritual Oasis.

**2. Read this section from the viewpoint of what is being separated, and what brings people together again?**

**WS:** What are separated are the spiritual and the physical. God, as Perfect At-One-Ment is the experience of being brought together again.

**3. Concerning Vs. 19: 8 and following, what is this business of a "hard heart?"**

**WS:** A "hard heart" results in a relationship of separation.

**4. Explore Jesus' advice in 19: 10 – 12.**

**WS:** When you are given The Word, your situation becomes a gift, even when one becomes an eunuch. If you can accept it as a gift. OK. If not, OK. *(Just to add a personal note: whenever I find a parking spot I'll say to my wife, "Ah, Jesus loves us." She'll look at me with her straight-arrow look and tell me, "Even when we fail to find a parking spot Jesus still loves us.")*

**III. Vs. 19: 13 – 15 The Little Children and Jesus—**

**A..** What is the experience here that illuminates "growing to perfection?"

**WS:** Embracing everything is living in the Spiritual Oasis. To deny anyone, is to deny our perfection. Note: In the Early Church, children had no status.

**IV. Vs. 19: 16 – 30 The Rich Young Ruler—**

**A.** There are a number of interesting dynamics in this section. First, the association of "eternal life" with our Spiritual Oasis is evident. The same can be said of its relationship in "growing to perfection." Then, Jesus lays out two criteria that fulfill the criteria of growing to perfection. What are these two criteria? How can they be used to help us grow to perfection?

**WS:** Fulfilling the 10 Commandments—Christians attempt to fulfill them not for salvation, but because of salvation. The 10 Commandments keep us awake.

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B. Compassion is the concern here; faith without works is dead.

How does wealth stand in our way?

**WS:** The danger of wealth is that it possess us, rather than we possess it. If stuff we can consider is a part of the world; i.e., being on vacation. The axiom is, "In the Spiritual Oasis, wanting nothing gives us everything."

**The big question, in this pericope is in verses 19: 25 and 26, "Who then can be saved?"** Jesus gives a curious answer. In light of our terminology how *is the issue of salvation* an interest in Perfect At-One-Ment?

**WS:** Salvation means to be "saved." This word is a transitive verb implying that we are saved from something and saved to something. In our experience, we are saved from spiritual sleep, and we are saved to spiritual awakening; i.e., we awaken to the Spiritual Oasis. "With man" salvation is impossible. With Perfect At-One-Ment all is possible."

**Vs. 19: 27 to 30— Reflect on Jesus' statement ". . . at the renewal of things."**

**WS:** This supports the Big Question "What do we lose while we are "on vacation," and what we gain back when we return "home?"

V. **Vs. 20: 1 to 16--- The parable of the Workers in the Vineyard**

1. This closing parable for this section on Handbook II applies the "law of reversal," living in our Spiritual Oasis reverses our earthly experience. How does this story inform us about growing to perfection? For me, a key phrase is 20: 12 ". . . you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day." What's going on?

**WS:** This parable supports the story of the Rich Young Ruler. It reminds me of a quotation (attributed to deChardin): "If you don't care who gets the credit, you can do anything." This is the result of viewing everything from the perspective of the Spiritual Oasis which is an experience of the Kingdom of God.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER—MT. 18: 21 - 35**

**BACKGROUND ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW:** Look at Matthew 18 for my analysis of this material using Gut Trip Analysis.

**The Theological focus: Sanctification or living the holy life.**

**The Key to this sermon is:** Before beginning to write this sermon, clarify the following:

- 1) Describe what it means to fulfill our human created essence; i.e., to be created in God's image.
- 2) Ground the experience of living in God's Kingdom (Matthew: Heaven). (Hint: in Gut Trip Analysis, heaven is not a place but a relationship to the Creator.)
- 3) Ground your experience of Deep Satisfaction. Keep this Gut Trip, and not moralistic or theological Gnosticism.
- 4) Clearly identify the following:

**Who is the Landowner?**

Hint: In Gut Trip Analysis, God is The Guarantor, because The Guarantor guarantees you'll experience life as "grumbling" or as deep satisfaction.

**What is the Vineyard?** (Hint: in Gut Trip this is not a place but a relationship.)

**Who are the workers?** (Hint: in Gut Trip the workers are just humans)

- 5) NOTE: Frequently, Matthew uses the time of day in symbolic ways. Usually, the evening or the dark is a time of meeting God face-to-face.
- 6) NOTE: This is one of several examples of the Law of Reversal. Living in the presence of God is to live the opposite of our human experience. Example: Lazarus and Dives or getting what is coming to you.

**The ONE THING to get said:**

The Vineyard is the human experience of deep satisfaction. This is what Matthew means by the Kingdom of Heaven.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER—MT. 18: 21 - 35**



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### **Finding our significance by living in the Kingdom of Heaven—**

It is important to remind ourselves that this parable is about identifying the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven; it is not about how workers are treated. Rather, Jesus' point is that when we put on **Jesus Glasses** everything is turned up-side-down and in-side-out: the Kingdom of Heaven is a place of equity rather than equality; in the presence of God we do not get our significance out of what we do, rather we find our importance in our relationship to the "Land owner" (God).

The phrase Kingdom of Heaven is unique to Matthew. The other gospels usually use a similar term Kingdom of God. To avoid Head Trip Analysis, it is necessary to think like a Jew by asking how do we experience Heaven, rather than as a Greek who wants to know about heaven. Gut Trip Analysis identifies this experience as the inner peace that comes when we return "home" from a "vacation." This is our sense of place. Gut Trip Analysis associates this phrase with the Spiritual Oasis.

### **The Vineyard—**

Traditionally, the use of the Vineyard is a metaphor that refers to the nation of Israel. Jesus is reminding his listeners they are those who pull their significance through their relationship to God rather than through their labors.

#### *God's Money:*

Jesus reminds us that God pays us with, "God's money out of God's own generosity." God's money is the currency of undeserved forgiveness, profound love, abundant living, and a deep sense of inner peace.

### **The Human Situation—**

#### *Our Creation:*

We humans are created to live the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy. This is our intended creation.

#### *The Human Situation:*

According to John Wesley, the human situation is that we are asleep to our intended creation.

### **The Human Predicament:**

According to John Wesley, the human predicament is that we are unable to awaken ourselves. Consequently, we are dependent on The Awakened to use the spiritual alarm clock to awaken us to our intended purpose. The Awakened are *the workers in the vineyard*; the nation of Israel, The Christian Church. The event that awakens us is traditionally what we experience as a Christ Event.

### **Heavenly Sunshine**

I spent some time on the web trying to find background information about this old gospel hymn. Any search reveals that it still is popular and used in many venues. Several country/western singers use it and apparently there are several verses with a refrain, but to date I've not found a copy of all the words. Subscribers, if any of you have a copy of the words, authorship, and publisher, please let me know.

What draws me to the song is its descriptive images. A brief Gut Trip Analysis reveals the following:

#### *Heavenly Sunshine:*

*Heavenly*-- Gut Trip Analysis relates the word "heavenly" to the experience of wholeness, health, and At-One-Ment. Even the cursory use of the phrase, "She looked heavenly in her wedding dress," reveals our experience of standing before the fulfillment of our intended creation. Those who have the awakened eyes of faith see every person as being the beautiful creation they are intended to be. We also see this in the way we look at puppies and kittens. As I understand it, the East-Indian culture has an expression when meeting each other, they bow with their hands together and pressed to their foreheads saying, "The god in me greets the god is you." This exactly is the significance of the term *heavenly*.

*Sunshine*— I'm attracted to this term because it represents the experience we have of fulfilling our intended creation. Anytime we feel particularly good about ourselves, our relationships, and/or our situation, the experience is like standing in the sun. Also, the implications are that the light of the sun illuminates the reality of our intended purpose.

The caveat here is that while the joyful things reveal our fulfilling the bad times and the dark times of life also reveal the very same reality. However, when things go well we feel that we deserve them, but we do not deserve the unfavorable things. However, it

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doesn't really matter because for those who have the eyes of faithful dependence on God see God's presence in every experience.

### *Glory Divine:*

*Glory*— Glory is not something bordering on the supernatural. Rather, glory is what we sense in the bride and her wedding dress; at this moment she is standing transparent to the God within her.

*Divine*—Again, the word “divine” is not a supernatural reference. Rather, it describes our experience of living in At-One-Ment. Traditionally, only God can be divine. In the Jewish worldview God is as close as our breath, so that the bride in her wedding dress projects an inner fulfillment. It is at this moment we stand in the presence of God's footprints that are experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment. Our bride is the penultimate experience of perfection. The interesting thing here is that all of us at every moment reveal this same reality. We always ARE revealing this perfection; it is just that we are more frequently asleep to this reality. It is this distorted sense that takes us back to the statement of John Wesley that we humans are asleep to our perfection, and depend on the work of the awakened to set a-tingling our spiritual alarm clocks.

## LESSON 22: THE COST AND GLORY OF TEACHING THE SPIRITUAL OASIS

TOPIC: MATTHEW 20: 17 – 21: 27, THE MORAL LESSONS

<b>Life in the Spiritual Oasis</b> <b>Matthew 12: 22 – 25: 46</b>		
<b>The Teacher’s Handbook – Moral Lessons</b> <b>Matthew 20: 17 – 25: 46</b>		
<b>The cost and glory of teaching the Spiritual Oasis</b>	<b>Demonstrating the teacher’s authority</b>	<b>The in-breaking of the Spiritual Oasis</b>
<b>Matthew 20 :16 – 21: 27</b>	<b>Matthew 21: 28 – 23: 39</b>	<b>Matthew 24: 1 – 25: 46</b>
<b>Lesson 22</b>	<b>Lesson 23</b>	<b>Lesson 24</b>

I. Read the assigned reading at one time.

II. **Note:** As you read this assignment, keep in mind the difference between “being on vacation” and “being at home.” Push your thinking to identify the “the cost and glory of teaching the Spiritual Oasis.” Handbook Part III teaches moral lessons. In scripture “moral lessons” are based on the relationship we choose to take to our human situation. These are not lessons about being naughty or nice.

III. **Vs. 20: 20 to 28--- A Mother’s Request**

1. How is the mother’s request representative of living “on vacation?”

**WS:** Any concern over one’s “position” in the Spiritual Oasis is the antithesis of living in the Spiritual Oasis. Obviously, this also is true in “society.”

2. What is the “cost” Jesus suggests to this woman? What is the “cup” Jesus must drink, and what does drinking from this cup accomplish?

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**WS:** The “cup” that is offered is the cup of death—everyone drinks from this cup, but few choose to drink from it, especially to drink of it on behalf of someone else, much less the whole of humanity. Jesus reminds us it is those, who are prepared by God, that which is experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment, that will sit at the right and left of Jesus in the Spiritual Oasis. Those who are “prepared” are those who are awakened to the Spiritual Oasis.

3. Jesus lays out a plan for living in the Spiritual Oasis. What is it?

**WS:** Surrendered servanthood is the method of living together in the Spiritual Oasis.

4. What is the moral?

**WS:** To live authentically is to live the surrendered life; i.e., to live on the Spiritual Oasis.

### IV. Vs. 20: 29 – 34--- Two Blind Men Receive Sight

1. Describe the human situation and related it to either living “on vacation” or “at home.”

**WS:** To be blind is to be un-awakened.

2. What is the request of the two blind guys?

**WS:** To have “mercy” on them; i.e., to heal their blindness.

3. What is the sight they want?

**WS:** To have “insight” – that is to be awakened to the authentic that is the Spiritual Oasis.

4. What is the “mercy” Jesus gives them? Why is it merciful? What is the “cost?” What is the “glory?”

**WS:** Jesus awakens them. It is an act of mercy as it is the difference between just living and living authentically. The cost and glory is that the reward for the deed is found in the deed itself.

5. What is the moral?

**WS:** To live authentically is to live awake to the Spiritual Oasis.

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### V. Vs. 21: 1 – 11--- The Triumphal Entry

1. Do some research in your commentary about this part of your assignment. Why does Matthew use these references to the Hebrew Bible (**Zech 9:9; Psalm 118:26**)? There is a curious statement “Hosanna to the Son of David.” What does it mean, and why would Matthew include it here in this chapter?

**WS:** The phrase “Hosanna to the Son of David” is used in these Hebrew Bible passages meaning “Save!” Used in this context, the experience is that of an exclamation of praise.

2. If there is a moral, what is it?

**WS:** If there is any moral here it is the association of the term “save” with Jesus who is the little picture of Perfect At-One-Ment. Perfect At-One-Ment saves us from choosing to be victims and save us to being victors in spite of our human situation. This is why Jesus is the Good News.

### VI. Vs 21: 12 – 17--- Jesus at the Temple

1. Here, again, is this curious statement “Hosanna to the Son of David.” What is going on here?

**WS:** Obviously, the Lawyers are students of the Hebrew Bible. To hear this phrase, and to understand its implications, is to associate Jesus with the Messiah.

2. Again, Matthew makes use of quotations from the Hebrew Bible (**Isaiah 56: 7; Jeremiah 7:11; Psalms 8:2**) What is going on here? (References are from Bible Gateway.)

**WS:** **Isaiah 56:7** records the importance of the temple as a House of Prayer.

**Jeremiah 7:1** records the falseness of those who worship.

**Psalm 8:2** implies the “smallness of humans in creation, and the royal dignity and power God bestowed upon them.”

3. What is the human situation in this pericope? Does it represent living “on vacation” or living “at home?”

**WS:** The human situation is that the Temple is a doorway into the Spiritual Oasis: a House of Prayer. Jesus’ actions point up the way this doorway was closed so as to block the entrance into the Spiritual Oasis: a den of thieves. Any experiences that block

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Awakenment represent those being “on vacation.” The indication of being on vacation is the notation that the Lawyers and the chief priests were indignant.

### 4. What is the cost of teaching the Spiritual Oasis?

**WS:** The cost is to be misunderstood concerning the meaning of being saved. When this experience is a “head trip” it means our situation makes us victims and we need an outside agent to ride in on a white horse and leave a silver bullet. When being saved is a “gut trip” it open us to the Spiritual Oasis where our freedom to choose leads us to be victors with Christ who is our example.

### 5. If there is a moral what is it?

**WS:** The awakened receive praise by those who are “awake” and “scorn” from those who are still asleep.

## VII. Vs. 21: 18 – 22— The Fig Tree Withers

1. What is the human situation here? The question here is not why the fig tree deserved this treatment, but what is the lesson Jesus is teaching about the Spiritual Oasis?

**WS:** Jesus experience of hunger is representative of the spiritual hunger we all have to live in the presence of Perfect At-One-Ment. The Spiritual Oasis is a metaphor for the authentic life. The cursing of the Fig Tree is a metaphor pointing to our need to satisfy our spiritual hunger not on things of this world (on vacation) but rather on the life that Jesus represents in the Spiritual Oasis.

2. **Vs 21: 21,** mentions the word “faith.” What is the “Head Trip” definition of this word? What is the “Gut Trip” definition of this word?

**WS:** The word “faith” means Surrender!

3. What is the “glory” of teaching the Spiritual Oasis?

**WS:** The “glory” is living with absolute possibility and freedom of choice. Glorification, the third of the great doctrines, implies total surrender to living in the Spiritual Oasis.

4. What is the moral of this pericope?

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**WS:** Do not deny our potential as those do who associate themselves with the “Fig Tree.” Rather, associate us with the Spiritual Oasis.

### **VIII. Vs. 21: 23 – 27— The Authority of Jesus Questioned**

1. What is the human situation here? What is the kind of authority the “elders of the people” are concerned about?

**WS:** Those in positions of responsibility have to ask for information. These “elders” are blind to the Spiritual Oasis. Jesus tricks them to reveal their blindness.

2. Do a little commentary research concerning the tricky question Jesus gives them? Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible. (The following is a bit too much King James, but you’ll get an important insight.)

Now this question is concerning John's baptism, here put for his whole ministry, preaching as well as baptizing; "Was this from heaven, or of men? One of the two it must be; either what he did was of his own head, or he was sent of God to do it." Gamaliel's argument turned upon this hinge (Acts v. 38, 39); either this counsel is of men or of God. Though that which is manifestly bad cannot be of God, yet that which is seemingly good may be of men, nay of Satan, when he transforms himself into an angel of light. This question was not at all shuffling, to evade theirs; but,

(1.) If they answered this question, it would answer theirs: should they say, against their consciences, that John's baptism was of men, yet it would be easy to answer, John did no miracle (**John x. 41**), Christ did many; but should they say, as they could not but own, that John's baptism was from heaven (which was supposed in the questions sent him, **John i. 21**, Art thou Elias, or that prophet?) then their demand was answered, for he bare testimony to Christ. Note, Truths appear in the clearest light when they are taken in their due order; the resolving of the previous questions will be a key to the main question.

(2.) If they refused to answer it, that would be a good reason why he should not offer proofs of his authority to men that were obstinately prejudiced against the strongest conviction; it was but to cast pearls before swine. Thus he taketh the wise in their own craftiness (**1 Cor. iii. 19**); and those that would not be convinced of the plainest truths, shall be convicted



of the vilest malice, against John first, then against Christ, and in both against God.

(3.) How they were hereby baffled and run aground; they knew the truth, but would not own it, and so were taken in the snare they laid for our Lord Jesus. Observe, 1.) How they reasoned with themselves, not concerning the merits of the cause, what proofs there were of the divine original of John's baptism; no, their care was, how to make their part good against Christ. Two things they considered and consulted, in this reasoning with themselves--their credit, and their safety; the same things which they principally aim at, who seek their own things.

