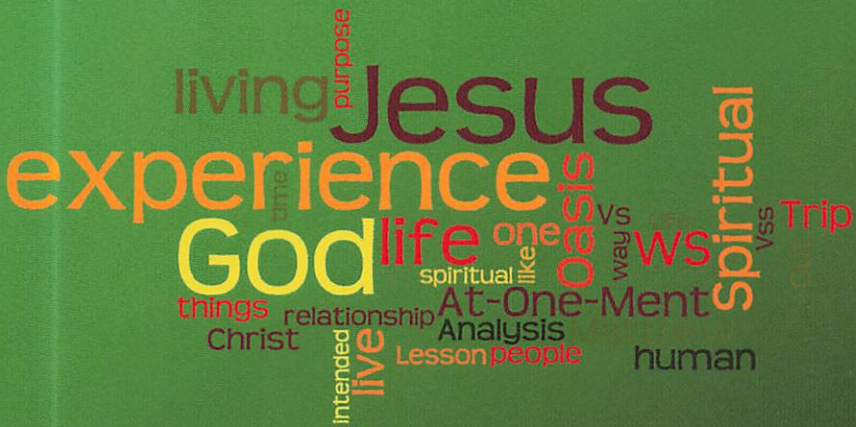


One Mission - Two Objectives:

Bible Studies in the Gospel of Mark



William E. Salmon

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By

Dr. William E. Salmon

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Info@ResurgencePublishing.com

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Epigram

The offense of the message of Jesus:

We local church theologians try too hard to define the offensive nature of Jesus' message. It is rather simple. *"You folks are living an illusion of what you think life is. In reality you have sold out to the world living as victims and not victors. The purpose of human existence is not only to be human, but also to be humane and gracious while working for justice and mercy; we are victors.*

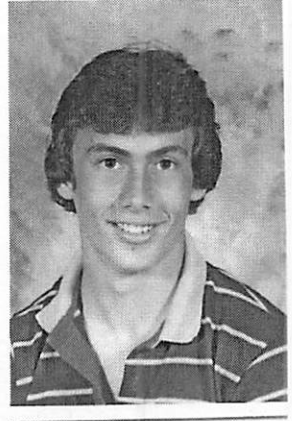
Pastor Bill

Dedication

Wesley Dana Salmon 1963 – 1983

Some people pack a lot of life into a short time-span. Wesley Salmon did just that. He joined our family by adoption on March 8, 1963, at the age of 3 weeks, an arrangement made through the Kansas Children's Service League. He left us to join our Meditative Council on October 13, 1983. He died of complications with leukemia.

He was joined by the births of his sisters, Jana Lynne and Julie Anne in 1965 and 1968. The five of us became a revolutionary missional family to live in the Order Ecumenical founded in the 5th City area of Chicago. The community research of this organization led us to live in, "faraway places with strange sounding names." Our children were not always as excited about our living arrangements. Sometimes they lived in children's structures living away from a traditional family experience, but they survived and became deeper people for the effort.



Wesley was a pistol. He was ornery in charming ways with many skills and a resilient attitude. He discovered his track ability while living in the Hartford (CT) House, at school where he practiced becoming a high hurdler. One of his unfinished goals was to become an Olympic hurdler about the time the then current world leaders would be too old for the jump.

When our family returned to the Kansas West Conference of the UMC, Wesley put his running skills to use as a Friday Night Hero who, from his position as a Wide Receiver, caught many of the winning passes that led them to the State play-offs. What a thrill! His Senior high school activity was running at the State Track meet in the High Hurdles where he was singled out to be, "the one to watch." That year Wesley also won state medals in the Intermediate Hurdles, the Long Jump, and the 400 meter relay.

His last track meet was on the road his freshman year with Kansas Wesleyan University. The coach brought to my attention that Wesley was running and winning, but retreated to the lawn to rest as he had little energy to spare. A doctor's diagnosis was leukemia.

He spent over 275 days at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. After a brief remission, he was admitted to a National Institute of Health research project at Children's Hospital in Madison, WI. He died after 19 days. RIP!

This page is dedicated in his memory by his family:
Mom, Dad, Jana, Julie

"Dad, don't just play. Win!"

"I'm a participator, Wes, rather than a winner."

"Geez Dad, I didn't get my athletic ability from you."

Acknowledgements

Publishing is a cooperative effort. I write the material and then it is turned over to four readers who make clear the message. I have an impolite title for them as the "B&B" group, but this is a pet name I do not disclose. Their work is not to support my ego, but to be certain that the reader can appreciate the message.

My wife, Beverly, is the first editor who reads everything for grammar, punctuation, syntax and spelling. Without her constant encouragement to be a better grammarian, this message is lost in my curious literary style as a stream of consciousness thinker and writer. Thank you, Beverly, for holding my feet to the fire of your clarity.

Three other readers represent different points of view. Marilyn Ericson is a long-time critic whose advice usually is, "Cut it in half and send it back to me." Marilyn reads for clarity and is gifted to find a lot of little things like verb agreement. Nedra Elbl is one who understands what I want to convey; her unusual gift is the insight to clarify the message. Pastor Emily Meckley represents the young-clergy point of view, and she reads for the big picture on how this message is received by Post-Modern clergy. The work of my B&B readers assures a higher class product. I am in their debt.

A special note of gratitude is given to The Foundation at the Salina (KS) Trinity United Methodist Church who agreed to be a repository for tax-free donations to support the publication and distribution of my books. This is a special group who decided to invest in this effort. Without their financial support you would not have this material in your possession. Their names are listed without reference to the amount of their support because the sum of their effort is needed to insure the future publishing of this series. These are:

Publication and Marketing Donors Listed Alphabetically by Last Name		
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These donors are special people. They are taking a chance on both the author and the material. Somehow they catch a vision not unlike Abram and

Sarai who are called to a foreign land that Jaweh will make known to them when they get there. There is something of wandering in the desert in this support as well. God is to be trusted!

Finally, the caveat: To those—in any category—I’ve inadvertently not recognized for their special contribution, I offer my sincere apology. For the creativity and free use of metaphors I take full responsibility; how I wish I could claim ownership, but it comes from a deep place in my spiritual innards. Finally, this document—like the others, is a Revelation – so WAKE UP!

Pastor Bill
Salina, KS
November 2012

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Introduction

One Mission - Two Objectives:

Bible Studies in the Gospel of Mark

Welcome to the study of the Gospel of Mark.¹ *The One Mission of this Gospel is summarized in the statement, "Wait until you discover the end of the story and then everything will make sense."* By turning to **Mark 16:9-20**, you'll discover that the resurrection material is a later addition. Some editor couldn't stand the idea that Mark didn't have a "rest of the story" ending, so the redactor added one and took away the mystery that Mark wanted to leave for us. It is in anticipation of our awakening that Jesus is born in our human experience and into our personal and corporate lives. This sets the stage for the Good News. To be awakened is to embrace our two natures as human (natural) and humane (spiritual) beings

A unique method makes sense of the Gospel:

The focus of *The Trinity New Testament Bible Commentary* is the use of a unique system for applying a contemporary Post-Modern system to ground the Good News by pulling our human and every-day experience through the biblical material. This system is named Gut Trip Analysis in which the question is, "What is your experience?" Consequently, for those seeking information regarding the historical positioning of Mark's materials, they are directed to more traditional commentaries.

The structure of Mark's gospel:

The Gospel of Mark is both beautiful and curious. It is beautiful because the message forms an arch: *The First Objective is described in Chapters 1-8* begins in northern Palestine, and *The Second Objective begins in Chapters 10-16* as we journey down south to Jerusalem. The keystone holding both arms of the arch together is Chapter 9 where the story of the Transfiguration takes place and where Jesus gets his marching orders from Elijah and Moses to leave Galilee and head for Jerusalem and death.

A Gut Trip Analysis names Mark the "secret gospel." Jesus constantly warns people not to tell who healed or fed them because all is revealed at the resurrection. In this way Mark's story begins with the baptism by John the Baptizer fulfilling the prophesy of Isaiah. Baptism, as a symbol of death and resurrection, begins the story and anticipates the end of it.

¹ A one-page chart of the Gospel of Mark is available FREE on the web at www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy.

Baptism and resurrection in Mark's Gospel:

The ultimate message of Mark is the resurrection. It is not accidental that he begins by defining the role of John the Baptizer and the baptism of Jesus. To this end the first eight chapters (in Galilee) address the brokenness of those in the Early Church, and the last eight chapters (in Jerusalem) focus on the demonstration of rebirth.

In baptism the resurrection is implied. Assuming the water is the symbolic agent, what happens in baptism is the act of dying and being resurrected. Gut Trip Analysis makes the point that the symbolic act of dying produces an actual death to living only in an outer existence.

Howard Thurman, the mentor of Martin Luther King Jr., wrote in his book, *Meditations of the Heart*," the following:

I am determined to live the outer life in the inward sanctuary. The outer life must find its meaning, and the source of its strength, in the inward sanctuary. As this is done the gulf between the 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 all be one.²

In baptism we awaken to the reality of an inner sanctuary for which we are created to live in the presence of God. This is a Garden of Eden existence where we live in At-One-Ment with our self, our neighbors, and with God experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment. In this way we fulfill the Great Commandment of Jesus to love God, neighbor and self. Our intended creation is to live the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.

The message of Mark—

It is helpful to remind ourselves that each of the gospels is written from the point of view of the resurrection, but it is written as if the story begins in the beginning. The way in which Mark plays on this knowledge is remarkable. The ending Mark does not supply, but Jesus will.

Mark is written in the context of the judgment of God:

At this point it is helpful to recall my axiom regarding the judgment of God. Gut Trip Analysis embraces the notion that God is incapable of punishment as God can only provide forgiving love (agape). What then is the judgment? It lies in my axiom, "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself." For instance, we obey the speed limit, and what is the reward? It is in the respect we gain from our passengers and our highway neighbors, and this means we do

² Thurman, Howard, *Meditations of the Heart*. Boston:Beacon Press, 1999. 173.

not get a speeding ticket. In the event we choose to break the speed limits, what then is our reward? We lose the respect of our passengers; we receive disapproving hand-signals from our highway-neighbors, and there is the possibility of paying a ticket. Where is God in all of this? One way or another, God is smiling as we earn our just rewards.

What are the just rewards for the nation of Israel?

Mark sets the context in the prophets:

Several years ago, a senior pastor of the First United Methodist Church in Colorado Springs, in an unpublished paper, noted that the focus of Isaiah is on the mission of the Hebrews to proclaim to all the earth the love of God. Since God granted them a land that belonged to other people, they never got around to accomplishing this mission because they were either causing war or defending themselves. The warning of Isaiah concerns this failure of purpose and its consequences.

On the other hand, the mission of Jeremiah is to awaken the people to follow the 10 Commandments. Again, they failed in this effort, and Jeremiah enumerated the consequences of their disobedience.

The focus is on the nation rather than on individuals:

Observe that personalism is lost on the Jews. Obedience, or disobedience, belongs not to the individual, but rather to the whole nation. It is observed that contemporary global society has much to learn, because we've lost our national identity at the cost of our individual over emphasis.

Take a moment to look back at the Jewish nation during the years 640 BCE to 515 BCE (Before the Common Era). This is the period of the two massive attacks by their enemies.

The prophets as forth-casters:

Prophets are those who read the signs of their times and forth-cast the penalty for the disobedience of the nation of Israel. Note that the term *forth-cast (forth-telling)* points to an interpretation of the times or situation. This is neither foretelling (like a fortune teller), nor is it forecasting (like the weather person). For example: choosing to speed on the highway is likely to result in a ticket. This is a forth-cast of what can happen under a particular set of circumstances. Fortune telling disregards the present set of circumstances, and sees a future not seen by ordinary people.

The influence of the two major prophets:

Note the two different missions. Isaiah is the mission to spread God's love; the mission of Jeremiah is to return the people to obedience. Later the Pharisees pick up the task of Jeremiah, while Jesus turns to Isaiah to context his own purpose.

Jeremiah and the Assyrian Exile---

The prophet (forth-caster) Jeremiah (640-580 BCE) understood what happened to the Northern Kingdom during the Assyrian captivity of 740 BCE. The new Assyrian Kingdom took ten of the tribes of Israel into exile into Assyria from which they never returned. These 10 Lost Tribes of Israel claim only a time of restoration that began in 536 BCE roughly 100 years later.