[1.] They consider their own credit, which they would endanger if they should own John's baptism to be of God; for then Christ would ask them, before all the people. Why did ye not believe him? And to acknowledge that a doctrine is from God, and yet not to receive and entertain it, is the greatest absurdity and iniquity that a man can be charged with. Many that will not be kept by the fear of sin from neglecting and opposing that which they know to be true and good are kept by the fear of shame from owning that to be true and good which they neglect and oppose. Thus they reject the counsel of God against themselves, in not submitting to John's baptism, and are left without excuse.

[2.] They consider their own safety, so that they would expose themselves to the resentments of the people, if they should say that John's baptism was of men; We fear the people, for all hold John as a prophet. It seems, then,

First, that the people had truer sentiments of John than the chief priests and the elders had, or, at least, were more free and faithful in declaring their sentiments. This people, of whom they said in their pride that they knew not the law, and were cursed (**John vii. 49**), it seems, knew the gospel, and were blessed.

Secondly, that the chief priests and elders stood in awe of the common people, which is an evidence that things were in disorder among them, and that mutual jealousies were at a great height; that the government was become obnoxious to the hatred and scorn of the people, and the scripture was fulfilled, I have made you contemptible and base, **Mal. ii. 8, 9**. If they had

kept their integrity, and done their duty, they had kept up their authority, and needed not to fear the people. We find sometimes that the people feared them, and it served them for a reason why they did not confess Christ, **John ix. 22, xii. 42**. Note, Those could not but fear the people, who studied only how to make the people fear them.

Third, that it is usually the temperament of common people to be zealous for the honor of that which they account sacred and divine. If they account John as a prophet, they will not endure that it should be said, His baptism was of men; hence the hottest contests have been about holy things.

Fourth, That the chief priests and elders were kept from an open denial of the truth, even against the conviction of their own minds, not by the fear of God, but purely by the fear of the people; as the fear of man may bring good people into a snare (**Prov. xxix. 25**), so sometimes it may keep bad people from being overmuch wicked, lest they should die before their time, **Eccl. vii. 17**. Many bad people would be much worse than they are, if they durst.

(2.) How they replied to our Savior, and so dropped the question. They fairly confessed "We cannot tell;" that is, "We will not;" ouk oi damen--We never knew. The more shame for them, while they pretended to be leaders of the people, and by their office were obliged to take cognizance of such things; when they would not confess their knowledge, they were constrained to confess their ignorance. And observe, by the way, when they said, We cannot tell, they told a lie, for they knew that John's baptism was of God.

Note, there are many who are more afraid of the shame of lying than of the sin, and therefore scruple not to speak that which they know to be false concerning their own thoughts and apprehensions, their affections and intentions, or their remembering or forgetting of things, because in those things they know nobody can disprove them.

Thus Christ avoided the snare they laid for him, and justified himself in refusing to gratify them; Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. If they be so wicked and base as either not to believe, or not to confess, that the baptism of John was from heaven (though it obliged to repentance, that great duty, and sealed the kingdom of God at hand, that great promise), they were not fit to be discoursed with concerning Christ's authority; for men of such a disposition could not be convinced of the truth, nay, they could not

but be provoked by it, and therefore he that is thus ignorant, let him be ignorant still. Note, Those that imprison the truths they know, in unrighteousness (either by not professing them, or by not practicing according to them), are justly denied the further truths they enquire after, **Rom. i. 18, 19.** Take away the talent from him that buried it; those that will not see, shall not see.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER—MT. 22: 15 – 22**

**The Theological focus:** The significance of living the Awakened Life as the life of integrity.

**The Key to this sermon is:** Think through and ground the following:

1. The dimension of Caesar's influence. **Vs. 21a**
2. The dimension of God's influence. **Vs. 21b**
3. How do you experience authenticity?
4. Describe the authentically human person
5. Think through how WWJD describes Jesus' ethic by which we honor Caesar and God.
6. Describe how "God's way" is experienced. **Vs. 16b**
7. Ground how all this helps the concept of Christian integrity.

**The ONE THING to get said:** We live in one world with two dimensions. One dimension is associated with Caesar. Another dimension is associated with God. (**Hint:** I found Paul's statement in **Acts 17:28** very helpful. The dimension of God is the one ". . . in whom we live and move and have our being." In other words, our experience of God – and Caesar—is now. In fact, Jesus' point is that unless we are aware of both dimensions now we are not living a life of integrity.

Also, I found Marcus Borg's book on "The Heart of Christianity" very helpful at this point. His emphasis is on rediscovering the heart, or inward dimension as the inner experience of God. He describes this on pages 55ff as "The More." Later, on pages 155ff, Borg describes our experience of The More as a "Thin Place." Beg or borrow this book – it's worth it.)

**The ONE EMOTION to share:** A sense of peace. A sense of place like living "at home."

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### ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter—Matthew 22: 15 - 22

#### The Key to this sermon is:

#### *The difference between Head Trip Analysis and Gut Trip Analysis—*

##### *Head Trip Analysis:*

This approach is characterized as objective, rational and cognitive; i.e., life is defined by knowing and understanding the nature of things, such as God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. We are defined by the end result, such as I am a **good or bad husband**. Head Trip Analysis has moral implications.

##### *Gut Trip Analysis:*

This approach is characterized as experiential, existential, and relational; i.e., life is defined by our experiences, such as God is Love, or Jesus can define God as a “Father.” We are defined by our creatureliness, such as I am a husband. Gut Trip analysis has indicative implications. In this way we are defined by our fulfillment (Gut Trip) rather than by the end (Head Trip) result; this is based on the ontological or on The Way Life Is (TWLI).

#### *The Ways of God—*

In **Vs. 16C**, Jesus’ visitors affirm that he teaches the Ways of God, and the main point Jesus drives home in **Vs. 21B** is that we are to give to God what is Gods. The question becomes, “If I was walking down the street and observed what belonged to God, what would I observe?” I will see Awakened People taking responsibility for their neighbors, the environment, and all of creation.

What we give back to God is by choosing to 1) set aside our human independence of ego and greed, and 2) choose to live dependently on Love demonstrated by people fulfilling their intended creation by ***living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.***

It is important that the person giving this sermon be able to illustrate this point, or the sermon will drift off into irrelevance. Those in the pew either will make assumptions about what this is, or simply not think about it. However, this is the point that Jesus wants to make.

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Jesus is using a Jewish worldview in which God is the meaning of everything; everything is filled with God. God is the significance of who we are! Pastor Keith Schadel, writing in his Camp Lakeside newsletter "Ripples," observes, "When I think I'm my own person, or my family's, or my employer's, or anyone or anything else's but God's, I am lost. When I seek to serve my self, my family, my employer, or anyone or anything else for their/its own sake, and not God, I am lost." (*My emphasis.*)

*The nature of The Truth (Goodness) that Jesus' teaches –*

*The things of God and the things of man:*

Reality and The Truth often are two different things. I'm not referring to illusionary reality, or what we sometime think we see like a desert reflection of water in the distance, but rather I'm referring to The Truth of what actually is of value, i.e., Goodness! A hot stove and a cold stove IS reality. However, The Truth is that there is more value (Good) to sit on a cold stove than there is in sitting on a hot stove. The Truth is a value proposition.

Notice that this is not a moral proposition, but rather it is the indicative or the ontological. The Truth that Jesus taught, and to which the Pharisees and the Herodians point, is such an indicative. It is of more value for humans to live the humane and gracious life than it is for us to live ego-driven, narcissistic and selfish lives. We fulfill our intended purpose in the former, and we are lost to God by living the latter.

## LESSON 23: DEMONSTRATING THE TEACHER’S AUTHORITY

TOPIC: MATTHEW 21: 28 – 23: 39, THE MORAL LESSONS

(NOTE: This scripture is the most used lection in Matthew. There are 10 Sermon Starter references in this material, representing three sermons per year in the 3-year cycle. It may be the most used lection in the Gospels. We’ll see.)

<b>Life in the Spiritual Oasis</b> <b>Matthew 12: 22 – 25: 46</b>		
<b>The Teacher’s Handbook – Moral Lessons</b> <b>Matthew 20: 17 – 25: 46</b>		
<b>The cost and glory of teaching the Spiritual Oasis</b>	<b>Demonstrating the teacher’s authority</b>	<b>The in-breaking of the Spiritual Oasis</b>
<b>Matthew 20 :16 – 21: 27</b>	<b>Matthew 21: 28 – 23: 39</b>	<b>Matthew 24: 1 – 25: 46</b>
<b>Lesson 22</b>	<b>Lesson 23</b>	<b>Lesson 24</b>

I. Read the assigned reading at one time.

II. **Note:** This study concerns the authority of the teacher who uses these three Teaching Handbooks on Transparent Ethics, The Spiritual Oasis, and Moral Lessons. The underlying question in this session is from where does the teacher get the authority to teach?

III. **Some things to keep in mind:**

*What is the experience of the name Jesus?* Transliterate this word. In our usual lexicon we translate Jesus is, “The Little Picture of Perfect At-One-Ment.” Another word for the experience of Jesus is “The Christ Bearer;” i.e., Jesus embodies the Messiah/Christ; i.e., the word “Jesus” is translated in Hebrew into Joshua or *the One who Saves*. Ask yourself, *from what* does Jesus save us, and *to what* does Jesus save us?

*Think about the source of Jesus' authority.* Because we are exploring the "Spiritual Oasis" what would it mean for Jesus to get his authority from this place? If this is the case, then from where do Chief Priest and the Elders, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and "the teachers of the law" find the source of their authority?

IV. Choose one of the following eight pericopes and examine the experience that is implied. Transliterate any of the Old Christian code words from "Head Trip" to "Gut Trip" analysis. Then, answer the question of where the teacher gets the authority to teach.

1. **Vs. 21: 28 to 32--- The Parable of the Two Sons**

The Bible Study participants understood this parable is concerned with doing lip service. One boy agrees to help and doesn't. The other boy refuses to help but shows up. The audience for this parable is the chief priests and the elder of the people. The obvious reference is to them. The experience implied faithfulness or surrender of ourselves to being obedient. This is not blind obedience for the decision to order our lives to do God's will is to do things to bring about At-One-Ment.

Those who do God's will enter into God's kingdom, no matter their present occupation. Or as a recent seminary graduate observed "God's Kin-dom" is the realm where we live as "God's kin." I like it!!

**Vs. 21: 31B** – kingdom of God: The experience of living as God's kin is to live in the Spiritual Oasis.

**Vs. 21: 32** – righteousness: having a "right relationship," or orientation of ourselves with God as Perfect At-One-Ment.

Jesus gets his authority to teach this parable from being in touch with The Truth, or that which is authentic, or from the experience of living in At-One-Ment.

2. **Vs. 21: 33 – 46--- The Parable of the Tenants**

This is a similar theme as the Parable of the Two Sons. The audience is still the chief priests and the elders of the people.

**Vs. 43, 44**—The warning given by Jesus is that those to whom the vineyard is given that "the vineyard" will be taken away from them because they are no longer fulfilling the purpose for which it is given; i.e., to hold it in trust for Perfect At-One-Ment. The

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“vineyard will be given to those who are Awake and practicing the intended purpose of the Spiritual Oasis that is to live together in At-One-Ment.

Jesus gets his authority by proof-texting from **Psalm 118: 22, 23**.

Those at the Bible Study meeting noted that this parable may have many ramifications, such as “the hedge” may represent “the Law of the Old Testament,” and “the Watchtower” may be representative of the Temple.

Words to transliterate: Kingdom of God always is experienced as the Spiritual Oasis.

### 3. **Vs. 22: 1 –14--- The Parable of the Wedding Banquet**

This is a curious parable because of the seeming mis-justice of the improperly dressed wedding guest. After all, he was walking down the street when the King’s messenger gave him the invitation. One of our Bible study students made the observation that in the days of the Early Church it is a tradition that the wedding host provides the wedding cloths appropriate for the event.

The wedding banquet is a reference to the activities in the Spiritual Oasis. To be “improperly dressed” for the Spiritual Oasis is to give lip service to its intended purpose. In effect, to say, “Yes, I am a part of the Awakened People, but I never live like it with my time, talent and financial resources.

Jesus gets his authority from being the “first born of many brothers and sisters” living in the Spiritual Oasis.

### 4. **Vs. 22: 15 – 22--- Pay Taxes To Caesar**

This is another amazing little lesson about living in the Spiritual Oasis because it points up one of the areas of misconceptions. To live authentically in the Spiritual Oasis also means to live authentically in the world. Not to live authentically in the world cheapens the experience of living in the Spiritual Oasis as a moralistic relationship; i.e., those living in the world are naughty. NOT TRUE! The only difference is that we are Awake! Becoming moralistic or prideful is a certain sign that we are no longer living in the Spiritual Oasis.

On the other hand, it is not possible to live authentically in the world without the experience of the Spiritual Oasis. To think we can is to live pride-fully; i.e., we do not need to be awakened. NOT TRUE. Authenticity of really living whole lives has its source



in the Spiritual Oasis. Not to affirm this is to be in denial, and this is a certain sign that we are not living authentically in the world.

Jesus acknowledges that we all live within one reality, and we need to experience living intentionally in both the world and in the Spiritual Oasis.

Jesus gets his authority from living authentically in both the world and in the Spiritual Oasis and thereby fulfills what it means to be a fully human person. In traditional Christian Code words, this describes what it means to be "holy."

**5. Vs. 22: 23 – 33— Marriage at the Resurrection**

The fundamental issue at stake here is the confusion and misinterpretation of what the Spiritual Oasis is. It is important never to lose sight of the point that "heaven" is not a place, it is a relationship we take to living authentically with both our worldly eyes and our spiritual eyes wide open.

The audience for this parable is the Sadducees who said there is "no resurrection. The Sadducees were attempting to see if he would affirm the resurrection and to see how he would handle the traditional relationships. Jesus shifts the meaning of this human predicament into the experience of living in the Spiritual Oasis where such petty arguments are ignored. This is the place of real living rather than the fulfillment of certain requirements.

Jesus gets his authority for this answer out of his personal experience of living authentically in the Spiritual Oasis.

**6. Vs. 22: 34 – 40— The Greatest Commandment**

Now, the audience shifts to the Pharisees who test Jesus on his knowledge of the 10 Commandments. Jesus reply is astonishing. In four sentences he summarizes The Law and shifts it into a profound statement concerning a New Law, the law of LOVE.

A transliteration: "Give your whole passion to relationships that build At-One-Ment. This is done through a relationship to our neighbors, and a positive self-affirmation. On these two principles the quadrilateral is based (scripture, tradition, experience and reason)."

Again, Jesus gets his authority to say this from his experience in living in the Spiritual Oasis.

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### 7. Vs. 22: 41 – 46--- Who's Son Is the Christ?

**Vs. 22: 42**—The word “Christ” is a Greek word meaning The Logos, or the Good News. Its Hebrew counterpart is “Messiah” or the one who saves. The word “save” always needs transliterating because it implies that we are “saved from” something, and we are “saved to” something. In our terminology, we are “saved from” the experience of inauthenticity, and we are “saved to” the experience of authentic living.

The Pharisees are trying to entrap Jesus by raising this question concerning the parentage of the Messiah. The Pharisee proof-text the argument by relating the Messiah to the lineage of David.

But Jesus, by proof-texting from **Psalm 110:1**, raises the obvious question, “If David called the Messiah Lord,” then how can the Messiah be in the lineage of David? Certainly, what we just did is a “head trip analysis” of this important material. Let’s see what we can do with a “gut trip analysis.”

The experience of the Pharisee’s question is their attempt to objectify the topic of “The Christ;” that is, to make the topic an object to be studied for his historical perspective to King David, etc. Jesus turns the topic into the experience of the meaning of “The Christ” which is the “sacrifice” we make by dying to the triviality of such questions as this.

Again, Jesus gets his authority to answer in this manner from living in the Spiritual Oasis where such questions are considered trivial.

### 8. Vs. 23: 1 – 39--- Seven Woes

Jesus begins this lesson in authority by a caveat. Again, he emphasizes the importance of living authentically in the world in **Vs. 23: 1 – 4**. His listeners are to respect and obey what the Pharisees and the Lawyers tell us. However, we are not “to do” what they do.

The “Seven Woes” are those things that keep us from opening the door into the Spiritual Oasis:

- 1) **Vs. 23: 13, 14**-- closing the door to the Spiritual Oasis;
- 2) **Vs. 23: 15**— insistence on “conversion;”
- 3) **Vs. 23: 16-22**-- swearing allegiance on to the things of this world rather than opening the door to the authenticity of the Spiritual Oasis;

- 4) **Vs. 23: 23 – 24**-- the practice of the unimportant things such as liturgies, when the more important thing is "Justice, mercy, and faithfulness;"
- 5) **Vs. 23: 25 – 26**-- making appearances more important than substance;
- 6) **Vs. 23: 27, 28**-- again, making appearances more important than substance;
- 7) **Vs. 23: 29 – 39**-- self-righteousness. Jesus ends this section of his teaching with a bit of forecasting. This is my transliteration (**Vs. 23: 37 – 39**): *O Thou great Communion, there are those who live within you who once were awake, but no longer can claim this title. As the 'Little Picture of At-One-Ment' I wanted to gather this great Communion together for nourishment and mutual support, but you've gone to sleep and no longer have the vision. This Communion is no longer viable, but is lost. However, the Truth(experienced as Goodness) no longer dwells with you against the day when 'true happiness' will be revealed.*

Once again, Jesus gets his authority as the reflection of himself as the "Little Picture of At-One-Ment.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 21: 23 – 32

### **The Season of KINGDOMTIDE**

The theme of Kingdomtide is to preach the message of Jesus: repent and believe. In Gut Trip Analysis, this theme is described in the following formula: Christians affirm, or confess, that God don't make no junk. When this is affirmed, then every moment is a precious gift, and this is why it is called "the Present." When we affirm these two things, then our Past is not only forgiven, it is forgotten. And when these three things are affirmed, then our Future is an open possibility. I submit to you, this formula is THE GOOD NEWS!