Jeremiah's purpose:

The message of Jeremiah notes the present collapse of the nation. The meaning of their captivity in Assyria is due to their disobedience in following the Laws of Moses. The code word here is The 10 Commandments. Consequently, the reward for their deeds is found in their deeds; their reward is their slavery. **Isaiah and the Babylonian Exile---**

The prophet (forth-caster) Isaiah (born in the later 8th C., and who died in the mid-7th C.) lived during the time of the Babylonian captivity of 586 BCE. King Cyrus of Persia took over the Babylonian kingdom in 538 BCE, and graciously returned a vanguard of Jews to rebuild the 2nd Temple in 515 BCE. Scholars acknowledge that the majority of those taken into exile died while in captivity. Nearly 140 years later, in the mid-400's BCE, their children returned to Israel.

The most common understanding is that First Isaiah (Chapters 1-39) is pre-exile, and Second Isaiah (Chapters 40-66) is pre-return. Some scholars observe a time line that records at least three expansive episodes covering a period of 200 to 300 years that are obviously beyond the life-time of those living. There is the suggestion that the Third Isaiah is located in Chapters 55-66. It is enough to say that Mark builds on the foundation of Second Isaiah, whose purpose is to anticipate the return of the Israelites to Jerusalem.

Isaiah's purpose:

The message of Isaiah points to the failure of the Nation of Israel to deliver the Good News of God's covenant to their neighbors. The reason for this failure is apparent; the history of the People of God is they had little time to be evangelistic because they were busy with their self-defense.

It is interesting to note that in the Babylonian Exile the Hebrews continued to practice the principles of their belief. In so doing, God accomplished through the Exile what the people failed to do on their own. The promised return is left to the Persian King Cyrus, who sends the people to home and temple in Jerusalem. For this action, Cyrus is known as the Messiah. 2nd Isaiah records,

This is what the Lord. . . who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd (*Messiah*) and will accomplish all that I please: he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid."³

³ Selected verses: **Isaiah 44:2-28.** (NIV)

View Mark's gospel through the context of Isaiah:

It is not by accident that the Prophet Isaiah is quoted by Jesus. The opening verses in Mark's gospel anticipates the message of John the Baptist summed up in **Isaiah 40:3, 4**; Mark associates John as the messenger anticipated by Isaiah. Then, in **Luke 4:18, 19**, Jesus sets the context for his own ministry in **Isaiah 61:1, 2**.

The organization of our study of Mark's gospel:

This book reports on 14 lessons in Mark. Each lesson is the experience of those attending the "IHOP Bible Study," that is renamed, "The Trinity Bible Study." Each lesson is a report of one of these studies. To this material is added the on-line SermonStarter material representing the appropriate gospel lectionary references associated with each lesson.

At the end of each Lesson is a short statement about the key insight. A lexicon of Gut Trip Analysis transliterations is located at the end of this study.

LESSONS IN GALILEE

- Section 1 The Objective to heal a broken people/world
 - Lesson 1: Really in the world
 - Lesson 2: To make whole a broken people and to call awakened followers

- Section 2 The Tools of power and teaching others to use them
 - Lesson 3: Teaching the Kingdom of God
 - Lesson 4: Demonstrating Jesus' Power
 - Lesson 5: The struggles of the faithful and unfaithful

THE TRANSITION TO THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION

- Section 3 The New Objective: Awakening the World
 - Lesson 6: Demonstrating his authority
 - Lesson 7: New marching orders
 - Lesson 8: Awakening the spiritually blind

LESSONS IN JERUSALEM

- Section 4 The kairotic moment
 - Lesson 9: The ripeness of time
 - Lesson 10: The offering is ready
 - Lesson 11: Falling through the hole in time

- Section 5 The event of Christ as new birth
 - Lesson 12: The sacrifice and blood offering

Lesson 13: Bewilderment

Lesson 14: Early manuscripts and women

With this foundation laid, let us turn to our study of the gospel of Mark. This is a gospel that moves so fast into the spiritual deeps that it takes our breath away.⁴ So, hang on. Here we go!⁵

⁴ It will be helpful to the reader to be familiar with my book, [Decoding Our Christian Words: From head-trip analysis vs. gut-trip analysis](#). See: www.resurgencepublishing.com.

⁵ In this document, all scripture references are NIV, unless otherwise indicated.

Part I: THE FIRST OBJECTIVE

To heal a broken world and recruit practitioners

Lesson 1: The Objective to Heal Broken People/World

Topic: Mark 1: 1 – 13, Isaiah, John’s baptism, and the desert temptation

To heal a broken world and recruit practitioners	
The Objective to Heal Broken People/World	
Isaiah, John’s Baptism and the Desert Temptation	To make whole a broken people and to call awakened followers
Lesson 1	Lesson 2

This is the first lesson in this series on Mark’s gospel. On the master chart (available to you on line at www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy), this is the first session on, "The Objective to Heal Broken People/World," and given the title, "Isaiah, John’s Baptism and the Desert Temptation" for the purpose of grounding Jesus’ ministry in the symbols of baptism and to build a team for ministry.

I. Read Mark 1:1-13 at one time.

Quick Reference	
<p>Mark 1:9, The theological geography: Coming from Nazareth and going to the Jordan to be baptized is to move from the world to a spiritual experience.</p> <p>Mark 1:10A, Heaven torn open. In Gut Trip Analysis heaven is not a place but a relationship. How does this change what it means to “tear open” heaven?</p> <p>Mark 1:10B, The Spirit like a dove. Observe the use of metaphor.</p> <p>Mark 1:11, The voice from heaven. See Mark 1:10A. Keep this Gut Trip!</p>	<p>Mark 1:12, The theological geography of going to the desert. The desert is an elemental spiritual place.</p> <p>Mark 1:13A, Satan. Think “deceiver,” the Big Liar, or The Illusioner. The lie Satan always tells us is that we are victims.</p> <p>Mark 1:13B, Wild animals. Those At-One with the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>Mark 1:13C, Angels. Think of angels as <i>messages</i> rather than <i>messengers</i>.</p>

<p>Mark 1:14A, The theological geography of John being in prison. What are the prisons in which we find ourselves?</p> <p>Mark 1:14B, The Good News. We are no longer victims but victors.</p> <p>Mark 1:15A, “The time has come.” In a theology of imminence the kairotic times always are in-breaking when we have the eyes to see it.</p>	<p>Mark 1:15B, “The Kingdom of God is near.” Keep this Gut Trip and apply the principles of a theology of imminence.</p> <p>Mark 1:15C, “Repent and believe the Good News.” Repent--Wake up and smell the coffee. Believe—Surrender Good News—The meaning of life is to live in the presence of God.</p>
---	--

II. Verse 1:1

Research the meaning of the following words by running them through your own human experience. This may mean you read some commentary and then take the old code words and make them your own experience.

Gospel

How do we experience the gospel? If it is “good news” then how does it affect us?

Good News awakens us to living as victors and not victims.

Jesus

How do we experience the Jesus factor?

Jesus is the Little Picture of the Big Picture of God experienced as unconditional and forgiving love; i.e., Goodness and/or At-One-Ment.

Christ

How do we experience the Christ factor?

Christ is the experience of the sacrificial spirit.

Son of God

How does an understanding of God as a relationship make a difference?

Using this experience, then how is Jesus the Son of God? What does this do to our personal experience of living the humane life?

III. Mark 1:4

Remind yourself of your definition of “repentance” and then apply it to this phrase, “The baptism of repentance;” *from what* do we turn away, and *to what* do we turn? Gut Trip Analysis affirms that we turn away from living as disobedient people to our intended purpose, and we turn toward living as obedient people.

Note how this results in the forgiveness of sins. Write down your experience of the meaning of these words to you.

IV. Mark 1:13

Who is “Satan?” Actually, the better question is what is Satan? (Make this a Gut Trip Analysis.) Satan is the Big Lie that we are victims to our circumstances and not victors.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material form Sermon Starter – **Mark 1:1-8**

It is the anticipation of our awakening that Jesus is born in our human experience and this sets the stage for the good news of Christmas when God has a surprise for us that we’ll discover at the end of the story. To begin, this discovery explores the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptizer. It is important to the development of this material that we avoid Head Trip Analysis so that we don’t get stuck on rambling theological explanations. Keep your preparation a Gut Trip Analysis by constantly asking, how do I experience this?

A key to Gut Trip Analysis

The question to ask of any scripture code word, such as God, Christ, Jesus, Holy Spirit, sin, heaven, hell, etc. is, “How do I experience this term?”

The Theological focus is on Repentance

In Gut Trip Analysis this is the experience of looking for the meaning of life in a direction that leads from our separation of individual and social pain. When we turn away, to repent from destructive patterns, we begin to experience a deep satisfaction that results in individual and social peace in ourselves and our other relationships.

In order for this material to be experienced as Good News, it is necessary to ground the following:

Define repentance and think of some examples of this theological dynamic:

Repentance is the experience of turning to face in a new direction. Observe that this does not change our situation, rather it changes only the way in which we are looking for solutions.

Clarify in your mind and experience John’s baptism of repentance. John used water as a symbol of cleansing the people.

Note that the Greek worldview is based on dualism:

God is absent in a kingdom in the upper portion from which God sends out angel messengers and finally God’s son. The lower portion of this dynamic is the human world characterized by the angst of death. The way in which we escape death is by going under the waters of baptism to die to the things of this

world. When we arise out of this watery grave we rise up to live in the presence of God.

Clarify in your mind and experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit:

In Gut Trip Analysis, the Holy Spirit is a wake up call to find the meaning of life in the experience of resurrection. The gift of the Holy Spirit is our experience of freedom: we are freed from defining our lives by worldly measures and given the freedom to define our lives in obedience to Perfect At-One-Ment or to Goodness.

Another key to understanding Gut Trip Analysis

The Doctrine of the Atonement:

Humans are created to measure ourselves by At-One-Ment, rather than any measure provided by worldly or natural standards. Good, in this context, is not a moral category, i.e., of being naughty or nice. Instead, Goodness is an ontological or indicative context; i.e., we *are* created good, and to do good things in order to bring ourselves into compliance with At-One-Ment. As we do this, and it happens all of the time, we are standing in the presence of what tradition names as God.

Isaiah 40:3. Recall the pre-exile significance of **First Isaiah** in chapters **1 to 39**, while chapters **40 to 66** are considered to be **Second Isaiah** and relate to the anticipation of returning from exile. Mark deliberately chooses the quotation from **Second Isaiah**. If you are not already familiar with the elements of what is going on in the two Isaiahs then do some background reading in a commentary. Some scholars promote the idea of a third Isaiah.

In **Mark 1:3**, brood on why Isaiah writes of, “a voice of one calling in the desert.” What are the deserts of life into which Christmas always comes? Recall that it is at night that Christ is born and that the desert is where we live out our lives. The Good News is that Christ comes to live in our desert. His presence is a spiritual oasis.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – **Mark 1:1–8**
Isaiah’s introduction to Mark---

This introduction in Mark really intrigues me. For some reason I’ve never separated this passage from the information about John the Baptizer. Clearly it is a contextual statement that needs its own treatment.

The message in Isaiah 40:3 is a “going home message”---

King Cyrus, the enlightened King of Persia, sends the Hebrews back to their home land and ends the Great Exile. The interesting insight is that while the Hebrews are in exile they accomplished their mission of spreading the love of God to all the world demonstrating that God can not be defeated. Getting Israel back “home” is the problem.

Home defined:

Gut Trip Analysis chooses to treat the word “home” in an emotional and theological context and not just geographical. Often you’ll see my message, *“Treat this as theological geography.”* For the Jews, home means to live in Jerusalem because this is where God lived with them. Consequently, home is experienced whenever and wherever people are fully aware of God’s presence. We become aware of God’s presence when we feel a deep sense of satisfaction or we experience At-One-Ment with neighbor, self and God. In this way we fulfill the Divine Commandment.

Baptism of Repentance:

Baptizer John uses water as the symbol for cleansing. Concerning the spiritual road work required by 2nd Isaiah, this is something the Hebrews did for 600 years to the time of Jesus. Now, John’s message can be summarized, “Do you want to go home? Then you’ve got to clean up your act.” To do this John required repentance—to turn around to see where you’re going, and to accept the forgiveness of sins—to awaken to the experience that God loves you although you’ve failed in your assignment to fulfill your intended purpose of living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy. In this way, sin is missing the mark.

The Covenants defined:

An interesting side note to this is the change in our covenanted relationship with God. In the Old Testament God makes our relationship conditional: *“If you keep the commands of the Lord your God and walk in obedience to him,”* then the Lord, *“will establish you as his holy people.”*⁶ However, in the Letter to the Hebrews the writer makes it abundantly clear that God changed God’s mind;

This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. *“I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”*⁷

Baptism of the Holy Spirit:

Gut Trip Analysis maintains that the nature of the Holy Spirit is seldom fully grasped. The word “holy” implies something that is experienced as healthy, whole, respectful, appreciated, and even joyful. The word “spirit” implies air. In this context the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is to receive the breath of God. Gut Trip Analysis transliterates this as the experience of awakening, health, wholeness and authenticity.