*The Gospel of Matthew chart notes that, at this point, the major purpose of Matthew is to teach us how to teach others moral lessons*

### **The Theological focus:**

Doing God's will is an act of orienting ourselves with the will of God as Perfect At-One-Ment. This act of orientation is called repentance (**vs. 32b**). For the best information on the Will of God, find and purchase this tiny book by Leslie Weatherhead, The Will of

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God. This is about 48 pages and examines the Intentional Will of God, the Circumstantial Will of God, and the Ultimate Will of God. Fabulous!

### **The Key to this sermon is:**

Before beginning this sermon, clarify in your own mind the following:

- 1) The Will of God. (Hint: in Gut Trip Analysis, the will of God is discovered in our actions, in our doings. Our doings are done in light of the Great Commandment of Christ. We see the need and move to serve it. At this point, God makes the best of it.)
- 2) To be in synch with the will of God. (Hint: Gut Trip Analysis examines the experience of being in synch as being in a kin-ship relationship to God. I wish I had invented this idea, but Emily Meckly, a St. Paul's Seminarian, gave me the idea in her Credo paper. She promoted this idea as living in the "Kin-dom of God." Right on!
- 3) How do we get into kinship with God? (Hint: Gut Trip Analysis promotes the experience of making our neighbors smile. When they smile, we smile. When we smile God is smiling.)
- 4) Clarify in your own mind the nature of Jesus' authority. Keep it Gut Trip. It is easy to fall into moralism of Gnosticism. (Hint: Gut Trip Analysis reports that Jesus' authority is discovered in actions that bring about wholeness, health, and a deep sense of satisfaction. When people smile, so does God. We find our authority in WWJD.)

### **ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 21: 23 – 32**

#### **This scripture is NOT about the Kingdom of Heaven (KOH)–**

This sermon is about the authority of Jesus as a reflection of our own awakened authority. This change of purpose is visible in the Matthew Chart hinted at in the above chart. The KOH sermons supported Part II in the Teacher's Handbook on "The Spiritual Oasis"—the KOH. This week's material shifts to Part III in the Teacher's Handbook on "Moral Lessons." In this instance, authority is not a moral issue, rather how Jesus (and us) embraces and use authority has moral implications. Remember, the overarching purpose of Matthew is, "A Training Manual for Teaching The Transparent Sanctified Life."

### **The Will of God –**

It is so easy to fall into a moralistic trap as we consider the will of God; it is easy to make it a Head Trip Analysis. However, Gut Trip Analysis comes easily to our rescue. We experience the will of God as we awaken to fulfill our intended purpose of living the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy. That it!

### **Independence from and dependence on God –**

This formula describes what John the Baptist knew, and for which the Tax Collectors and Prostitutes sought baptism. This is what Jesus knew. Also, this is what the Chief Priests and the Elders of the church failed to understand. Our dependence on God is why we live the humane and gracious life. Anything else is the antithesis of our created purpose. The Old Testament rituals and proscriptions were designed as the method to approach God; this was the work of the Levite priests and the Chief Priest. The whole sacrificial culture was built to enable the People of God and God to interact.

Jesus, as the Christ, provides something new. No longer do the people have to search for God! God comes to us. The letter to the Hebrews makes it clear that in the Old Covenant God would be our God IF we would be God's people. In Christ Jesus, the New Covenant is stated that God IS willing to be our God with no strings attached.

**Is it any wonder that the Chief Priests and Elders of the Synagogue were confused? The question for us becomes, "Why are we still confused?"**

Recently, I had a Moslem acquaintance ask, "For Christians, what is the human purpose?" My reply was, "We are created to praise God." He looked at me, smiled, and threw his hands in the air and shouted, "Bingo!" Later, I took him a quote from Luther's "Small Catechism," which states that the human purpose is to praise God. In exchange, when he went to Palestine for a visit, he brought back and gave me a crucifixion scene carved out of olive wood.

How does Praising God get translated into our intended purpose? Easy. When we live the humane and gracious life we are acting out our gratitude and thanksgiving for awakening us. The relationship between a Moslem and a Christian is founded on being humane with each other, and this becomes a transparent demonstration that we are all brothers and sisters.

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### Righteousness –

This is one of our Old Christian code words that gets moralized by Head Trip Analysis. Righteousness is experienced as living in synch with our intended purpose. Or, it is fulfilling our relationship to God who is experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment. This is what the Baptism of John is all about. This is what John knew, and what the Tax Collectors and Prostitutes experienced. Also, this is what Jesus knew. This is what we need to know over and over again.

### Repent and believe –

Gut Trip Analysis treats these words as having the same foundation: **surrender**. 1) We are to surrender living independently from our dependence on God; we have to give up! 2) Then it is required that we discipline our ego so that we get in tune with “the mind of God,” which is to live the humane and gracious life.

#### *Repent:*

Traditional Christianity treats the word “repent” as the act of turning around. For instance, as we are live independently of God, then we turn to begin living dependently on God by asking WWJD.

#### *Believe:*

Traditional Christianity treats the word “believe” as *betting our life* on that which will sustain us. It is like getting on an airplane. We “believe” in the physics of the aircraft and in the skill of the pilot; in fact what we are doing is surrendering ourselves, we are betting our life on these characteristics. The same can be said for the word *faith*.

### Jesus’ authority –

**Jesus gets his authority for the same place we do**, which is from living awakened to our total dependence on God. The evidence is that we experience of sense of inner peace when we are living the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy. Our authority is in fulfilling this intended purpose: a cow’s authority comes from living as a cow. The same can be true of a dog, a tree, a rock, or all of creation. Everything seems to get along well except human beings with our built in self-consciousness. Then the SELF part gets in the way; i.e., our ego becomes a problem.

Jesus demonstrates that it is possible for us to die to our egos—to die to all the barriers preventing us from full-filling our intended creation by freely and intentionally choosing

to go to the cross and die. This is a mirror for us to follow in his footsteps; we can intentionally choose to die to our egos in order to have "the mind of God." In other places, I treat this phrase as The Really Real.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 21: 33 – 46**

**The Theological focus:**

This parable defines the nature of God, the authority of Jesus, and the work of the church.

The parable speaks directly to the actions of the covenant community as defined by the Nation of Israel, the Early Church, and today's Christian Church.

This purpose sets this parable apart because of its focus on the corporate covenant community. Its message is not on personal salvation, but on the work of the saved (covenanted) community.

The caveat to preparing this sermon is to keep it simple. This is a big order!

**The Key to this sermon is:**

Before beginning this sermon, clarify in your own mind the following:

Read carefully **Isaiah 5: 1 – 7, 8: 13, 14**

Read carefully **Daniel 2: 31- 25, 44, 45.**

Clarify the following:

1) Landowner, 2) vineyard, 3) servants, 4) the fruit, 5) who the farmers are, 6) who are the "others to whom the vineyard is given, 7) who is the "son,"

Define God's will. [Hint: Gut Trip Analysis defines this as: a) fulfilling our human purpose as those created to praise God, b) fulfilling our essence to live humane/human lives, c) practicing At-One-Ment, d) experiencing the result as an inner peace and a sense of deep satisfaction.]

## Life in the Spiritual Oasis

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 21: 33 – 46

**The Season of KINGDOMTIDE.** The emphasis during Kingdomtide is on sanctification, or on how to live the Awakened life; sometimes sanctification is about living the holy life which is the **Spiritual Oasis**. Gut Trip Analysis prefers “the Awakened Life” because it immediately grounds it in our indicative behavior; we ARE humane and gracious citizens fulfilling the expectations of the Kingdom of God. Head Trip Analysis uses the awkward interpretation about living the moral life of naughty and nice. Sanctification defines the Spiritual Oasis.

**The theological focus –**

It appears that there are three master themes in this scripture: **the nature of God, the authority of Jesus, and the work of the Awakened People of God as the church.**

To clarify my understanding on how Jesus identifies himself, I found it necessary to read **Isaiah 5: 1 – 7, 8: 13 – 14, and Daniel 2: 31 – 35, 44, and 45.** These are the passages that helped me get a grasp on Jesus as a “stumbling block” and “The stone that crushes.” Take a moment to read over these passages. Obviously, Jesus was telling the Chief Priests and the Pharisees something with which they were familiar.

**The Mission of the Chief Priests, the Pharisees, and the sacrificial system --**

In this lesson, Matthew switches the audience from the “chief priests and the elders” (**Vs. 21: 23**) to an audience of “the chief priests and the Pharisees.” An interesting, although insignificant bit of information.

The mission of the Chief Priests was to prepare the people to bring them into the presence of God. In the Old Testament, God was hidden behind the Veil of the Temple. Once a year on the Day of Atonement, the Chief Priest would enter behind the Veil in order to make a sacrifice to cleanse the faith of their failure to follow all of The Law. This was done using an animal that was a substitute for the people themselves. For this purpose, the Chief Priest became the representative of the people who first prepared himself, and then made a sacrifice on behalf of the whole nation. Traditionally, the blood of a perfect ‘lamb’ was shed, and this was followed by a perfect goat that was set loose to symbolize the nation’s escape from the wrath of God; God is generous after all.



### **The Will of God –**

This subject is usually made difficult by attempting to explain too much. Gut Trip Analysis is helpful at this point. The will of God is that creation fulfills its intended purpose; a cow is to be a cow and a tree is to be a tree. To this end, we humans are to be authentically human which means we are to live in humane and gracious relationship with all things and all people.

### **Clarify these metaphors –**

1) Landowner; 2) Vineyard; 3) Servants; 4) The "fruit;" 5) The Farmers; 6) The others to whom the vineyard is given; 7) The Son.

### **ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 22: 1 – 14**

**Eschatology** – the anticipation of the Final Joy. Remember, only God is the "Final Joy." This has nothing to do with an afterlife, or where we go after we die. When people find the Final Joy **now**, what happens to us after we die is in God's hands anyway. The eschatological moment usually comes to us in an event that awakens us to the deep joy of living **now** in God's eternal presence. It comes to us as a wake up call!

### **The Key to this sermon is:**

Matthew treats the Kingdom of Heaven in an allegorical parable. It is helpful to remember that heaven is not a place, rather it is a relationship. This is why Jesus could call God his Father. Define the following:

- 1) The Dark Existence – Matthew tells us the invitees to the wedding were found in the dark streets of life. Define for yourself how you can illustrate to your listeners the significance of our HUMAN existence.
- 2) The Awakened Life – Matthew tells us those who come to the banquet are those awakened to God's definition of being both a human and a humane person. How will you communicate this experience to your people?
- 3) The Banquet – How will you communicate the experience of the Banquet to your people? The banquet is found in the Spiritual Oasis.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 22: 15 – 22**

**The Key to this sermon is:**

Think through and ground the following:

- 1) The dimension of Caesar's influence. **Vs. 21a**
- 2) The dimension of God's influence. **Vs. 21b**
- 3) How do you experience authenticity?
- 4) Describe the authentically human person
- 5) Think through how WWJD describes Jesus' ethic by which we honor Caesar and God.
- 6) Describe how "God's way" is experienced. **Vs. 16b**
- 7) Ground how all this helps the concept of Christian integrity.

**The ONE THING to get said:**

We live in one world with two dimensions. One dimension is associated with Caesar. Another dimension is associated with God. (**Hint:** I found Paul's statement in Acts 17:28 very helpful. The dimension of God is the one ". . . in whom we live and move and have our being." In other words, our experience of God – and Caesar—is now. In fact, Jesus' point is that unless we are aware of both dimensions now we are not living a life of integrity.

Also, I found Marcus Borg's book on [The Heart of Christianity](#) very helpful at this point. His emphasis is on rediscovering the heart, or inward dimension as the inner experience of God. He describes this on pages 55ff as *The More*. Later, on pages 155ff, Borg describes our experience of *The More* as a "Thin Place." Beg or borrow this book – it's worth it.)

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 22: 15 – 22**

**The Season of KINGDOMTIDE.** The emphasis during Kingdomtide is on sanctification, or on how to live the Awakened life; sometimes sanctification is about living the holy life which is the Spiritual Oasis.

### **The Ways of God—**

In Vs. 16C, Jesus visitors affirm that he teaches the Ways of God, and the main point Jesus drives home in Vs. 21B is that we are to give to God what is Gods. The question becomes, "If I was walking down the street and observed what belonged to God, what would I observe?" I will see Awakened People taking responsibility for their neighbors, the environment, and all of creation.

What we give back to God is by choosing to 1) set aside our human independence for ego and greed, and 2) choose to live dependently on Love demonstrated by people fulfilling their intended creation by *living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.*

It is important that the person giving this sermon be able to illustrate this point, or the sermon will drift off into irrelevance. Those in the pew either will make assumptions about what this is, or simply not think about it. However, this is the point that Jesus wants to make.

Jesus is using a Jewish worldview in which God is the meaning of everything; everything is filled with God. God is the significance of who we are! Pastor Keith Schadel, writing in his Camp Lakeside newsletter "Ripples," observes, "When I think I'm my own person, or my family's, or my employer's, or anyone or anything else's but God's, I am lost. When I seek to serve myself, my family, my employer, or anyone or anything else for their/its own sake, and not God, I am lost." (*My emphasis.*)

### **The nature of The Truth (Goodness) that Jesus' teaches –**

*The things of God and the things of man:* Reality and The Truth often are two different things. I'm not referring to illusionary reality, or what we sometimes think we see like a desert reflection of water in the distance, but rather I'm referring to The Truth of what actually is of value, i.e., Goodness! A hot stove and a cold stove IS reality. However, The Truth is that there is more value (Good) to sit on a cold stove than there is in sitting on a hot stove. The Truth is a value proposition; i.e., Good ness.

Notice that this is not a moral proposition, but rather it is the indicative. The Truth that Jesus taught, and to which the Pharisees and the Herodians point, is such an indicative.

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It is of more value for humans to live the humane and gracious life than it is for us to live ego-driven, narcissistic and selfish lives. We fulfill our intended purpose in the former, and we are lost to God by living the latter.

### ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 22: 34 – 46

**The Key to this sermon is:** Define for yourself –

- 1) The Awakened Life and how Jesus illuminates this experience
- 2) The Jewish definition of "Messiah"
- 3) The Greek definition of "Christ"
- 4) How you describe the source of Jesus' authority
- 5) Describe the experience of standing in the presence of God. This is especially important to get illustrated.
- 6) Define the theological role of the Pharisees (Hint: remember they get a bad rap in the Gospels. They are like today's pillars of the church supporting the status quo; without them we have chaos; with them we get stagnant. In Gut Trip Analysis, they are the Awakened Ones through the influence of the 613 Laws of Moses.)

**The ONE THING to get said:**

Jesus gets his authority from standing in the presence of God which is the experience of full Awakening; i.e., the Spiritual Oasis.

### ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 22: 34 – 46

**The Key to this sermon is:**

**Summary:** Awakened People stand in the Presence of God. The surrendered life is obedient to our intended purpose to praise God.

**What do you think about the Christ?—**

It is necessary to clearly answer this question **before** starting on this sermon. To stir your own mental juices, I'm sharing with you my answer which depends on using Gut Trip Analysis and not Head Trip Analysis. Head Trip Analysis is the basic mistake that is

perpetuated for the last 500 years since the introduction of the Scientific Method that objectified Christian theology; all of our old Christian code words became objects to be studied and quantified; heaven is a place, and God is a mysterious object. The Jews never thought this way: heaven is a relationship that gives meaning to everything human, alive and environmental, and God is not mysterious but profoundly familiar and relational—this is why Jesus could call God “Father.”

The experience of Christ—an Awakening Event:

Note first off that “Christ” is not an object but an experience. Christ is an event; it is Saul being knocked off his horse and blinded in order that he is awakened to Christ's presence in his life. Usually, our first experience of Christ comes to us as an Awakening. At first we may not give this event this name, and we may never give it any name, however we experience a transforming event that awakens us to our **intended purpose**. It is important to note again that this transforming event may never be named, and it is not necessary that it be named anything!

However, the Christian tradition does have a name for it, and it is “The Christ Event.”

The experience of Christ -- our Intended Purpose:

Humans are created to “Praise God.” This is the traditional answer found in Luther's, “Small Catechism.” This is our intended purpose. However, it is more than just Sunday School and worship rituals. The way a Cow praises God is by fulfilling its intended creation of being a cow. The same is true of a bird, a tree or a rock. We humans fulfill our intended creation by living the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy.

Observe that it is impossible to be humane and gracious and not work for justice and mercy. Or, in reverse, it is not possible to do acts of justice and mercy without being humane and gracious. In the Christian tradition, we fulfill our intended purpose by surrendering our ego-independence in obedience to total dependence on God. This is what pleases God and makes God smile. *How do we know God smiles? God smiles when we live the humane and gracious life, and this is affirmed by our neighbors and spouses, and we have a deep sense of fulfillment and inner peace.* These are good first signs. There are other signs that we are pleasing God that do not depend on our feeling good or deeply satisfied, and I'll leave that for another time—unless you want to dialogue with me. In that case, send me an email to [wsalmon@cox.net](mailto:wsalmon@cox.net).

## Life in the Spiritual Oasis

The difficulty humans have in fulfilling our intended purpose is the presence of our ego. Sometimes, I draw the distinction between our natural selves created by Mother Nature in which we are concerned about some fundamentals like breathing, eating, procreating, safety, etc. These things are ego driven in order to be “self” sustaining.

However, humans are given soul selves by which we modify our ego-needs in order to live in community with others. I don’t have a right to pollute the air that others breathe, I can’t rape another person in order to satisfy my sexual needs, I can’t rob my neighbors watermelon patch because of my selfish hungers, etc. The soul becomes a conscience that makes us sociable.

This awakening to living the humane life is evidence of the Christ that lives within us.

The Inner Christ—Luther and John Wesley’s observation:

Christ is not something we gain, rather, Christ is something we are. Luther noted that we ARE LITTLE CHRISTS. Living with the potential to fulfill our intended purpose is something with which we are born. The difficulty is that we are asleep, in denial, or never get around to naming our experience the “Christ Experience.”

John Wesley observed that the human situation is that we are asleep to the reality that Christ already dwells within us. However, to make matters worse, the human predicament is that we can not awaken ourselves. The human condition is hopeless! Is there an answer?

Yes, there is an answer. The work of The Church is to awaken those who are still spiritually asleep; they are asleep to their soul; they are un-awakened; they have not looked into the spiritual mirror to discover they are Little Christs.

Of course, the work of the Church depends on it living the Awakened Life. Where the people slumber, there is no evangelism! This will explain some things for you, and will become the imperative of your ministry.

The imperative of our work depends on our **naming our human experience in the tradition of the Christian Church**. People are more awake than we give them credit. The Church is more awake than we give them credit. The missing link is we never get around to naming the good things we are doing with our Christian nomenclature. This is why every sermon grounds the Good News of Christ in the experience of those in the pew, and then names the experience using the Christian lexicon. Such as:

- 1) When we (or the church) are fun to live with, *we are experiencing Christ*;

- 2) When we (or the church) are tolerant of different races, cultures, genders and sexual orientations, *we are experiencing Christ*;
- 3) When we (or the church) move to meet human need, *we are experiencing Christ*;
- 4) When we fail to do these things, God cries, and we crucify Christ again.

The importance is to open our eyes and then to name what we see and what we do with an appropriate Christian code word. This is one of our most common failures as preachers; we ground and illustrate, but seldom remember to relate these ordinary human experiences back to the scriptures and Christian tradition. Of course, the opposite also is true; we name the old code words but fail to relate them to our human experience.

The problem of the Pharisees—

The problem of the Pharisees is not the objectification of their faith-understanding; they lived out of the Jewish mindset just like Jesus did. Their problem is they trivialized their experience through ritualization, and their dependence on “Historical Theology.” The Christ (Anointed One, Messiah) had to be of the Royal Line that began with King David. At first glance this not all that bad. David lived the Awakened Life; i.e., awakened to the Christ within him; this is what made him “royal.” On second reflection, they put Christ in a box. Unless the Christ was genetically associated with the “line of David” it couldn't be the Christ. This was a bad mistake and blinded them to the Christ that was being revealed through the life, ministry, and then the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Concerning Chapter 22: 34 – 40:

This is why Jesus' answer to the Pharisees' question, in today's lection reading, is so astonishing. The Pharisees must have felt they had his question locked up. Any child in Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah could answer the question concerning the 10 Commandments. But Jesus explodes our understanding of the rules concerning “honoring God and no idols,” and “being respectful of our neighbors.” Jesus tells us, we are to surrender our whole selves in love of God and love of neighbor. OK, think Mother Teresa as an example. The question for us becomes, “Are we up to it?”

The answer is easier than you think! In fact, the answer is inescapable. Go back and read the material about who we are and whose we are. The answer is becoming what we are created to be! That's it.

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Do we want to know what Christ looks like? Look at Jesus, and then begin to behave as WWJD. No ego! Total surrender! Obedient to God as Perfect Awakening! Absolute obedience! Sounds almost too tough to accomplish doesn't it? Not so much really. The tough part is giving up our egos—as witnessed in the Adam and Eve story/myth that explains why we got kicked out of living in the Presence of God because we missed the mark of living dependently on God.

### **ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 23: 1 – 12**

Ground the following:

- 1) Review this scripture in a commentary.
- 2) Clarify in your own mind why Jesus supports the teaching of the Pharisees but not their actions.
- 3) Vs. 9 -- Clarify the problem presented here. The commentaries I referenced indicate that Matthew is dealing with a local early-church problem. Check out the web.

### **The ONE THING to get said:**

The surrendered life is obedient to our intended purpose of being created to praise God.

### **ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 23: 1 – 12**

#### **Summary:**

How the door gets opened on the Spiritual Oasis.

#### **The teachings of the Pharisees:**

This is not an attempt to make a comprehensive analysis of the various principles embraced by the Pharisees. Usually, contemporary preachers give these early theologians a bad rap. In this case, Jesus gives us specific guidelines that we were to, "Do as they said, but not do as they did."

Using Gut Trip Analysis, the purpose of The Law, in all of its manifestations, was to Awaken people to live authentically. The difficulty is that our ego gets in the way of living generously and responsibly with neighbor, self, and finally with God that is experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment. We human beings are created for the purpose of "praising God;" this is the traditional response to the question in the catechism. In other



words, the purpose of the Law was to provide guidelines for living as responsible citizens; this means to render to Caesar the requirements of Caesar, as well as to give to God the things that are Gods. What belongs to God? We do. What is required of us? We are required to live surrendered and dependent on God. This is what Jesus is telling us about "obeying" the Pharisees.

The Gut Trip principles of living the righteous life are, 1) to live Awakened to our spiritual relationship with God; 2) to live in harmony with our intended creation, which is to be humane and gracious while working for justice and mercy; to live in At-One-Ment with neighbor/environment, to overcome our schizophrenia of self, and to live in harmony with God. In this way we fulfill the Divine Commandment.

**The scientific method of a) identifying our human experience, and b) then giving it a traditional Christian code name.**

In section III of today's sermon outline is an example of using a scientific formula for doing Gut Trip Analysis. From my perspective, this is one of the weaknesses I hear in most sermons. We take the lection reading for the Sunday, we pick up the theme and ground it, or illustrate it, or illuminate it. All this is fine and dandy. But, we've forgotten to related it back to, "This is what Jesus meant to say when he observed. . . ."

**Today's language—**

Take human fathers today. As a Jail Chaplain, it is a universal principle that young people in jail do not know their fathers; they were abandoned by them or abused by them. They are not good role models for ethical behavior. In this same vein, many people in the pew idolize their pastor by putting us on a pedestal. How many pastors complain about living in a "glass house;" I know my children all disliked the "fish bowl effect" of the ministry.

**The language of scripture—**

The response is not to depend on earthly models—unless they are examples of living the humane and gracious life. Then, the example is no longer earthly; it is a "heavenly" example. The ethical mirror for fatherhood is discovered in Jesus who is the little picture of what the Big Picture of Fatherhood looks like.

## LESSON 24: THE IN-BREAKING OF THE SPIRITUAL OASIS

TOPIC: MATTHEW 24: 28 – 25: 46, THE MORAL LESSONS

<b>Life in the Spiritual Oasis</b> <b>Matthew 12: 22 – 25: 46</b>		
<b>The Teacher's Handbook – Moral Lessons</b> <b>Matthew 20: 17 – 25: 46</b>		
<b>The cost and glory of teaching the Spiritual Oasis</b>	<b>Demonstrating the teacher's authority</b>	<b>The in-breaking of the Spiritual Oasis</b>
<b>Matthew 20 :16 – 21: 27</b>	<b>Matthew 21: 28 – 23: 39</b>	<b>Matthew 24: 1 – 25: 46</b>
<b>Lesson 22</b>	<b>Lesson 23</b>	<b>Lesson 24</b>

- I. Read the assigned reading at one time.
  
- II. **Note:** This study concerns the authority of the teacher who uses these three Teaching Handbooks on Transparent Ethics, The Spiritual Oasis, and Moral Lessons. The deep lesson in this session concerns the identification of the Spiritual Oasis; what is it that characterizes this spiritual—and moral—resource? As noted in the above chart, this is the third, and last, session in the Third Teacher's Handbook. The next four sessions (25 – 28) identify the nature of "The Transparent Experience." The 29<sup>th</sup> session is Jesus' commencement exercise.
  
- III. This section in Matthew is one of the most difficult parts of the New Testament, along with the Book of Revelation. Both documents are apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic material is associated with the "End of the Age," and this kind of literature is subject to the use of hidden language. Think for a moment about this illustration: In Russia, during the Communist times, a strict curfew kept people off of the street at night. One evening, the Bible Study at a neighbor's house was especially long, and a woman, on her way home, was stopped by a night guard and asked why she was out on the streets.

She replied, “Well, my *brother died* and I’ve been to a reading of *his will*.” To the secular guard, the woman was out late because she was visiting with her lawyer. To her Christian friends she was at a Bible study!

The meaning of things all depends upon the context! The significance of things depends on the use of metaphors.

**Context and significance.**

**Matthew 24 and 25** are this kind of literature. This section is like all of the apocalyptic material in the Bible: **Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation, along with a few places in Isaiah** (notably, **Isaiah 13: 10; 34: 4** as quoted in **Matthew 24: 29.**)

**WS:** Before we begin, I want to summarize the apocalyptic section of Matthew in this way. A “Gut Trip Analysis” of this paragraph suggests there are False Prophets promoting a false image of the Spiritual Oasis as a place reserved for special people who meet a litmus test. This is a false notion because the Spiritual Oasis already is within all of us. The Elect are awake to it, and those spiritually asleep are not. The Elect are not “special people,” they are those who are awake to claim their election to the Spiritual Oasis.

**Now think of context and significance:**

**Matthew 24: 30** raises the question, “if you were walking down the street and you saw the Son of Man coming on the clouds in the sky, what would you be seeing?”

**WS:** The expression “Son of Man” comes to us from the Book of Daniel where Daniel has a vision in which the “Son of Man” arrives riding on the clouds. Some scholars believe the male image in this phrase was useful to the Early Church to support the notion that Jesus was fully man and fully God. It is interesting to note in Matthew that Jesus uses this image in the same sentence about the visibility of lightning and the image of a dead carcass.

The concluding image in this paragraph is that of vultures gathering around a carcass. While it appears that Matthew couples both the deception of the viewer (in the desert and/or inner rooms) with what the 2nd Coming can be like, the paragraph context does not support this view. On closer examination, Matthew seems to say that such predictions of the 2nd Coming can be like a dead carcass. The “vultures” are the False Prophets.

## Life in the Spiritual Oasis

### The Context:

This material comes at the end of our section on The Teacher's Handbook – Part III: Moral Lessons. And, it comes before the next section on The Transparent Experience of preparing for the crucifixion, death and resurrection stories.

### The Significance:

The significance of this special material in Matthew is entirely metaphorical. For whatever reason, Matthew chooses to close out his teachings on "Moral Lessons," and to set the stage for his lessons on Spiritual Transparency, by using the metaphor on the End of the Age.

In our context, the "End of the Age" is the end of living asleep to the experience of living in the Spiritual Oasis. To this end, Jesus uses a metaphor that is recognized by those who ARE AWAKE! See **Vs. 24: 2**, ". . . not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

**WS:** The "Gut level experience" of this statement is that those things preventing the Good News of the opening of the Spiritual Oasis are now destroyed. Jesus life and ministry demonstrates this truth.

### *The Disciples ask for a sign—*

Jesus continues to point to himself: I am the sign!

The purpose of all this is in **Vs. 24:31**, is "to gather the Awakened!" Immediately after this statement Jesus follows it with the "lesson of the fig tree" (**Vs. 24: 2 – 35**). Look at the signs of the times to determine if "summer" is near. What is the experience of summer but a time of refreshment and delight?

The one caveat that is necessary. Tim La Haye gets this material wrong in his series of books on the "Left Behind" series. He treats this material as "scare-the-hell-out-of-em" threats: "Get right with God or be left behind for eternity."

**WS:** This interpretation is unfortunate, because it supports the notion that the Spiritual Oasis (Kingdom of Heaven) is a place instead of a relationship, and that the Spiritual Oasis is reserved for special people instead of a place in which all already live. This is why it is necessary to take a positive view and report the importance of "loving people into the kingdom—the Spiritual Oasis." Beside this his definition of "eternity" as

a place is way off base. Only God is eternal, and it is only as we have a relationship to God who is experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment do we live in an “eternal relationship.”

**Matthew records two other dynamics: How to identify False Prophets, and how to identify The Elect.**

**False Prophets**—are those who “appear to betray and deceive.” They convince us that our human situation is our problem and not our relationship to our situations. In a word, they are about convicting us as Victims and not Victors. False Prophets are those who preach the antithesis of At-One-Ment, and their “love grows cold” (Vs. 24: 12). Jesus warns us in Vs. 24: 28 that the vultures will gather to eat on the carcass of those who are convicted as Victims. The False Prophets are the doomsayers.

**WS:** How can we identify who are the False Prophets? The Bible Study participants struggled with this at length. Our conclusions were that False Prophets are those whose activities and actions are the antithesis of At-One-Ment; they are the ones who convince us we are victims to our situations and circumstances. While it is true that our circumstances can victimize us, the Awakened are those who have a choice either to be victims or victors.

**The Elect**—are those who are Awake to the power of living in the Spiritual Oasis. For those living in the Spiritual Oasis “our distress is shortened” (Vs. 24: 22), and we are those who “stand firm to the end will be (saved) awakened in the Spiritual Oasis.”

**WS:** Again, the Bible Study participants struggled with this. Our conclusions were that the Elect are those who live out of a stance of possibility rather than impossibility. They are the hopeful part of society, and those who work on At-One-Ment in all things. One further conclusion is that The Elect and the False Prophets are described in the parables recorded in the **25th Chapter of Matthew**.

Jesus ends this chapter by forth-telling us the immediacy of this awakening. “I tell you this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened” (NIV – Vs. 24: 32 – 35).

**WS:** This prediction is confusing to scholars. Elsewhere, Jesus says that he will return before the Temple is destroyed stone-by-stone. This took place in 70 C.E. So, what’s the problem? Did Jesus make it back, and no one recognized him? Perhaps. Certainly, there are those who still anticipate his 2nd Coming. Others understand this

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anticipation as metaphorical. Others, myself among them, believe this is God's immanence; i.e., God always is awakening us.

Watchfulness is required because the Spiritual Oasis is already with us, unless we are blind to it. In **Vs. 24: 36 to 51**, Matthew notes the importance of waking up; just like Noah awakened to the fact he was not a victim to the rain. Instead, he is celebrated as a victor.

### **IV. Use the material in Matthew 25 to ground the conversation above.**

#### **1. Vs. 25: 1 – 13: The Parable of the Ten Virgins**

##### **What is the Context?**

**WS:** The context concerns how to stay awake or go back into spiritual sleep. The Elect are those who work to stay awake. False prophets are those whose purpose it to convince us that we are victims of our circumstances.

##### **What is the Significance?**

**WS:** The significance is for those who are Awake (The Elect) to always be prepared through bible study, regular attendance at worship, study, and frequent use of the sacraments, accept enlightened/Awakened mentors and leaders, and bear the fruit of their faith in acts of justice and kindness.

##### **What is it that is keeping half of the maidens asleep?**

**WS:** They chose to neglect their preparation and the fruit of their decision is that they miss living in the Spiritual Oasis. The caveat is to observe that these women are not being punished. Instead, they are receiving the reward of their deeds.

##### **What is their fate?**

**WS:** In this instance, the word "fate" is inappropriate. Fate implies we have no choice; i.e., we are fated to be men and not women. In this instance, the women—both those prepared and unprepared—are receiving the fruit of their efforts.

#### **2. Vs. 25: 14 – 30: The Parable of the Talents**

##### **What is the Context?**

**WS:** Again, this parable supports the End of the Age material in Matthew 24. The context is faithfulness, or in “Gut Trip” terminology, surrender of all that you are given.

### **What is the Significance?**

**Vs. 25: 29, 30** are poignant, “Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance.” In the Spiritual Oasis, the more aware we are the more we have. The unfortunate aspect of this parable is that the more Asleep we are the less we have of the Spiritual Oasis. Also, those who are asleep experience their human situation as, “darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” In a word, their experience is victimization. The TV game show, “Wheel of Fortune,” plays by these same rules; the more you have the more you have the chance to win.

### **3. Vs. 25: 31 – 46: The Parable of the Sheep and Goats?**

#### **What is the Context?**

**WS:** How is the third parable supporting the “End of the Age” material? One Bible Study participant observed that, “sheep are led, while goats are driven.” We consider Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is the one who sets the example for us to follow, so we must be sheep instead of goats. The key verse in this section is **Vs. 25: 34ff.** “Come, you who are blessed (Awakened) by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom, (The Spiritual Oasis) prepared for you since the creation of the world.”

Observe two things about this verse. First, the kingdom is our inheritance—we’re a part of the family of those living in the Spiritual Oasis. Second, the Spiritual Oasis is already ours “since the creation of the world.” All we do is to claim it, which means we awaken to it and accept its reality.

#### **What is the Significance?**

**WS:** How do we go about claiming it? Ah, this is the easy part. We claim it by serving the hungry and thirsty, the stranger, the naked, and those in prison. As we serve these people we are serving Christ! What is the difference between serving and not serving? It is the difference between waking up in the Spiritual Oasis and not waking up in it.

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### A. ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 24: 35–44

**The Main Point:** Watchfulness is required because the KOG (or the Spiritual Oasis) already is within us, unless we are blind to it. In Vs. 24: 35 – 51, Matthew notes the importance of waking up, just like Noah awakened to the fact he was not a victim to the rain. Instead, he is celebrated as a victor.

### B- ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 24: 36–44

#### The apocalyptic nature in Matthew---

At this point in the Gospel of Matthew presents us with a lot of apocalyptic material. When you think deeply about the nature of the Incarnation then it is appropriate we begin Advent in this way. A “Gut Trip Analysis” of this material suggests there are false prophets promoting an illusionary image of the Kingdom of God which is where we experience the **deeply satisfied life**. The false image is that the Kingdom is reserved for special people who meet specialized criteria.