Actually, all of creation cannot get along without the breath of God. The breath of God is our “is-ness.” Just as a cow is a cow because of its “is-ness,” then the same is true of the rock, tree, birds of the air, and even humans. The

⁶ Deuteronomy 28:9 (NIV)

⁷ Hebrews 8:10 (NIV)

difficulty in grasping this reality is our self-consciousness or ego. It is in learning to discipline our ego, to set aside our desire for spiritual independence, and to fully embrace our total dependence on God. When we do this, we experience a deep sense of significance and integrity. We awaken to our is-ness that is to live the humane and gracious life, and we are at peace.

The Good News:

Mark, through the lips of Baptizer John, makes this point, how do we get home? How do we finish our spiritual road work? Just wait, John announces, there is, "One more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit;" in this way he demonstrates how we get "home."⁸

THIS SCRIPTURE: Material form Sermon Starter – Mark 1:9-15

Recently I made the point that when we wear Jesus Glasses (to live through Christ) we can see things that those who do not have Christ as the context for their lives can not see. For instance, we can see three Wise Gentiles coming to view a Babe in a manger. With Jesus Glasses they can see this is the Son of God, the Savior of the world. Interestingly, I mentioned that when we have Jesus Ears we can hear angels sing. When we have a Jesus Nose we can smell the incense of God's love permeating our pores.

The word Epiphany means revelation. The task of preaching during this season is to reveal the Good News of Jesus Christ that—while we are victimized—we are not victims but victors. Jesus is the Christ Event in our lives that awakens us from spiritual sleep and turns us around in repentance to look at life through the eyes of At-One-Ment. It all begins in baptism.

The Experience of the desert and of home—

The desert:

Repentance theology makes the point that when we are looking in the wrong direction our lives are miserable, and we make others miserable as well. In fact, when we are miserable then God is too! The solution is for us to turn around to look in a new direction. The result is that our lives are happier, others are happier with us, and God smiles. When we look in the wrong direction we are looking at *desert experiences*. Conversely, when we turn to look in a new and a wholesome direction, we are looking at *home experiences*. Sometimes, I use the image of *home as The Oasis of Spiritual Refreshment*.

The experience of home:

Throughout the gospels this is a persistent theme. Jesus tells his disciples, "Let's go over to the other side." Sometimes this is over to a *desert experience* where he encounters the demoniac or other such suffering life. On

⁸ Mark 1:7, 8.

other occasions, Jesus crosses over to *home experiences* where he preaches to the crowds and heals people.

Gut Trip Analysis makes the point that, 1) we exist in the deserts of life, but home is where we experience the completion of life; 2) our big problem is we live so long in the desert that we think this is home, but it is not. Our home is living in Christ.

Observe, this does not change the desert, but it changes us by changing our relationship to the desert. Christianity is not an escapist religion; we do not escape the desert experiences, but Christians learn to embrace our physical and natural lives so that they are not our enemies. In this way, Christians do not allow the desert to determine our attitude; we chose to live as victors and not victims.

Christ determines our attitude:

This is the significance of the Cross (victimization of the desert), the Death (in which we die to the notion we are victims), and the Resurrection (in which we choose to be victors in spite of—or even because of—the desert).

This is important! Once we wrap our minds around this experience we know what it means to be saved; that is, we know from what we are saved (victimization), and we know to what we are saved (victory!).

Defining the proclamation in Kairotic times---

Because life is messy and often difficult we respond by living in denial that life can be anything else; we allow our human situation to define us. Yet, it is the messy times, those moments when we are un-prepared, that events happen to us that offer us the opportunity to awaken to define ourselves by the Christian story. This in-breaking can happen to us when we are called to account for our behavior. My personal testimony is that my call into the ministry occurred at a summer camp after my pastor confronted me to behave or go home. Twenty-four hours later at the final camp fire, I awakened to live a more authentic and humane life. The message of Jesus is, "Wake up and embrace life as it is defined by Jesus Christ." Such events can be as common as a red light in the rear view mirror, or as earth-shattering as a jail sentence, or a death of a pet.

Lent is the time to go deep:

This is what to expect during Lent. We are starting a journey into our inner life to prepare us to secure the abundant living represented in the Easter experience. The goal is to re-discover the significance of the new life that never goes away but gets hidden behind too much human experience. Lent is the time to strip away all of our denial and disillusionment; this is what we deny ourselves as a Lenten exercise.

During Lent we share tools to get our dying done, so that we can fully appropriate the Easter experience.

The season of Lent strives to strip away all that prevents us from fulfilling our intended creation. God's intended purpose is for us to live wholly and abundantly as human/humane people in At-One-Ment with neighbor, self and God as Perfect At-One-Ment. In this way we fulfill the Great Commandment of Jesus Christ.

Mark 1:9B, The Jordan River as a "River of the Spirit"

Some Insights take awhile. I knew that I wanted to treat the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan as a metaphor for "Rivers of the Spirit." Finally, it dawned on me that such rivers are found everywhere. My earliest spiritual reservoir is a youth mentor. Another mentor is an encounter with Roy Burkhardt, a deep prayer warrior. In my life there are "rivers" of para-church ministries such as the Taize community in France, and the global work of the Ecumenical Institute/Institute of Cultural Affairs out of Chicago with whom my family and I lived for eleven years. Add to my list the more formal church rivers like the Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C., and the super ministries that feature small groups and service projects at the Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, and the Church Under The Bridge in Waco, Texas. A smaller, yet powerful river, is found in the ministry of the director of our local Rescue Mission, or in the 18-year ministry of a Kansas camp director.

The lesson to be learned is that all of these mentors and ministries represent rubbing my nose in sacrificial service. Recently, my local church pastor and preaching mentor, is leading our congregation to the place where every member is involved in some kind of community service or church mission.

I believe these people and places are rivers in which we can cleanse our personal desert experiences.

What do you think? What are the Rivers of the Spirit in which you are washed?