**The Elect**, in **Matthew 24: 22** are those who are awake to it, and the **Spiritually Asleep** are not. The Elect are not special people,” they are those who are awake to claim their election to live in the Spiritual Garden where the deeply satisfied life is experienced. Every one of us are the elect. Just as the Cow fulfills its intended purpose, so it is when humans fulfill our intended purpose we are The Elect.

#### The use of apocalyptic images---

This section of Matthew is one of the most difficult parts of the New Testament, along with the Book of Revelations. Both documents are apocalyptic literature and associated with the “End of the Age.” In Gut Trip Analysis it is helpful to remember that Jesus the Christ is The End, just as he is The Beginning. For me the significance of this special material is entirely metaphorical.

In Gut Trip Analysis, the End of the Age is the end of living asleep to the experience of living in the Garden of Awakening. To this end Jesus uses a metaphor that is recognized by those who ARE AWAKE! See Vs. 24: 2, “. . . not one stone here will be left on another, every one will be thrown down.” In the Gut Trip experience these points to



those things preventing the Good News; the opening of the Spiritual Garden (the Kingdom of God; i.e., the Spiritual Oasis) is now destroyed. Jesus' life and ministry demonstrates this truth. The Disciples ask for a sign and Jesus points to himself: "I am the sign!"

### The "Son of Man"---

The phrase, "The Son of Man," mentioned in **Vs. 37B**, refers to an image from Daniel (OT apocalyptic material). Some sources believe the gospel writers use this image to support the idea of Jesus' humanity in addition to his living the awakened life; i.e., his divinity.

### Thinking like a Jew---

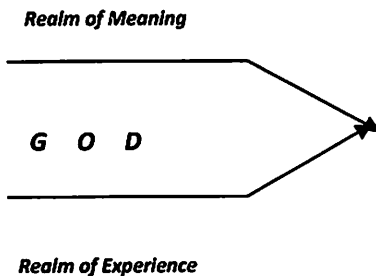
*God is not an absent part:*

In order to make sense of apocalyptic material it is necessary to think like a Jew. For the Jew everything is filled with God; God is as close as our breath—breathe in and breathe out and we are experiencing God. In Genesis 1, God breathes into the human creature the breath of life (**Gen. 2:7**). Consequently, God is not something from which we are absent. The only way this is possible is for humans to be in denial, to be ignorant, or to be forgetful, all of which we frequently experience.

*Heaven is not a place:*

The following is an illustration of :

### ***The Jewish Experience***



Hebrew theology is experiential, existential and relational. Of course these are the principles of Gut Trip Analysis. First, **God** is not absent but is that which fills everything just as the Garden metaphor tells the story of how God took earth and breathed into a soul.

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However, there is a **Realm of Meaning** that is considered “up there;” however, this “up there” is not heaven in the Greek sense of the word. Heaven, in this way, is not a place but the on-going “**Realm of Meaning.**” Concerning the **Realm of Experience:** When a Jew hit his finger with a hammer; the first response is to reach up into the realm of meaning (yet still present in the middle of God’s breath) and ask what is the lesson here, what is God trying to teach me? *The lesson is that the pain is a reminder that we belong to God.* This is why I teach my members to say, “Thank You!” when they hit their thumbs or stub their toe.

### ***The lesson to be learned:***

Consequently, when we hit our thumb with a hammer *we use the pain to remind us that we belong to God.* Every human experience has a similar result so that everything is experienced within the realm of God.

### **Imminent and Immanent--- (This is very interesting!)**

*Imminent*, according to the Webster’s Dictionary, means, “ready to take place, esp. hanging threateningly over one’s head:” IMPENDING. *What is impending is the “Deeply satisfied life.”*

*Immanent*, according to the Webster’s Dictionary, means, “remaining or operating within a domain of reality or realm of discourse: INHERENT. Theologically, when something is immanent it is revealing something about its character; i.e., the cow is inherently a cow because it reveals its creation nature. What is true of the cow also is true of humans. But our problem is self-consciousness, the foundation of free will, that allows us to be in denial, or to choose to be less than we are created to be; i.e., inhumane or the antithesis of our creation to live the humane and gracious life. *What is inherent with us is the “Deeply satisfied life.”*

*In the theology of imminence* both of these definitions come into play. What is “immanent” or inherent within us is threatening or impending to take place. This is the nature of apocalypticism. The Gospel writers use this as a method to illustrate both the impending breakthrough that will come to us in the incarnation, but also to illuminate that what is coming is inherent with us already. *This is the message of Advent and much of the message of Lent; Jesus become transparent and is revealed within us.*

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 25: 1 – 16**

Kergma and Didache seem in two different disciplines. However, in the last 10 years, there is a hunger on the part of laity to be taught while we preach. In my jargon this is, "Teach the Preach," instead of, "Preach the Teach." Or, in other words, teach, teach, teach as you preach, preach, preach. Try it, your people will like it!

**The ONE THING to get said:** In the "midnight" experiences, prepare yourselves to persevere for the hope that is just around the corner. It is imminent!

**A reflection on today's scripture:**

Beginning in **chapter 24**, the overall purpose of Matthew is the anticipation of the End Times (eschatology) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming (parousia). For our purposes, the last three sermons before Advent prepare us to see the relationship of the Birth of Jesus as an illustration or a metaphor for our own rebirth of faith. Last week's sermon over the 10 Virgin Bridesmaids, today's sermon over the Talents, and next week's sermon over the Sheep and the Goats are for this very purpose.

**The Theological focus:**

Faith as surrender. Faithfulness, when understood as surrender to God, is experienced as wholeness, health and the fulfillment of our intended humanness.

**The Key to this sermon is:**

Define the following:

1) **The Talent.** This is one of those words that gets taken literally instead of metaphorically. It is a mistake to understand this word as one of our "gifts," such as music, or preaching, or athleticism. Metaphorically it represents our intended creation as "praisers of God," or as followers of The Way. The only way the word "Talent" makes sense is to explain what happens to the wicked servant. Also, this understanding affirms that as we use what is given to us prepares us to have more. Perhaps, the axiom, "Use it or lose it" can help.

2) **Vs. 26 – 30:** Decide what is the significance of these verses, and be able to share your views with your people.

**The Theological focus:** Faith as surrender. Faithfulness, when understood as surrender to God is experienced as wholeness, health and the fulfillment of our intended humanness.

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### ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 25: 1 – 13 “The Parable of the 10 Virgins”

#### Clarify in your own mind the following:

*Kingdom of Heaven* -- In Gut Trip Analysis this defines the place for the party.

*End Times* – Eschatology, or the surprise God always has waiting for us.

*Second Coming* – Parousia, or the unexpected, yet expected, awakening.

*The hope* that is found in our despair (in our midnight experiences – Vs. 6).

#### Identify these metaphors associated with this scripture:

**Vs. 1** -- Who are the virgins?

**Vs. 2, 3, 4** -- What is the significance of the oil?

**Vs. 5** -- Who is the Bridegroom?

**Vs. 10** -- What does the Wedding Banquet represent?

**Vs. 10b** -- What does the Closed Door represent?

#### Consider the following:

Eschatology— This is the study of “Last Things.” The shortest way to embrace this concept is to remember that, “Jesus (Christ ) is the last thing.” Gut Trip Analysis is a big help to any theological concept because it takes the indicative seriously; it takes the world seriously. It is in good company here, because our Christian tradition reports that at Christmas God took the world seriously.

Think of the image of the Cross **standing between** this very moment in which we live while **standing before** the next future moment. Now, pull any and all events and circumstances through Jesus Christ. What you have done is one of the “Last Things.” Suddenly, it is important, not theoretical, and it is relevant.

The problem with Head Trip Analysis is that eschatology becomes something to study that gets entangled with theories, and this makes it something that can take place only after it meets certain litmus tests; suddenly the theory is irrelevant.

Parousia--- Like the term eschatology, the term parousia is traditionally understood to imply the Second Coming of Christ. As a Gut Trip Analyst, I've never been sure when Christ left so He/She could come again.

Head Trip Analysis treats this topic as a theory to be explored rather than as something to be experienced each and everyday of our lives. It is at this point, and others like them, that we get into splitting hairs about pre-millennial, post-millennial, and utopian experiences. The point of this is that whatever comes to pass during these times, Christ reigns.

That Christ reigns is something I can affirm. The more we Awaken to the experience that Christ is in the center of things, and that we pull our lives through him, the presence of Christ could not be more present or more imminent. But, tipping our hat in the direction of tradition, it can be affirmed that Christ always has been, is now present, and it is anticipated that the Christ always will be. To that degree it can be said that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming comes often.

*The ONE THING to get said:*

When each individual prepares him or her-self to persevere through the "midnight" experiences, then its party time.

*The EXISTENTIAL AIM:*

Like death, we each prepare alone.

**Pre-Itch:**

Read or sing the old camp song, "Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning, burning, burning. Give me oil in my lamp, I pray. Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning, burning, burning. Keep me burning 'til the break of day." *Implied:*

We need the oil during our midnight experiences. When we get enough oil in our jars to persevere, then suddenly it is, "the break of day."

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### ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 25: 14 - 30

#### *The ONE THING to get said:*

The more we surrender, the more we have a sense of fulfillment.

#### *The ONE EMOTION to share:*

Living humanely results in the blessed assurance experienced as a peace of mind that we are doing the right thing.

### ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 25: 14–30

#### **Concerning today's lection:**

The chart notes that the major purpose of Matthew is to teach us how to teach others about moral lessons; that is to learn to live the Awakened Life. In Gut Trip Analysis, morality is not doing naughty or nice; rather it is fulfilling our intended purpose of living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy. Instead of an ethic of moralism, Gut Trip is an indicative ethic; this ethic is concerned about fulfilling our intended purpose.

#### **The Judgment—**

As I've shared in other contexts, judgment is one of the most misunderstood concepts in Christian theology. Judgment is misconstrued as a moral judgment on being naughty or nice. Gut Trip Analysis treats this as an indicative ethic, or an ontological statement. God's judgment always is about fulfilling our intended purpose of living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy. When we fall short, the judgment is that our neighbors don't like us, and we feel bad about ourselves. This experience is Tough Love, or God's Wrath. The axiom is, "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself." When our deeds support justice and mercy, the reward is people are pleased, and God is pleased. When our deeds fail in this direction, the reward is people are hurt, we are disappointed in ourselves, and God cries.

#### **Faithful and unfaithful--**

Faithfulness is something WE ARE, and not just something we do. We do good deeds because of who we are. The emphasis is on our created purpose. By tradition, Martin

Luther's "Small Catechism," responds to the question, "What is the purpose of being human?" The answer is, "To praise God."

How do we praise God? Often I begin by illustrating that a Cow always is a Cow, and it is in its "cowness" that God is praised; it fulfills its intended purpose. The same is true for a Rock, or a Tree, or anything else in creation. It is only we humans, because of our SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS that struggle with our intended purpose. This is clearly illustrated in the Garden Story where Adam and Eve choose their independence from God, rather than to be dependent on God. To be faithful is to live dependently on God. To be unfaithful is to remain in the illusion of our independence from God.

*Unfaithfulness and fear:*

It is clear that the Servant Investor with the one Talent was unfaith because he was fearful. Fear is a common human experience, and there is nothing naughty about the emotion. However, it is when we experience this human emotion that it is the reminder to continually throw ourselves—to take the leap of faith—into the waiting arms of God. In today's lection, this is why God is disappointed. Actually, the servant doesn't have to be "thrown" anywhere as he already is living in darkness, and his experience is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The clear lesson is when we experience life lived in darkness, and when our human situation overwhelms us so that we are crying and grinding our teeth, we are failing to fulfill our purpose of "praising God," or of fulfilling our intended purpose of living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.

**The Theological focus:**

Faith as surrender or dependence on God: Faithfulness, when understood as surrender to God is experienced as wholeness, health and the fulfillment of our intended humanness. This is the antithesis of "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

**The ONE THING to get said:**

The more we live in the Kingdom of Heaven the less we weep and gnash our teeth.

**Pre-Itch:**

Tell a poignant story about making God happy! Gut Trip Analysis promotes the experience that when we are living in At-One-Ment with neighbor and self, we are

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making God happy. We make God happy by fulfilling our intended purpose of living the humane and gracious life *while working for justice and mercy.*

### ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 25: 31 - 46

#### A reflection on today's scripture:

Chapters 24 and 25 in Matthew are apocalyptic; i.e., they concern the Last Things (eschatology), and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming (parousia). To understand the significance of these two dynamics it is necessary to know this historical situation. The Gospel of Matthew is written around the 80's C.E. This is about 50 years after Jesus death and resurrection, and 10 years after the fall of the Temple in 70 C.E. by the Romans. Before Jesus died, he predicted that he would return before the Temple was torn down.

This delay, in particular after the Temple's destruction, caused consternation and some angst in the Early Church. Consequently, Matthew gives us three parables. These are introduced by two pericopes on the "Signs of the End of the Age in Matthew 24: 1 – 35 (eschatology), and "The Day and Hour Unknown (Parousia) in Matthew 24: 36 – 51). The three parables are: Matthew 25:1-13, "The Parable of the Ten Virgins," Matthew 25: 14 – "The Parable of the Talents," and today's Gospel reading "The Sheep and the Goats," in Matthew 25: 31 – 46.

#### The Theological focus:

Fulfillment of our intended human purpose -- to be humane

#### The Key to this sermon is:

As always, the danger is Head Trip Analysis that answers the question of, "What do I know about this word?" To ground each word ask yourself, "What is my experience of this word?" Ground the following words before you start preparing this sermon:

1) **Vs. 34a – The King's realm, or the Kingdom:** (Hint: One seminarian identified the experience of the Kingdom as the "kin-dom." I like this definition because it takes us away from the kingdom as a place, an idea, or an object. Also, in this way, the kingdom is not a political definition. The Kingdom is the experience of a relationship; we are kin with God. Dare we call God, "Papa?")

2) **Vs. 31b -- Heavenly Glory:** (Hint: think relationally: What is your experience of the heavenly? Don't make this difficult. What is your experience of glory?)



3) **Vs. 34b -- Blessed:** (Hint: Think “glory,” or how do we humans bring glory to God. Watch for the answer. Jesus tells us *four times* in this parable.)

4) **Vs. 40 -- Eternal punishment:** (Hint: What is the experience of living without God?)

5) **Vs. 40 -- Eternal life:** (Think: The opposite of eternal punishment.)

*The ONE THING to get said:*

We fulfill our intended purpose when we care for the least, the last and the lost.

*The ONE EMOTION to share:*

Working for service and for justice results in a deep sense of satisfaction which is the theological experience of standing in the presence of God.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – MT. 25: 31 – 46**

### **Christ the King**

During the first 1500 years of Christian history, words and phrases like this were understood because of the political reference point that could be up-lifted into a spiritual understanding. Today, I don't even like the word “up-lifted” because of the overtones of Head Trip Analysis that speaks of Heaven, or God's Kingdom as some separate realm; it is not; the Kingdom of God is found with in us. Unfortunately, Christ as King gets the same treatment.

Answer the Gut Trip Analysis question of, “Who is Christ the King?” Now we can be quick to answer, Christ is the demonstration of Awakening, the one by whom we judge our own state of Awakening – it can be said that we measure (rule – get it?) ourselves by the Awakened Christ.

### **The Parable of The Sheep and the Goats: 25: 31 – 46**

Rightly understood through Gut Trip Analysis, the lectionary is setting the stage as our pre-preparation for Advent and Christmastide. These three parables tell the story about how Christ comes (a 2<sup>nd</sup> time) into our lives over and over again. The Incarnation is our eschatology; always this comes to us as a surprise!

**Blessed by the Father, Vs. 34**

The word “blessed” is another one of those blessed words that create struggle using Head Trip Analysis. “Blessed” often is translated as “happy,” which is true of the way the Beatitudes use the term. In Gut Trip Analysis, the only thing that makes us happy is when we are fulfilling our intended creation. When a cow fulfills its purpose, God is happy, and when God is happy, then the cow is happy. The same can be said for we humans; when we fulfill our intended creation to live the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy, then God is happy, and when God is happy we are too.

1) **Vs. 34A -- The King’s realm, or the Kingdom:**

Gut Trip treats this word or phrase as the experience of living the Awakened life concerning our dependence on God. When we are awakened to this experience, it is then that we are living in the Kingdom.

2) **Vs. 31B -- Heavenly Glory:** Hint: think relationally:

What is your experience of **the heavenly**? Heaven always is the experience of living in God’s presence. We know we are in the presence of God when we have a deep sense of satisfaction, and we feel that we “have ourselves together.”

What is your experience of **glory**? Glory is the third doctrine in the line of justification (getting awakened), sanctification (embracing the awakened life), and glorification (surrendering our “good, bad and the ugly” in total dependence on God!)

3) **Vs. 34B -- Blessed:** (Hint: Think “glory,” or how do we humans bring glory to God. Watch for the answer. Jesus tells us **four times** in this parable.) Traditionally, this word is translated as happiness.” What makes us deeply satisfied is fulfilling our intended purpose of living the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy. This answer is very appropriate for this particular sermon.

4) **Vs. 40 -- Eternal punishment:** This is the experience of living unaware of the nearness of God.

5) **Vs. 40 -- Eternal life:** This is the opposite of eternal punishment.

**The Theological focus:**

The anticipation of fulfilling our intended purpose as human and gracious people

**The EXISTENTIAL AIM:**

As we awaken spiritually then we *Awaken* to Christ the King who always resides inside us; always has and always will. The only requirement is to open our eyes and ears to see, hear and experience it.

## SECTION V: THE TEACHER'S REWARD

### LESSON 25: PREPARING FOR DEATH

TOPIC: MATTHEW 26: 1 - 16, THE TRANSPARENT EXPERIENCE

<b>A Partial Summary Chart of the Gospel of Matthew          "A Training Manual For Teaching The Transparent Sanctified Life"</b>			
<b>The Teacher's Reward          Matthew 26: 1 – 28: 15</b>			
<b>The Teacher's Handbook – The Transparent Experience          Matthew 26: 1 – 28: 15</b>			
<b>Preparing for death</b>	<b>Transparent food for the Spiritual Oasis</b>	<b>The Way Life Is (TWLI)</b>	<b>The Transparent Even</b>
<b>26: 1 – 16</b>	<b>26: 17 – 30</b>	<b>26: 31 – 27: 31</b>	<b>27: 32 – 28: 15</b>
<b>Lesson 25</b>	<b>Lesson 26</b>	<b>Lesson 27</b>	<b>Lesson 28</b>

**Note:** This study concerns the teacher who uses these **three Teaching Handbooks** on Transparent Ethics, The Spiritual Oasis, and Moral Lessons. The deep lesson in this session concerns the identification of the Spiritual Oasis; what is it that characterizes this spiritual—and moral—resource? As noted in the chart, this is the first session in the 7<sup>th</sup> arena titled, "The Teacher's Reward." The next four sessions (# 25 – #28) identify the nature of "The Transparent Experience." The 29<sup>th</sup> session is Jesus' commencement exercise.

- 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.

This seventh arena of our study supports "The Transparent Experience." Interestingly enough, the Gospel of Matthew begins this part of our study in the "Preparation for Death."

**III. As you do the following assignment, put on your spiritual glasses to see absolute wonder begin to unfold. Then, listen with your best spiritual ears to the absolute and awe-filled silence of what is happening here AND WHY!**

The setting for this drama is "Passover." For the ancient Hebrew slaves in Egypt this is the defining moment of their individual and communal lives—from the moment that death passes over the land, saving the Hebrew people this people is no longer "on vacation" but are moving "toward home." This ancient experience is a foreshadowing (or a prolepsis) of what will take place in Jesus Christ (Son of Man). As Moses led the Old Humans (the old Adam) *HOME*, Jesus leads the New Humans (The new Adam) *HOME*.

**As this event takes place we no longer see the images of transparency projected on the screen of our life, but WE BECOME THE TRANSPARENT IMAGE OF GOD'S CREATION; we become AT-ONE with the Spiritual Oasis. This is full transformation! But it takes a death to get there—the death of our- "selves!"**

**By the way, this is what the church always calls "GLORIFICATION."**

Now, with this in mind, please do some commentary research on the following topics:

**1. Passover—speculate on how this ancient celebration sets the stage for our glorification.**

**WS:** Passover, in the Hebrew Scriptures, is a foreshadowing of the crucifixion and resurrection in the Christian scriptures. For the Jews, Passover is a defining event for them as a nation. The people of the "old Adam" were led to freedom from slavery; i.e., in a word, this act was for their "salvation." Death passed over the houses in Egypt and the firstborn children living in those houses died unless the blood of the lamb was painted on their doorposts. Observe, the whole nation of Israel becomes the transparency of salvation.

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An "event" happened, blood was shed on their behalf, they experienced a type of baptism crossing the Red Sea, they ate Manna as a type of Holy Supper, and they were led HOME into the Promised Land (the Spiritual Oasis).

*As Christians, our Passover is the same series of actions. An "event" happens, blood is shed on our behalf, we experience baptism, we eat a holy meal, and we are awakened to our HOME in the Kingdom of Heaven (the Spiritual Oasis).*

**2. Son of Man---In this setting, why does Matthew pick up, again, this particular phrase from Daniel?**

**WS:** When Jesus uses this phrase, it emphasizes his humanness. On the other hand, Son of God emphasizes his divine aspects. Matthew emphasizes the human aspects in support of the "transparent experience" to which all humans are heir. Like the ancient Jews, as we experience the transforming event of the resurrection, then we are the transparent emulsion through which the spiritual light illuminates our relationship to the Spiritual Oasis. As this happens, we experience glorification.

**3. Anointment (in this instance with perfume)---In general, what is the role of "anointment" and how is it used in the New Testament? Jesus tells us the significance of this event in Vs. 26: 12, 13. To what end does Matthew use this material at this place in his gospel? Speculate on the importance of "anointment" for us as contemporary Christians.**

**WS:** Literally, anointment is the application of oil to a body. What it symbolizes is the setting aside of an individual for a particular purpose. To this end, the religious, priests, ministers/pastors are set aside from society to be God's representatives. This goes back to the division of labor in the twelve tribes of Israel, the Levite Tribe was anointed for this purpose. In the experience described in Matthew, the importance of this symbol is related to the significance of the act Jesus was about to experience in the cross and resurrection.

*Observe that Jesus indicates his anointment by Mary Magdalene is in preparation for his death. The significance for us that that as we are joined in a death like Christ's death (through baptism and/or confession) we die to being "on vacation" and awaken to the life of living "at Home."*

**4. Simon the Leper—Speculate on the significance of Jesus eating with the family of this social outcast.**

**WS:** The commentaries are of two minds about this event. One commentary speculates on the translation of the word “leper” that also can be “potter.” In this instance, Jesus may be in the home of Simon the Potter. This is likely since lepers were not allowed to their homes. Also, it is doubtful that even a healed leper would have the resources to buy a home. Other commentaries speculate that this event may be in the home of Simon the leper whom Jesus healed.

*Under any circumstances, Jesus’ association with the outcasts of society is an illustration of the Good News that is the product of the impending death and resurrection. The Good News is that we are not victims of our circumstances, rather we are victors. In other words, the circumstances of our lives are not transformed, we are transformed; i.e., our relationship to our circumstances is transformed because we are transformed!!*

*One writer observed that Jesus, who was great, chose to make himself nothing: he existed with the Creator, but chose to become a creature; he lived in a mansion in glory, but chose to be born in a manger; he lived in fellowship with the Father, but chose to be in fellowship with prostitutes, lepers and outcasts. While I like this illustration, as you might guess it troubles me because of its use of old images understood as objects to be studied rather than experiences: creator, mansion in glory, holy Father.*

**5. Judas Iscariot—In light of this drama, Judas plays the double role of helping us set the context for the Transparent Experience," and then pushes the drama onto the next act on our stage. Share some of your insights with us.**

**WS:** Why did Matthew include this section in his writings, particularly at this place? Of course this sets the stage for the betrayal. However, the significance of Judas’ betrayal is its emphasis on greed. Greed can be associated with living On Vacation; i.e., he is un-awakened to the Spiritual Oasis.

**6. 30 silver coins—This is a symbolic amount. What can you find in your commentaries, and can what you find be applied to our drama of transparency.**

**WS:** Some commentaries note the contrast of the extravagance of the amount of money in comparison of the extravagance of the cross and resurrection. Thirty silver coins represent four months salary. Another commentary notes that thirty silver coins

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was the amount due as compensation of the loss of a slave. Also, the betrayal fulfills the prophecy made in **Zechariah 11: 12**.

*This event convicts us all, since it is a common occurrence for us to choose life on vacation instead of the authentic life on the **Spiritual Oasis**.*

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – THERE ARE NO SERMON STARTER OR LECTIONARY REFERENCES FOR THIS SCRIPTURE!**



# LESSON 26: TRANSPARENT FOOD FOR THE SPIRITUAL OASIS

TOPIC: MATTHEW 26: 17 – 30, THE TRANSPARENT EXPERIENCE

<b>The Teacher's Reward Matthew 26: 1 – 28: 15</b>			
<b>The Teacher's Handbook – The Transparent Experience Matthew 26: 1 – 28: 15</b>			
Preparing for death	<b>Transparent food for the Spiritual Oasis</b>	The Way Life Is (TWLI)	The Transparent Even
26: 1 – 16	<b>26: 17 – 30</b>	26: 31 – 27: 31	27: 32 – 28: 15
<b>Lesson 25</b>	<b>Lesson 26</b>	<b>Lesson 27</b>	<b>Lesson 28</b>

**Note:** This study concerns the teacher who uses these **three Teaching Handbooks** on Transparent Ethics, The Spiritual Oasis, and Moral Lessons. The deep lesson in this session concerns the identification of the Spiritual Oasis; what is it that characterizes this spiritual—and moral—resource? As noted in the above chart, this is the first session in the 7<sup>th</sup> arena titled, “The Teacher’s Reward.” The next four sessions (# 25 – #28) identify the nature of “The Transparent Experience.” The 29<sup>th</sup> session is Jesus’ commencement exercise.

- I. Read the assigned reading at one time.
  
- II. In this section, the Lord’s Supper stands alone because of its uniqueness. Baptism and Holy Communion are intimately tied together, and represent the two symbols called sacraments in the mainline Protestant Churches as Holy Communion and Eucharist. Other names associated with the sacrament of Holy Communion are Holy Mystery or Holy Supper. All of these names are descriptions of ways to understand this experience. The Catholic Church (Roman and Eastern) has seven sacraments. Interestingly, the United Brethren Church adds the sacrament of Foot Washing.

**III. Your assignment is the following:**

**1. Reflect on your experience of Holy Communion. Please share your insights with us.**

**WS:** I prefer the term Holy Communion because it reflects a deeper level of relationship with the Body of Christ, and with individual communicants. Also, this term implies a spiritual connection with God as Perfect At-One-Ment.

My experience of Holy Communion is that it reflects the story of my life. To this end, my ritual with each communicant is, "This is the story of my life," and the response is, "This is the story of my life renewed."

This holy meal has roots in Judaism's understanding of covenant. King David, when he was a small boy had a unique relationship with Jonathan. Many of the rituals of covenanting have their origins around this relationship. It is believed they ritualized their relationship by cutting their hands, and then joining hands to commingle their blood; in this way they became "blood brothers;" they were in "communion" with each other. It is this "sharing of blood" that Christians ritualize in communion.

There are other aspects of the "blood covenant" that also are reflected in our communion ritual, the breaking of bread and the spilling of wine. Our Christian tradition picks up on this at wedding receptions during which the newly weds cut the cake and feed each other, and then drink wine or juice with linked arms. In this way they are ritualizing covenant—a serious commitment experience in the "eating of each other's body, and the drinking of each other's blood." This activity foreshadows Holy Communion.

**2. What is the significance of the broken bread? To what human experiences can this be related?**

**WS:** One aspect of my life is the experience of brokenness. My life is broken. This is reflected in my own self-depreciation and daydreaming. In the understanding of the blood covenant, brokenness is our fate as human beings—I am fated to be male, others are fated to be females. Fate describes The Way Life Is (TWLI); this is our state of being human.

However, when our brokenness is surrendered (poetry—"into the arms of God") into the presence of Perfect At-One-Ment we experience the transformation of our

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brokenness into spiritual nourishment. This is the experience of awakening to the Spiritual Oasis. Holy Communion ritualizes this experience of transformation.

**3. What is the significance of the spilled juice? To what human experience can this be related?**

**WS:** A second aspect of my human experience is that my life is expended; it is spilled out! At conception we are given all of the life we are going to have. At birth, life begins to be spilled out until one day we experience the last drop. When this is expended, then we're gone; also this is The Way Life Is or TWLI. Like my brokenness, when my expenditure is surrendered to God as Perfect At-One-Ment, the miracle of transformation occurs. My expenditure becomes spiritual refreshment.

**4. How do these elements become spiritual food from our Spiritual Oasis?**

**WS:** How does this transformation occur? At once this is both mysterious and transparent. It is mysterious because we know it occurs because our experience is the demonstration of it (Gut Trip). Again, it is mysterious because we know it happens but we don't fully comprehend it (Head Trip).

*However, from the point of view of the transparent Spiritual Oasis, our wholeness is something that is always present with us. Our problem is that we are spiritually blind to it. Life (on vacation) is experienced broken and expended. Life (at home) is experienced whole; i.e., life is experienced as nourishment and refreshment. As we awaken to life in the Spiritual Oasis we are more aware of this experience.*

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – THERE IS NO SERMON STARTER OR LECTIONARY REFERENCES FOR THIS SCRIPTURE!**

# LESSON 27: THE WAY LIFE IS

TOPIC: MATTHEW 26: 31 – 27: 31, THE TRANSPARENT EXPERIENCE

<b>Section IV: The Teacher's Reward</b> <b>Matthew 26: 1 – 28: 15</b>			
<b>The Teacher's Handbook – The Transparent Experience</b> <b>Matthew 26: 1 – 28: 15</b>			
Preparing for death	Transparent food for the Spiritual Oasis	<b>The Way Life Is (TWLI)</b>	The Transparent Even
26: 1 – 16	26: 17 – 30	<b>26: 31 – 27: 31</b>	27: 32 – 28: 15
<b>Lesson 25</b>	<b>Lesson 26</b>	<b>Lesson 27</b>	<b>Lesson 28</b>

*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-seventh 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 second lesson on "The Transparent Experience."*

- I. Read the assigned reading at one time.

**II.** 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.

**WS:** One of the operating principles of this approach to Bible study always is to ask the question, “What is your experience?” The Bible Study participants 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 an eight-by-nine-by-five-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).

**WS:** 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!) Most of what happens to us can be laid at the feet of Mother Nature; this is our natural/human state of existence. Often this is mistaken for “evil” because of all the troubles. It is important to remember that pain never lies to us: You can ask, “Am I in pain?” If you are, you are. If you are not, you’re not.

On the other hand, evil can tell you nothing but lies. This happened in the Garden of Eden, and even today the Big Liar always is out to have you live in illusions. You can ask, “Am I a victim? The Big Liar will keep you there although this is a lie, because Jesus came to demonstrate how we can live as victors even when life is pretty tough.

## The Teacher's Reward

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. This is the demonstration of the life, ministry, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**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 choose 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 hopeful in spite of death, or even because of death.**

**WS:** “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. We are prone 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.” [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.

**The Gift of the Resurrection:**

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.

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

**A. Vs. 26: 31 – 35: Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial**

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

**WS:** 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**.

**WS.** 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 as 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 that the work of the “Bad Shepherd” is not a work of evil. Rather, it is the work of TWLI.

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### B. Vs. 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?

*WS: TWLI. I rest my case.*

### C. Vs. 26: 47 -- 56: Jesus Arrested

Read this section to see what it reveals about TWLI?

**WS:** Betrayal is not the work of evil; this is the work of TWLI.

### D. Vs. 26: 57 – 68: Before the Sanhedrin

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

**WS:** 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 at 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 many churches today they are blind to the will of God for our time!

To this end, neither the Sanhedrin nor our current church institutions needs condemnation, instead they need transformation. This is the goal of the 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.

### E. Vs. 26: 69 – 75: Peter Disowns Jesus

How do Peter's actions reveal TWLI?

**WS:** The experience of being compromised is an everyday 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 20th 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 says nothing about preparing a message for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; the worldview of the Post-Modern Society. For this concern we can thank Gut Trip Analysis as the method to address today's world that already lives in tomorrow's culture.

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 our human experience.

**F. Vs. 27: 1 – 26: Jesus Before Pilate**

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

**WS:** 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.*

**G. Vs. 27: 27 – 31: The Soldiers Mock Jesus**

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

**WS:** 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.*

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER – THERE IS NO SERMON STARTER OR LECTIONARY REFERENCES FOR THIS SCRIPTURE.**

## LESSON 28: THE TRANSPARENT EVENT

TOPIC: MATTHEW 27: 32 – 28: 15, THE TRANSPARENT EXPERIENCE

<b>A Partial Summary Chart of the Gospel of Matthew</b> <b>“A Training Manual For Teaching The Transparent Sanctified Life”</b>			
<b>The Teacher’s Reward</b> <b>Matthew 26: 1 – 28: 15</b>			
<b>The Teacher’s Handbook – The Transparent Experience</b> <b>Matthew 26: 1 – 28: 15</b>			
<b>Preparing for death</b>	<b>Transparent food for the Spiritual Oasis</b>	<b>The Way Life Is (TWLI)</b>	<b>The Transparent Even</b>
<b>26: 1 – 16</b>	<b>26: 17 – 30</b>	<b>26: 31 – 27: 31</b>	<b>27: 32 – 28: 15</b>
<b>Lesson 25</b>	<b>Lesson 26</b>	<b>Lesson 27</b>	<b>Lesson 28</b>

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.

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

### III. OUT OF THE DESERT AND INTO THE SPIRITUAL OASIS

All else is prelude to the event we witness in this study. Everything prepares us for this history-changing and life-changing event. For me the key words are, "Go and tell my

brothers [*and sisters*] to go to Galilee; there they will see me (28:10).”Galilee is home to Jesus, just as the Spiritual Oasis is our spiritual home. It is the place where we are comfortable, among friends and colleagues, and we can be the selves we were created to be. Sociologically, this is where we experience our sense of place.

Isn't this the meaning of the crucifixion and the resurrection? We die to life in the desert of TWLI (The Way Life Is), and we are resurrected into the meaning of what it means to be fully a human and humane being. This Bible study names this experience as the Spiritual Oasis, Deep Satisfaction, or Full Awakening.

These words/phrases are Gut Trip Analysis words. In the traditional language of Christianity, the name given to this experience is Sanctification, Heaven or the Kingdom of God. These are “Head Trip Analysis” words that mean the same thing.

Nothing could be more transparent to this Good News in Matthew's gospel. The Genealogy of Jesus supports this purpose: Abraham is the first born; the birth of Jesus as the Christ; the baptism of Jesus; the healing, the preaching; the work of the Disciples; the work of John the Baptist; the transfiguration. All of these events paint the image of true, authentic living in the transparency of abundant life.