Desert Experiences:

Frequently, I ask subscribers to take biblical references and treat them as theological geography, time, or events. This supports the Gut Trip notion that every word, event, place and object in the bible is to be treated metaphorically. Each lectionary reading is written like a movie in which every object, every word, every background piece or song, supports the message of the movie; nothing is extraneous to the plot.

When Mark tells us that Jesus left Nazareth and went to Galilee, then Mark is telling us that Jesus left one hell-hole for another. After his baptism in the Jordan (the archetype of the Spiritual River), he is sent to The Desert (the archetype of our human experiences) for 40 days and nights to be tempted and to teach Satan three lessons. Nighttime is another metaphor for the kairotic time in which we meet Jesus.

Isn't this our own personal story? My son dies at 21 with leukemia, my niece has a breast removed, my friend is raped, and my high school students are

bullied. In each instance, isn't this where we find our personal deserts? In each instance I am awakened to the presence of Jesus. Why, because Gut Trip Analysis allows us to see Jesus in every human experience. This is a lesson that Mark teaches us.

What if we decide to wash the sandy grit of the desert in one of our Spiritual Rivers? In such waters Jesus is waiting for us to open our eyes. When we finally do get our spiritual eyes washed open isn't this experience *like heaven being torn open and the Holy Spirit landing on us like a dove?*

We all live in human deserts of angst and discomfort, but Jesus demonstrates that the desert is not out to get us, and Jesus shows us how to survive both the desert and temptation.

We get a deep sense of satisfaction by discovering Jesus in our personal deserts.

Lent is a time to strip away all the things unnecessary for living the humane and gracious life.

The key insight in Lesson 1

How can we live in the world?

Our Spiritual Existence and our Desert Experience:

The world is a lot deeper than we traditionally understand. Jesus is aware we are created to live dependently *on* God in a *spiritual existence* that leads to freedom from fear and death, while our *desert-experience* offers us independence *from* God, but leads to despair and the anxiety of death. The desert experience deceives us into accepting that the desert life is all there is, while our spiritual existence moderates, transforms, and makes meaningful the desert experience. Jesus is aware that we live in these two simultaneous worlds.

The desert experience is adept at keeping us asleep to the reality of our spiritual existence. One way we die to the influence of the desert experience is in the act of baptism. It is for this purpose that John the Baptizer baptizes Jesus. When we come up out of this watery grave we begin the journey to illuminate the spiritual resources available to us to make humane our desert experience.

At this early point in the Jesus Story, the act of baptism becomes a foreshadowing of the baptism of the cross.

Lesson 2: The Objective to heal broken People/World

Topic: Mark 1: 14 – 3: 19, To make whole a broken people and to call awakened followers

To heal a broken world and recruit practitioners	
The Objective to Heal Broken People/World	
Isaiah, John's Baptism and the Desert Temptation	To make whole a broken people and to call awakened followers
Lesson 1	Lesson 2

This is the second lesson in this series on Mark's gospel. On the master chart (available to you on line at www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy), this is the second session on, "The Objective to Heal Broken People/World," and given the title, "To make whole a broken people and to call awakened followers," for the purpose of grounding Jesus' ministry in the symbols of baptism and to build a team for ministry.

I. Read Mark 1:12–13 in one reading.

How does making the "desert" a theological issue change our understanding of Mark's message? The deserts are closer than we'd like. Think of the daily grind of the office car pool, preparing the weekly sermon when we are dry of new ideas, teaching unresponsive children in Junior High, hearing an unexpected diagnosis by the vet, being in a rush to do errands and having a fender bender, trying to quit smoking, etc.

Speculate on the significance of this experience for Jesus.

II. Mark 1:14–20, 2:13–17, 3:13–19

How does a theology of imminence⁹ inform these verses?

Imminence: the quality of being imminent

Imminent: ready to take place; impending

Immanent: within the domain of reality

⁹ Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary. 1969.

If I am walking down the street and experience the nearness of the Kingdom of God, what will I experience? In Gut Trip Analysis, the experience is a deep sense of satisfaction. It is like the farmer who walks a mile into a field to get his tractor only to discover it is out of gas. He walks back to his pickup to get the gas, and carries enough to get it started. Later in the day, a part on the plow breaks, and he takes off for town. As he installs the new part, the wrench slips and he bloodies his thumb. At the end of the day, he looks back upon the ploughed field, the straight rows, the smell of the rich soil, and he thinks to himself, "Now, this is heavenly!" The farmer is deeply satisfied.

In Mark 1:16-20, how would you describe the experience of Simon, Andrew, James and John, and why is their response immediate? What is going on here? The call of Jesus to follow him is not an imperative statement. Instead, it is a moment of recognition of the meaning of life; it is an ontological event. We understand this when we know our call into the ministry is not a job but a vocation.

III. Mark 1:21–34; 1:40–2:12 and 3:7-12

Speculate on the significance of the healings, and to what purpose does Mark use them? Refer back to Section II and the definition of the desert. The significance of healing is that it is us who are healed, rather than the desert. When we awaken to the reality that we are in charge of our relationship to the desert, and that the desert does not define us, then we experience what Jesus means to be healed. This is when the demons cry out, "Have you come to destroy us?" In this sense, the influence of such demons is destroyed.

Define for yourself the experience of evil (theodicy). Keep this Gut Grip or you will lapse into moralism. Think of evil as the experience of the Big Lie that we are condemned to define ourselves by our circumstances; we are victims. It just is not the case!

Christians define ourselves by Jesus Christ who *intentionally chooses* to die to his political and religious circumstances. In this way his circumstances could not defeat him, and by doing this he destroyed—once and for all time—the notion that we are *victims*. It is when we define ourselves by the experience of Jesus that we experience our freedom as a resurrection.

With this definition in mind, what is the significance of being filled with an "evil spirit," "demon possession," "leprosy," or "paralytic?"

IV. Mark 1:35–39

How do you describe your “solitary place” where you go to pray? How is this accomplished in a world where the noise and busy-ness of life cannot be avoided? How does living in our inner spiritual cave help us?

Mark 1:38–39, Jesus describes his purpose as, “Coming to preach.” Gut Trip Analysis is what he preaches. This is the danger of putting into practice these methods because preaching begins to define what we are and what we do. Get a hold on the Good News and we become evangelists. The caveat is we need to practice what we preach; make the Good News good news.