In other words, when we look through these events, what we see is God's intent for humanity to live in At-One-Ment with each other. In this way, The Awakened are a “remnant” living on behalf of a world society that is unawakened! In Christ we are covenanted to be The Awakened against the day when all the world is awakened to abundant living.

When this finality takes place, then humanity will move out of the desert and into the Oasis.

**WS:** In the meantime, those who are awake to this reality live on behalf of those who are still asleep. Also, we have the responsibility to be “Agents for Awakening” those still asleep.

#### **IV. 27: 32 – 57 The Crucifixion and The Death of Jesus**

Read this section several times without stopping, and pay attention to the emotions of the passage.

1. Name the emotional content of this reading.

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**WS:** I suppose it is difficult to read this passage without thinking of Gibson's movie "The Passion." While I am not a big supporter of Gibson, certainly he captured the horrific emotion associated with this event. Even in reading this passage out loud, the terror, abject horror, and deep anger quickly are summoned into consciousness.

2. Think back. What are your emotions as you read it? What do your emotions reveal about your state of spiritual Awakening?

**WS:** O-o-o, I wish now that I had never asked this question. Because I think of myself as being spiritually awake. Now, the question is existential. As a Head-Trip, I can justify anger, horror and terror. Yet, it is from a Gut Trip Analysis that I experience that these powerful emotions find their locus in my Spiritual Oasis as well. All of us tend to deny that powerful emotions belong in the Spiritual Oasis. However, like our failures, these emotions have a wellspring in our spiritual reality.

### V. 27: 57 – 61 The Burial of Jesus

1. What are friends for?

**WS:** Friends are for doing just what Joseph from Arimathea was doing, as well as what the two Mary's are doing: waiting at the tomb. Friends are "there" for each other.

2. What does this brief section reveal about the collegiality of The Awakened?

**WS:** The Awakened are in synch with each other and with the mission/purpose of the Spiritual Oasis. There is a difference between being "friends" and being "colleagues." Friends are those who have an investment in us. Colleagues, while they can be friends, have an investment in what we are about. It is not necessary that a colleague be a friend; they are the ones who jump into our foxhole at the moment we need someone covering our exposed back.

3. What do The Awakened reveal about the "transparent relationship" to Perfect At-One-Ment? Work hard so that you do not get trapped into seeing this event as an **object** to be studied. What is the BIG MESSAGE that Matthew is giving us about the relationship between The Deserts of Life and The Spiritual Oasis?

**WS:** Matthew's Big Message about the relationship between The Deserts of Life and The Spiritual Oasis is that death and friendship are crucial items.

First, it is necessary for the Awakened to die to the significance and importance of our human existence. In order for death to be defeated, it is necessary to surrender

ourselves into the waiting arms of Death. It is helpful to remember that death always is our friend; it never lies to us.

Second, friendship/collegiality is a crucial experience because it is only through deep friendship we are called into full Awakening. Remember that Wesley reminds us that the human situation is that we are spiritually asleep. However, the human predicament is that we are unable to awaken ourselves. This is the mission and responsibility of The Church of the Awakened.

**VI. 27: 62 - 66 The Guard at the Tomb**

1. The concerns of the Tomb Guards reveal much about The Desert. Reflect on how you've adopted the stance of the Guards, and how does your experience illuminate The Desert experience?

**WS:** Oh, geez! I'm always The Guard At The Tomb. Recently while coming home pulling our travel trailer with our pickup, a beautiful young blond pulled up next to me at a stop light. She was driving a brand new Corvette with the radio blaring full blast. Obviously, her activities were saying, "Look at me!" And I did. I was convicted at many levels. Her youth, her wealth, her in-your-face attitude all reminded me that my chosen profession as a 70 year-old retired theological writer denied me these more obvious pleasures. Of course, this experience Awakened me to how quickly the things of the flesh lead us away from the peace of the Spiritual Oasis. This is not to say that youth, 20-something, and driving red Corvettes can not be experienced in the Spiritual Oasis. It can, but at the moment I'm writing about, my personal humility was deeply addressed.

2. The concerns of Pilate reveals much about The Desert. (**Remember Matthew 27: 11 – 26?**).

**WS:** The study of **Matthew 27: 11 – 26** focused on how our political institutions become agents of "worldly sleep." However, in **Matthew 27: 57 – 61**, an interesting thing about Pilate is that he keeps coming off as a sensitive and caring person—maybe this is because of the reported work of his wife? Whatever the case, I find it hard to imagine that our U.S. Congressional teams, much less the Office of the President of the U.S. could be approached for such a menial request, unless the one pleading for assistance for help was a very prominent person.

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Joseph of Arimathea may have had such a position. What this reveals about the desert of human existence is that the political process can be a Head-Trip/World trip trap. This is not the work of evil, it is simply TWLI.

**VII. Vs. 28: 1 – 15 The Resurrection**

1. *This is The Transparent Event of Transparency Itself!* Read this brief section out loud several times. Or, have someone else read it to you several times. Savor the drama and the imagery. Print out this study page. Fold the paper in half. In one column write “Head Trip,” and in the other column write “Gut Trip.” Use the following words found in this passage to identify how the word is used as “Head Trip” and then as “Gut Trip.” Remember, “Gut Trip” *names your experience* and then points to the traditional word for clarification.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Head Trip</b>	<b>Gut-Trip</b>
<b>Descriptive similes</b>	a. angel of the Lord --	<i>Messenger; The Awakener</i>
	b. from heaven—	<i>God’s Office; Place of Perfect At-One-Ment</i>
	c. to the tomb—	<i>Place of death, Place of Hope</i>
<b>Similes for enlightenment</b>	d. His appearance was like lightning—	<i>An inner light; the experience of Awakening</i>
	e. His clothes were white as snow---	<i>The experience of perfection</i>
	f. he is risen from the dead	<i>Discovering the Spiritual Oasis</i>

**The open Spiritual Oasis door**

2. Matthew records in 28: 8 that the women were “afraid yet filled with joy.” Reflect on how these two words are transparent to our experience of the Spiritual Oasis.

**WS:** Obviously, joy is easily associated with our Spiritual Oasis. This is one of the characteristics frequently associated with our Spiritual Awakening. However, it is

important to remember that we bring to our Spiritual Oasis all that we have and are; we bring all of our contradictions and foibles. So our fright is an honest emotion that, once we are awake, we can use to awaken us to our Spiritual Oasis and its resources.

**Vs. 28: 10b**, “Go and tell my brother [*and sisters*] to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

**WS:** This phrase “Go. . . to Galilee” frustrates me because my experience of myself is that I make too much of this phrase. Yet, Matthew uses it frequently enough that surely there are some implications that “Galilee”—like “the other side of the lake”—can be associated with our Spiritual Oasis. It is helpful to remember that Jesus was “at home” in Galilee.

First, reflect on the use of gender terms, and why it is important to use gender inclusive pronouns? Take this in light of the experience that God is Perfect At-One-Ment.

**WS:** Ah, well. Gender pronouns associated with the term “G-O-D” borders on idolatry. God is unfathomable Perfect At-One-Ment. That’s it, unless you want to talk about the experience of God as The Guarantor, or as The Meaning of Things.

Second, in light of the opening statement in our Section III about going home, what does this reveal about transparency?

**WS:** Every event in life provides us with the occasion to “see through it” to its meaning, significance, or to our Spiritual Oasis. Because we can bring every event, no matter how small-minded, or how mean it is, once we have the tools to be awake, then each and every occasion is a potential moment for clarity.

#### **VIII. Vs. 28: 11 – 15 The Guard’s Report: a curiosity**

1. Why do you think Matthew put in this strange little deception? Reflect for a moment on what may have happened *the night before* Matthew wrote this little section that produced an, “Ah, Ha! This reminds me about The Guard’s report. I’ll need to add this to my story!” Using your imagination, what may have been the event to spark this recollection?

**WS:** The night before: Matthew picked up the Galilean Gazette to read of local C.E.O’s who robbed their companies and shareholders of the pension funds. On second

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reflection, Matthew's mind was jogged back to a little-told story about the Chief Priest's and community Elders to deal with the local insurrection surrounding Jesus.

While this is an imaginary response, Matthew's motivation to include this escapes me. Certainly, this adds nothing to the significance of the story. It strikes me that this is extrapolated material mistakenly added to the canon. What do you think?

2. Reflect on the very curious statement at the end in **28:15B**, "And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day." In light of transparency, what does this reveal about living in The Desert and/or living in the Spiritual Oasis?

**WS:** Living in the Desert of The Way Life Is (TWLI) is the place where anything can happen, and usually does. From my own viewpoint, this is an unfortunate addition because it adds fuel to the fire of blaming the Jews for the death of Jesus. Of course, this is like blaming the Boy Scouts when one fails to walk an old lady across the street.

However, this does offer me the occasion to remind us that we bring all of life's experiences—contradictions and foibles, joys and deep satisfactions—to the refreshing waters of our Spiritual Oasis.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER— MT. 27:11–54, "JESUS BEFORE PILATE."**

**The blood of Jesus** – This is one of those misunderstood words. In some settings the word "blood" is often exchanged for the word "love." Ostensibly, this exchange is done in order to avoid the nastiness associated with the word "blood." Interestingly, this is right for all the wrong reasons. To avoid the word "blood" is to cheapen the activity of Jesus' death on the cross. Certainly, his death was a profound act of love. However, the word love fails to convey the terrible price paid for us to use the word love.

The Blood Covenant goes back into the ancient history of Israel, and is based on the ideas associated with the blood sacrifices by the ancient priests. In like manner, once a year the High Priest put on the clothes of the common people, and took a perfect sheep and a perfect goat. He laid his body upon the sheep in an act representing all of the People of God. This was done in repentance for the sins of the whole people of Israel. He then slit its throat to spill the blood of the sacrifice *representing the willingness of the people to die to their stupidity* in failing to live the lives fulfilling their created purpose; i.e., to live the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy – the life of *shalom*.



Then, the High Priest took the perfect goat, and again laid his body on it as an act of contrition for the stupidity of the people in failing to fulfill their intended creation. Except, this time, the priest took the sheep out into the wilderness and LET IT GO FREE! This is the source of our term "Scape Goat," and is symbolic of the freedom we experience because of this demonstration *representing the willingness of the people to die to their stupidity*. It is our willingness to awaken to the fulfillment of our intended purpose that results in our freedom or of our forgiveness and resurrection.

**This is our story of Easter! Jesus Christ is the sacrificial Lamb, and we are the Scape Goats.**

Consequently, the work of the Blood Covenant does result in a profound act of love performed on our behalf. However, we never can forget the price paid to achieve it.

**Theological Places:**

- Vs. 11, Governor's palace
- Vs. 22, Praetorium
- Vs. 33, Golgotha (The Skull)

**Things mentioned:**

- Vs. 24, Water and washed hands
- Vs. 28, Scarlet robe, crown of thorns, staff
- Vs. 32, cross
- Vs. 34, wine mixed with gall
- Vs. 48, Wine-filled sponge
- Vs. 51, torn curtain

**People, besides Jesus:**

- Vs. 11, Pilate
- Vs. 19B, Pilate's wife
- Vs. 24, Soldiers
- Vs. 32, Simon of Cyrene
- Vs. 39, passer's-by
- Vs. 41, Chief Priests, Teachers and Elders
- Vs. 44, unrepentant robbers
- Vs. 54, Centurion

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### Jesus is mocked by:

- Vs. 24, soldiers
- Vs. 39, passers-by
- Vs. 41, Chief priests, Teachers and Elders
- Vs. 44, Robbers

### Unusual Events:

- Vs. 19, the personal appeal of Pilate's wife
- Vs. 24, Pilate washing his hands of the affair
- Vs. 25, "Let his blood be upon us and our children"
- Vs. 45, Darkness
- Vs. 51, Temple curtain rent

### Unusual observations:

- Vs. 18, "it was out of envy they handed over Jesus to him"
- Vs. 19, Pilate's wife personal appeal, "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him"
- Vs. 54, the Centurion's affirmation, "Surely, this is the Son of God."

### My Gut Trip Analysis of this scripture:

#### *The Denial---*

To be human is to live in a synthesis that, on one side is our human limitations and natural inclinations, and on the other side we have our spiritual and humane natures; in short, we live in a synthesis between our natural selves and our spiritual selves.

#### *The Judgment of the unawakened life---*

The Judeo/Christian experience documents our denial of this synthesis, and the Jesus' Story records the judgment that is the reward for living this Unawakened life. The trial of Jesus, his scourging and crucifixion, recalls the last gasp of our human-natural condition to destroy the judgment represented in Jesus Christ.

#### *The Judgment of the awakened life---*

Jesus Christ represents the judgment that we live in denial that we are both human/natural and spiritual/humane. The ultimate lesson for us is a demonstration of how we can choose to die to the barriers preventing us from fulfilling our intended created purpose.

*The result--*

The result of living the synthesis is to live the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy; in other words, to live in *Shalom*.

**The Key:** Before you begin this sermon, think through the significance of how the blood of Jesus is experienced in your life. Keep your analysis Gut Trip to avoid pietism and moralism. By approaching the topic as an experience you'll catch the existential and life-changing transforming power of these words.

**B. ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER— MATTHEW 27:11–54, “JESUS BEFORE PILATE.”**

*Prelude: The struggle of ambiguity and decision making---*

The struggle presented in this scripture illustrates the difficulty we have in making decisions. Remember, some decisions are between right and right (which tie to wear), while other decisions are between wrong and wrong (on the way to the delivery room do we stop at the stop sign and have the baby in our car, or do we speed through the light and get to the hospital in time?) Seldom are our decisions between right and wrong. The people in today's scripture struggled with the ambiguity of their decisions.

## LESSON 29: COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

### TOPIC: MATTHEW 28: 16 – 20, THE NEXT STEP

This is our twenty-ninth lesson in this series of 29. This lesson remains under the general banner associated with "A Training Manual For Teaching the Transparent Sanctified Life. However, this is the eighth arena and the lesson is on "The Commencement Address."

**The Teacher's Reward  
Matthew 26: 1 – 28: 20**

**The Next Step  
The Commencement Address  
Matthew 28: 16 – 20**

**Lesson 29**

- I. Read the assigned reading at one time.
- II. **(Note: This is a review of Matthew's chart.)**

These four verses in Matthew 28: 16 to 20 bring to an end the gospel of Matthew.

However, Matthew's treatment of them is not a graduation from something, rather it is a commencement address, or our commissioning as Teachers of the Transparent Sanctified Life.

Recall that Matthew gives the early church "A Training Manual For Teaching the

Transparent Sanctified Life." The Transparent Life is the life experience that fulfills our intended human purpose in humane ways. The Sanctified Life is a life experienced as "*deep satisfaction*." To this end, the training manual begins by "Training The Teacher" through the stories of "The Birth of the Teacher," and then the "Training of a Teacher."

The second section of the training manual provides the "Tools For Teaching The Methods For a Happy/Holy Life." (Sanctification.) This is the largest section of scripture in our study of Matthew that we named "The Teacher's Handbook –Part I: Transparent Ethics." This includes much of Jesus' ethical teachings.

The third section of this training manual is a short section on “Moral Imperatives” supported by the topic of “Foundations for morality.”

The fourth section covers “Life in the Spiritual Oasis.” This topic is supported as Part II of the teacher’s handbook. You’ll recognize the Spiritual Oasis in Jesus’ teachings on The Kingdom of Heaven.”

This is followed by, “The Teacher’s Handbook—Part III on “Moral Lessons.” We addressed this part in three studies covering our studies on the cost and the glory of teaching, the authority of the teacher, and the in-breaking of the Spiritual Oasis.

The fifth section concerns “The Teacher’s Reward.” This material examines “The Transparent Experience,” and this current study on, “The Next Step.”

**III. Reflect on the following:**

**1. Vs. 28: 18—“All authority on heaven and earth has been given to me.”**

**a. Take the words “heaven” and “earth” and reflect on what these words point to in our human experience.**

**Bible Study participant comment:** Heaven and earth is bigger than us. The eternal—the Spiritual Oasis—is always. The start of eternity is now. Earth is related to The Way Life Is (TWLII).

**WS:** This answer reveals that the use of our experiential terminology comes readily to the minds of the Trinity Bible Study participants. Fantastic. Now, this is nit-picking but the verb “is” in the opening sentence implies “meaning,” i.e., “Heaven and earth IS bigger than us.” This is not to lose sight of the fact that both the Spiritual Oasis (heaven) and the TWLI (earth) are both simultaneous experiences.

**b. Describe the significance of our relationship to Jesus as The Christ, and how do we stand in the reflected authority of Jesus. Think: Awakened People.**

**Bible Study participant comment:** If truly awakened people, then we have a duty to teach or share with others to help awaken them to Jesus.

**WS:** Oh, I agree, but tell me why. My reasoning is that our created purpose, and the purpose of the Creator, is for all of us to live in At-One-Ment. This can’t be done until everyone is Awakened! Consequently, those who are awake have the duty to awaken

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those in spiritual sleep. Coincidentally, the Jews believe that when everyone obeys the 10 Commandments at the same time, this ushers in the Messianic Age. I believe we are saying something very similar in speaking about the Awakening all of humanity—this ushers in the Day of the Lord, or as we called it The Spiritual Oasis.

2. Vs. 8:19 – 20a---“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the *Father* and of the *Son* and of the *Holy Spirit*, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

**What is the “Gut Trip Analysis” of these underlined words: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?**

**Bible Study participant comment:** Three forms or modes of existence. Almighty Creator, maker of heaven and earth. The Son, Jesus, the one true incarnation of God, who came to earth to save us from our sins and shows us the way to salvation. The Holy Spirit who lives in the hearts of the believers and gives new life.