V. Mark 2:18–22

This is the first confrontation between the people and Jesus. The disciples of the Baptizer fasted because they were not aware the “bridegroom” was with them. The “bridegroom” is with us when, like fish we become aware of our dependence on the water. We can always tell when we are in denial, or we forget this reality, because we flop around and gasp for spiritual air. The message of Jesus is, “Wake up and surrender your independence,” God provides the water you need.”

Speculate on your experience of old patches and the new.

VI. Mark 2:23-27

How is Jesus the “Lord of the Sabbath?” In what ways does this information change our experience of doing Sabbath?

Doing the Sabbath becomes a stumbling block when we let the ritual become the meaning. We do the Sabbath when we practice surrendering our lives to live in God; this is when we use Jesus as the sponge through which we pull the meaning of our human existence. It is like scratching the cross on each lens of our glasses so that everything we see is observed, “through the cross.” It is like saying, “I need a new pair of shoes, and asking WWJD?” This is not to say we don’t get the shoes, but we stop to ask the question so that we become self-aware that the shoes are not defining us rather than Christ defining what we need. In such instances, I like to think of the story of Job—as unpleasant as this may be—but he defined himself by God even in the event there was no such God. Interesting, isn’t it!

What does this reveal about our role as the daughters and sons of God?

Keep it Gut Trip!

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – **Mark 1:4-14**

The nature of evil—

Evil is the most misunderstood experience in Christian theology. Our problem with evil is we make it an object rather than an experience or a relationship.

What evil is not:

Evil is not having bad things happen to us (i.e., cancer, 9/11, hurricanes, abusive relationships, etc.), nor are we evil when we do mean things to other people or they do hurtful things to us. This is just “The Way Life Is” or TWLI. People die of cancer because of TWLI. Dumb people fly airplanes into buildings or into the ground because of TWLI. I like the bumper sticker, “S- - t Happens!” These things are simply TWLI.

Evil is the Big Lie and the illusion of the truth:

Evil is an illusion of truth that while we are victimized, we have the choice of living as victims or as victors. To live as though we have no choice in the matter is a lie. The resurrection proves that we can choose to be VICTORS in spite of being victimized because we are in charge of our choices. No one else can choose for us, unless we allow them to make the decision for us. Consequently, evil is the lie that we are victims. It always is a lie.

When we personify evil, we call it the Demon, the Devil, or Satan. These are metaphors used to describe the experience of being victimized. These personifications promote an illusion as the truth. The point is that Evil is Illusion; it is not the truth. The resurrection of Christ dispels the lie that we are victims rather than victors.

Once we get our minds around this definition, we have a powerful therapeutic tool to counsel those who are suffering. We can disabuse them of the notion they are victims; they are not victims unless they choose to be. The Good News of Jesus Christ is that while we live in the deserts of victimization, the authentic life is lived through the victory of Christ’s life, death and resurrection.

This is the Good News. In this we find awakenment, life, and freedom in Christ!

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 1:14–20

The word Epiphany means revelation. The task of preaching during this season is to reveal the Good News of Jesus Christ. All such *events*, mundane and extraordinary, awaken us from spiritual sleep and illuminate the reality of our inner spiritual dimensions. For instance, an ordinary event of being called to the Principal’s Office, or the special event of the birth of a puppy, give us insights into living in the presence of God. The end result of such events is At-One-

Ment, a phrase based on the Doctrine of the Atonement that spells out its meaning. Our experience is a deep sense of peace in which we are At-One with ourselves, with our neighbors, and with God whose name is Perfect At-One-Ment. You will note this formula is the Greatest Commandment.¹⁰

The Theological focus: Epiphany is a wake-up call.

Ground the following before you begin.

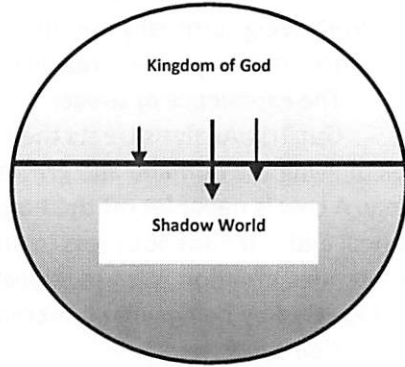
1. **Good News**

Definition: God loves us.

Experience: Looking in the mirror and saying, “Yes! I’m OK just as I am, and then sing, “Just as I am, without one plea. . .”

2. **Kingdom of God**

In Mark’s gospel, this phrase represents the Greek worldview of dualism. God is absent in a supernatural perfect kingdom located “above” the realm of a shadow reality in which we exist while embracing the angst of death. It is from God’s Kingdom that messages (angels) are sent, and God’s son is sent to live among us.



3. **Nearness of the Kingdom of God**

Nearness does not imply

geography but rather the immediacy of the in-breaking moment when enlightenment or awakenment occurs. The awakenment of God can come at any moment; the messages of our freedom arrive like a thief at night. What is anticipated is the birth of awakenment to free us from slavery to the angst of death.

4. **Fishers of people** (Come on! Get with gender appropriateness.)

This phrase is a metaphor that is appropriate for those living in a fishing economy. No longer is the focus on self-support but shifts the called to the awakenment of others. Gut Trip Analysis affirms that not to be gender conscious is idolatry. Think about it.

5. **Galilee** (Treat as theological geography.)

The Galilee of our human experience is that this is the place where we experience Perfect At-One-Ment with God, neighbor and self and fulfill the Great Commandment of Christ.

The one thing to get said in **Vs. 20**, is, “Don’t get left in the boat.”

¹⁰ **Matthew 22:37–40.**

The one emotion to share is the warming embrace of Christ. As we surrender we melt into a relationship with Christ who is Living Water.

It is in anticipation of our awakening that Jesus is born in our human experience and into our personal and corporate lives. This sets the stage for the Good News. According to Mark, God has a revelation to make that we'll discover when we get to know the "rest of the story" after we experience our own awakening that is a moment of personal resurrection.

When we experience the following we experience an Epiphany---

Repentance:

Repentance is an active verb in which we need to repent *from* something and repent *to* something. Fundamentally, we repent when we turn away *from* living spiritually asleep, and we repent when we turn *to* the amazing experiences of living in the presence of God.

The experience of Grace:

Gut Trip Analysis treats the topic of grace as never being let off the hook of living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy. A cow is never let off the hook of being a cow. Humans, because of our free-will and self-consciousness (ego), get us in trouble by missing the mark of our intended creation. We are expected to worship God just as the cow worships God by being what it is created to be.