**WS:** Um-m-m, where to begin. All this is pretty Head-Trippy. While this is true, this also is fuzzy. Let's see if we can turn this into Gut-Trip Analysis. To begin, recall the activity is related to baptism—cleansing of our human separation and restoring us to live as victors. We are to do this activity in the name of The Trinity: an Intimate Relationship with Perfect At-One-Ment (God, the Father), The Little Picture (Jesus) who embodies the Sacrificial Spirit (Christ), and of our Freedom of Choice (Holy Spirit, or our Surrender—or Sanctified--Breath).

Reflect on, and share your insights into the statement, “. . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

**Bible Study participant comment:** A disciple who does not obey is not a true disciple. We must share with others what has been shared with us.

**WS:** The place I want to push is on the “why” this is true. One troubling word in this scripture is the word “obey.” It is true we are to obey, but those who are Awake obey because we choose to obey rather than feel compelled to obey. The reason the Awakened chose to obey is that humans are more humane when we do.

What we obey is the 10 Commandments. These are our guidelines not because the Commandments SAVE US, rather because we ARE SAVED we obey them to make us more fully human.

**2. Vs. 28: 20b— And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**

What is your experience of these words, and how do they inform the significance for our ministry as The Awakened?

See **John 14: 18 – 20**, “Because I live, you also will live. . . I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.” **Reflect on the significance of these words in light of transparency.**

**Bible Study participant comment:** When we live our lives as Christians then people may see Jesus reflected through us.

**WS:** I believe it. However, if I was walking down the street and I looked through somebody to see “Jesus” in them, what would I be seeing? My answer is I would see them as the Authentic Human/humane beings they already are. We see Jesus in everyone all of the time! They may not know it, and they may not call it that. However, they are “Jesus” just as they are as authentically human as they will ever get.

Our difficulty here is that all creation—rocks, trees, cows, etc.—exude its essential creation; immediately we know what an object it because it transmits its intended creation to us. Now, when it comes to human creation we get stuck because of SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS.

What a shame. We are just what we are! This is what the Awakened know about themselves and what we know about every other human on the face of the earth. When we KNOW this, then we are transparent to the Spiritual Oasis, and/or to the Christ who lives in us.

**a. Reflect on the significance of these words in light of the Spiritual Oasis?**

**Bible Study participant comment:** His light is reflected through us.

**WS:** Yes, exactly. Moving on from the statement immediately above, the Spiritual Oasis is the fully human/humane person we see. Or, in another way of saying it, we see Jesus who is The Little Picture of Perfect At-One-Ment.

**b. What is the experiential lesson learned in this exercise?**

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**Bible Study participant comment:** Jesus is not only with us; He is also in us. His Holy Spirit gives us the power to be His disciples, to be His witnesses. When Jesus is in us, His authority also is in us.

**WS:** All true, although I'd prefer to use experiential language to explain it. Jesus (Authentic Humanness) is not only with us, Authentic Humanness is in us. His Power To Live Authentically (The Holy Spirit) gives us the power to be The Awakened Ones (His disciples); to be His witness to living the humane life. When we accept that Authentic Humanness already exists within us, then Jesus' authority also is in us because we are Authentically Human as we are humane.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER –MT. 28:16-20, "THE GREAT COMMISSION."**

**The Season of TRINITY** celebrates the "Holy Trinity." Typically, this is known as the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. However, our difficulty is this distinction is Head Trip Analysis in which these topics are made into objects to be studied, rather than experiences or relationships. Some commentaries recommend the Nicene Creed to be used on this Sunday (three bodies but one essence). You will want to ground your own thinking about the three persons of the Trinity before starting your sermon.

This is a transliteration of, "The Holy Trinity; " a Gut Trip Creed: "One Deeply Satisfying experience:"

*We affirm the experience of a transformed life that moves us from living as Victims in the world of our human experience to living as VICTORS in a humane existence. This experience takes place as we awaken to a spiritual resource that we already have but to which we are spiritually asleep.*

*First, this resource is the experience of living in a harmonious relationship with Perfect At-One-Ment. This experience we associate with our traditional understanding of God.*

*The second experience concerns sacrificial living, the result of which is works of justice or unmerited love given to others. Once we experience this we associate it with our traditional understanding of the Christ represented in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus.*



*The third is the experience of our freedom to choose the relationship to our human existence as victors or victims. The activity of our choice is the expression of our freedom. Once we experience this we associate it with our traditional understanding of The Holy Spirit.*

*What unites these experiences is they are all one spiritual resource, the essence of which is experienced in three ways.*

**The Key to this sermon:** To preach this sermon it is necessary to ground in your own thinking on what “the authority” is that is given to us. You will want to include your own thinking on the significance of baptism that is done in the name of The Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit. (or, in the experience of living in At-One-Ment, by the example of self-less-ness that is the Sacrificial Spirit, by providing occasions in which people must choose.)

**The ONE THING to be said:** Our “discipleship” is to live authentic, whole and abundant lives and to call others to their own authenticity.

**The ONE EMOTION to share:** A deep sense of satisfaction and accomplishment in doing a job well and being a part of something big.

**ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: MATERIAL FROM SERMON STARTER —MATTHEW 28:16–20, “THE GREAT COMMISSION.”**

**The authority given to us—**

To preach this sermon it is necessary to ground in your own thinking what “the authority” is that is given to us. You will want to include your own thinking on the significance of baptism that is done in the name of The Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The authority that is given to us is something we only need to claim. Already we have all the authority we’ll ever need; in fact it is the same authority that Jesus had, and Moses and Abraham. It is the authority of our authenticity. Remember, Barney on the old “Andy Griffith Show” who never wore his authority very well? Barney is All Of Us. It is necessary for us to awaken that it is in fulfilling our intended purpose that we claim what we already are.

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Remember cows, trees and rocks never struggle with their authority—they are what they are created to be. Humans struggle with being human because Mother Nature made us human and natural, **but God gives us a soul that transforms all of our natural inclinations into embracing the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy.** The difference is like living At Home or On Vacation. We humans have lived so long only as natural creatures that we have come to accept that our natural inclinations must Be Home. **They are not; this is Vacation.** It is only as we awaken to live as transformed humane and gracious creatures do we experience living at **The Home** of God's intended purpose for us.

It is necessary to observe that there are two parts to living our intended creation.

**First**, it is living the humane and gracious life. **Second**, it is working for justice and mercy. In order to fulfill our intended creation it is necessary for us to do both.

### The Trinity defined---

#### *The experience of God:*

In Gut Trip Analysis God is experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment. It is when we live in harmony with our neighbor, and we feel good about ourselves that we please God. In this way we fulfill the Divine Commandment to love neighbor, self and God.

#### *The experience of Jesus as the Christ:*

In Gut Trip Analysis, the Christ is first experienced as the self-less-ness that is the Sacrificial Spirit. This is Tom Hanks in the movie "Joe Vs. the Volcano," jumping into a volcano on behalf of a people to whom he owes nothing. He does it because none of the islanders are willing to do it, but they need the sacrifice to satisfy the hunger of the volcano. If people will take time to identify "the volcano's" in our lives that demand sacrifice, this will make a lot of sense. You can begin by looking up the god Molek, or Molech, the god that demands the sacrifice of children; i.e., the use of our nations sacred treasurer in blood sacrifice.

#### *The experience of the Holy Spirit:*

In Gut Trip Analysis, the Holy Spirit is *first experienced as GRACE*. However, grace is not something that is given to us, rather Grace is not being let off the hook of being what God created us to be; i.e., humane and gracious working for justice and mercy.

*Another experience of the Holy Spirit is the Freedom to choose to live as Victors. Life constantly presents us with alternatives; we can choose to be victims of our circumstances, or we can choose to be Victors. Jesus death is a demonstration of how we can die to the barriers preventing us from living the victorious life. He was confronted by the religious and political barriers of his time, but he intentionally chose to die to their influence; in the last analysis, they had no power over him. This same freedom can be ours as well. When we choose to live the victorious life, we have experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.*

**The fulfillment of our intended creation (two functions)---**

Some of this is clarified above. However, it is helpful to review that we humans are intended to live BOTH the humane and gracious life, AND to work for justice and mercy. Without both, we fail to live up to what is expected of us. A cow, rock, tree or bird is expected to fulfill its' Is-Ness in the same way that we humans are to live humane.

**The purpose and experience of Obedience (surrender)---**

Obedience is not something most humans think of as a positive experience. This struggle is evident and real seen in the way we fall short of the glory of God. *God is all there is! There is nothing more! There is nothing else!* A cow understands this by being a cow; its cow-ness is fulfilled in God! The same is true for a tree, a rock or a bird. It is only has we humans awoken that we fulfill our intended creation by being humane; this is they way we are fulfilled in God; **this is the way God is fulfilled in us.** Because we have Free Will—like Adam—we choose to be god by going out on our own. The further away from God we go, the unhappier we are and the more contentious we become. This is due to our sense of independence from God.

Doesn't this say something about the world in which we live that seeks to settle border disputes on selfish standards?

It is when we learn to surrender our whole selves—all of our entire being—then we replace our-selves with the presence of God! The more of God we embrace, the better we feel about ourselves and the better our neighbors like us.

The reason this works is that this is the purpose of our creation!

There is an illustration from the book, 'The Shack,' at the end of this material!

**Vs. 16A, to Galilee: The place of living the Awakened life**

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**Vs. 16B, Eleven disciples to the mountain:** The mountain, in the Jewish worldview, always represents the place for living in the presence of God.

**Vs. 17A, when they saw him they worshipped him:** We worship the Christ whenever we awaken enough to live the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy

**The ONE THING to be said:** Jesus Christ is our mountain to which we go to get our instructions to share with the entire world.

**The EXISTENTIAL AIM:** Living on the Jesus Mountain is the experience of fulfilling our intended purpose of living the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy.

## AN ADDENDUM:

The Trinity is such a difficult doctrine to explain. As you can tell, my effort in this sermon is to run The Trinity through our personal experiences. The experience is what unifies it:

***We experience God*** as Perfect At-One-Ment always in and through our own imperfect experiences of living At-One.

***We experience Jesus Christ*** both as a spirit of sacrifice and as a demonstration of living and dying the intentional life.

***We experience the Holy Spirit*** as the grace of never being let off the hook of our intended creation of living the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy, and as the freedom to choose living the surrendered life.

### **A review of the book, "The Shack"**

With this in mind, I want to share a couple of quotes from the book, **The Shack**, written by William P. Young. This is a story of Mack who is working through the kidnapping and murder of his young (grade school age) daughter Missy on a camping trip. They find her body in The Shack. Through the purpose of the book, Mack is confronted with the opportunity to meet The Trinity who wish to help him in his journey to spiritual health. They invite him to meet "them" at **The Shack**.

On this occasion Mack meets a big black woman (God) whose name is Elousia, but also is known to Mack's wife as "Papa." She explains her physical description as necessary to cut against any of his pre-conceptions of what God looks like. Jesus is a middle-eastern carpenter (type cast, no doubt), and the Holy Spirit is an Asian woman, Sarayu, who is as light as the wind and collects tears in a bottle.

While I encourage you to buy and read this astounding tale, I want to share two brief quotes that identify for us the author's use of the term "the Trinity."

#### **First from pages 100 - 101**

Mack is speaking:

"There's that whole Trinity thing, which is where I kind of get lost."

Papa laughed a long rich belly laugh that made Mack want to join in. She set the little bird down on the table next to Mack, turned to open the oven, and gave the pie that was baking a quick little look. Satisfied that everything was fine, Papa then pulled up a chair alongside them. Mack looked at the little bird who, amazingly, was content to just sit there with them. The absurdity of it all gave Mack a chuckle.

“To begin with, that you can’t grasp the wonder of my nature is rather a good thing. Who wants to worship a God who can be fully comprehended, eh? Not much mystery in that.”

“But what difference does it make that there are three of you and you are all one God. Did I say that right?”

“Right enough.” She grinned. “Mackenzie, it makes all the difference in the world!” She seemed to be enjoying this. “We are not three gods, and we are not talking about one god and three attitudes, like a man who is a husband, father, and worker. I am one God and I am three persons, and each of the three is fully and entirely the one.”

The “huh?” Mack had been suppressing finally surfaced in all its glory.

“Never mind that,” she continued. “What’s important is this: If I were simply One God and only One Person, then you would find yourself in this Creation without something wonderful, without something essential even. And I would be utterly other than I am.”

“And we would be without . . . ?” Mack didn’t even know how to finish the question.

“Love and relationship. All love and relationship is possible for you *only* because it already exists with me, within God myself. Love is *not* the limitation; love is the flying. I *am* love.”

**Then from pages 122 - 123**

“You know what I am talking about,” Mack was a little frustrated. “I am talking about who’s in charge. Don’t you have a chain of command?”

“Chain of command? That sounds ghastly,” Jesus said.

“At least binding,” Papa added as they both started laughing, and then Papa turned to Mack and sang, “Though chains be of gold, they are chains all the same.”

## Addendum

“Now don’t concern yourself with those two,” Sarayu interrupted, reaching out her hand to comfort and calm him. “They’re just playing with you. This is actually a subject of interest among us.”

Mack nodded, relieved and a little chagrined that he had again allowed himself to lose his composure.

“Mackenzie, we have no concept of final authority among us, only unity. We are a *circle* of relationship, not a chain of command or ‘great chain of being’ as your ancestors termed it. What you’re seeing here is relationship without any overlay of power. We don’t need power over the other because we are always looking out for the best. Hierarchy would make no sense among us. Actually, this is your problem, not ours.”

“Really? How so?”

“Humans are so lost and damaged that to you it is almost incomprehensible that people could work or live together without someone being in charge.”

“But every human institution that I can think of, from political to business, even down to marriage, is governed by this kind of thinking: it is the web of our social fabric,” Mack asserted.

“Such a waste!” said Papa, picking up the empty dish and heading for the kitchen. “It’s one reason why experiencing true relationship is so difficult for you,” Jesus added. “Once you have a hierarchy you need rules to protect and administer it, and then you need law and the enforcement of rules, and you end up with some kind of chain of command or a system of order that destroys relationship rather than promotes it. You rarely see or experience relationship apart from power. Hierarchy imposes laws and rules and you end up missing the wonder of relationship that we intended for you.”

“Well,” said Mack sarcastically, sitting back in his chair. “We sure seem to have adapted pretty well to it.”

Sarayū was quick to reply, “Don’t confuse adaptation for intention, or seduction for reality.”

(Young, William P., *The Shack*, Los Angeles:windblown, 2007.)

## CONCLUSION

I trust you have found these reflections, commentaries and exercises helpful. Among other things, “life is dialog” and your reflections would be valuable to me and our other readers. Starting a sermon is far easier than finishing a sermon, because finishing the sermon has to do with translating what you have learned into real life. I am more interested in that than anything about how you get there.

Visit our website and post your reflections and examples of how the sermons you prepare from these exciting thoughts on the Gospel of Mathew change your life and that of others around you. What else are you learning about being a teacher in today’s complex and often confounding world?

Pastor Bill  
In his Service  
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## Religion

*I am very impressed with the book, both in tone and in subject matter. I agree wholeheartedly that religious and theological reflections are a result of lived experience, and should be seen that way.*

*It is popular for people to claim they are "spiritual" but not "religious," as if religious ideas were something outmoded or even unnecessary, getting in the way of a direct experience of the Divine. This creates a false dualism and shows a facile misunderstanding of what religious reflection is all about. Bill Salmon's book removes this stigma upon theological reflection and shows the distinction between "religious" and "spiritual" to be a false one. In fact, Salmon's book goes further and shows how theological ideas are central to spiritual development.*

*The problem is not with theology, but with those who misunderstand how important theology is for spirituality. Theological ideas are, after all, second order language, and are only possible following a spiritual experience, a direct sense of awe and worship of the Divine. People can only come to conclusions about religious ideas when they have spent time trying to explain their own religious experience.*

*Unfortunately, for many, theology gets put into a place it was never meant to occupy, and becomes a set of static concepts, designed to encapsulate religious experience in a series of immutable propositions. These concepts become standardized, and eventually become purely mental constructs, removed from lived experience.*

*Furthermore, people don't think in terms of abstract concepts, but in terms of concrete terms regarding things and events which matter most in their lived experience. After all, no one falls in love with an idea. People only fall in love with persons. By turning God into a set of ideas, it becomes harder and harder for anyone to follow their hearts and truly love him. By reducing religious terms to abstract concepts, it makes it impossible to see and understand how those ideas affect us in the first place. Thus the personal experience of God becomes farther and farther removed from things that really matter.*

*By taking theological ideas and concepts away from purely academic categories, Salmon tries to restore theological reflection to its rightful place, as a critical, meaningful reflection on individual experience of God in the first place. Theological ideas are not conceptual head trips, but experiential gut trips, the result of each individual confronting their own world head on and seeing what really matters. Salmon makes the claim that deep spirituality comes from being deeply religious.*

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ISBN 978-0-9763892-7-9



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Genealogy. Note the women	Xmas escape to Egypt and return	Instruction and test time	Gallilean Intern-Ship	Transparent satisfaction	Teachers' challenge	Indicative ethics: WWJD	Watch your focus	Watch your priorities	The transparent focus	Teaching stand-point	Changing lives	Staff qualifications	Transparent Task	Graduation Address	Affirming credentials	Do the Will of God	Teaching life in the Spiritual Oasis	The cost of teaching	Demonstrating the power of the Good News	Demonstrating new directions for ministry	Lesson Series: The Spiritual Oasis	Growing to Perfection	The cost and glory of teaching in the Spiritual Oasis	Demonstrating the teachers' authority: From what, from where, does Jesus get his authority?	The in-breaking of the Spiritual Oasis	Preparing for death	Transparent food for the Spiritual Oasis	The Way Life Is	The Transparent Event	Comencement exercises
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