God's judgment:

Judgment always is misunderstood because we associate it with punishment for falling short of an expected goal. Instead, God never directly judges us because, "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself;" i.e., when we cheat on tests at school, we can anticipate getting caught by the teacher, and God cries. On the other hand, when we do not cheat, we will not get in trouble, we earn the respect of our classmates, and we have the good feeling of fulfilling our intended purpose of living the humane and gracious life. Make note that this formula is the Divine Commandment of Jesus. God's judgment always is Tough Love for failing to achieve our intended purpose of living the humane and gracious life. Cheating is not living the humane life.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 1:21–28

One caveat — I found it impossible to reflect on this material until I defined and grounded in my personal experience Mark's use of the term Authority and the term Hopelessness. The key is to define the word and then to describe our experience of it. This is the only way to appropriate the significance of these terms.

Authority:

Authority is the result of fulfilling our intended purpose. A cow fulfills its purpose by being a cow. The same is true for a bird or a rock or a tree. Jesus gets his authority from demonstrating the fully awakened life. We humans get our authority in the same way.

Evil:

Gut Trip Analysis interprets the term “evil” as hopelessness. Evil, from this perspective always, is the Big Lie convincing us that we are victims living in hopeless situations; this is our cross to bear. The message of Jesus is that we can be victors because Jesus is the first born whose demonstration is that while we are victimized, we do not need to live as victims. The resurrection proves that we can live the victorious life.

Evil Spirit:

The presence of the Big Lie is that we are victims when we are created to be victors. The demonstration of Jesus intentional death reveals the Big Lie for what it is.

Holy:

Holiness is fulfilling our intended creation of living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy. Holiness is not something we achieve, rather it is something we are, always has been, and always will be. This is an indicative condition and not a moral category; we are created holy.

Holy One:

The use of this term by Mark is to emphasize that Jesus lives the fully awakened life and demonstrates for all of us what it means to embrace our intended creation.

Capernaum:

Consider this location as spiritual geography. It is the place where people live their ordinary lives in the world.

The one thing to get said is that our hope is found in living in the shadow of Jesus’ integrity.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 1:29-39

Epiphany is a period of eight weeks during which we explore the Good News that is revealed to the Gentile world. The Wise Ones are gentiles who awakened to the reality of the Christ in their lives. They are the vanguard of the awakened people that one day will be named Christian.

Metaphorical treatment—

Several words used in this lection are treated metaphorically and then extrapolated into social concepts. It is the contention of Gut Trip Analysis that this is how the early church treated these stories anyway. The truth remains the

same if they are applied to individuals or to the social realities in which they lived. For example:

The Synagogue:

When treated as a theological metaphor, the synagogue becomes a safe place and a home for the awakened people. In this lectionary reading it is treated as a home where Jesus is comfortable in preaching to the awakened people who consider the synagogue as a spiritual home. In the context of this lection, Jesus leaves the “safe place” in order to go out into the world filled with dangers where he lives with the un-awakened that Mark describes as those with “fevers” and “demons.”

Fevers and Demons:

In terms of preaching this scripture, it is important that Jesus’ work needs to be lifted into the metaphorical. It is obvious that Jesus leaves a place of safety to go into places where there is trouble brewing. It always amuses me that Simon has a mother-in-law story. However, he must think a lot of her to ask Jesus to heal her. When this story is taken as a metaphor then think of all the ways in which we experience “fevers” in the world today. Several years ago the book *Affluenza*¹¹ pointed out that around the world there is a sickness that leads society into greed.

Concerning the demons, treat them as metaphors. There is plenty of fodder to burn here, in particular the excesses of several individuals and institutions.

Sunset and dawn:

It is the contention of Gut Trip Analysis that the biblical writers used these words as metaphors to remind people that the “dark times” of life are not to be feared because this is where we find Jesus. Jesus is born, dies and is resurrected in the dark.

Preaching:

This scripture is so delightful and charming. Jesus leaves the synagogue where it can be assumed that he is preaching. At the end, Jesus and the disciples are off into the neighboring villages, so that he can continue to preach his

¹¹ *Affluenza*: de Graaf, David Wann, Thomas H. Naylor, *The All-Consuming Epidemic*, The earliest reference: -- Tom Shales, “Rough Cuts From Ann,” The Washington Post. October 25, 1979.

message. What is important for you as a preacher is to keep in mind the message of Jesus: We are not victims, but victors.

The formula of the Good News--

As we affirm/confess that **All is Good**, then the **Present** moment is to be received as a precious gift—this is why we call it the Present. When we embrace this then our **Past is forgotten** and forgiven, and our **Future is open**. I submit that this really is Good News.

The solitary place:

The solitary place where Jesus goes to pray is like going to the filling station to get our spiritual batteries recharged.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter - Mark 1:29-39

Knowing the secret--

What is the secret Jesus and the Leper know? Obviously, Jesus wants it to be a secret, but why? Mark uses this question as the format to formulate his message. Jesus knows a secret, but he doesn't want it known until he appears after the resurrection. No one will understand all of the healings, the walking on water, and the meeting of the Big Three on top of the mountain until Jesus appears following the resurrection. Then everything will make sense.

The interesting thing in Gut Trip Analysis is that in each of the healings, etc., there is a pre-revelation of the meaning of the resurrection. Each little healing is a demonstration of the transformation of life Jesus promises. Interesting, isn't it?

Goodness is not a moral quality-

The word "Good" is a hard word to use because of the presumed understanding of its meaning. If it is good then it must be "conforming to the moral order of the universe." (*Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary. 1969. 360.*) The word "good" used as a theological metaphor does not have moral connotations, rather it speaks to the indicative of being itself; we are Good! The Good has an ontological purpose. This has roots in the argument between Socrates and the Sophists. Socrates assumed that quality is related to the Truth, while the Sophists related the truth to Goodness. Socrates won the argument sending the future into a quest for where the truth would take us. The result is our present state of scientific development. Whereas, Gut Trip Analysis relates to the work of the Sophists—as do the Jews—who assumed that the meaning/significance of life is with God who is experienced as The Good. The Good used in this way does not relate to a moral category, but rather to a state of being; God created everything and said that it is good.

A quote from The Shack:

The book written by William P. Young, *The Shack*, has taken the interest of many people because its theology identifies the work of the Trinity. I have a deep respect for the author's dependence on the idea of relationship to identify the quality of human existence.

Jesus speaks to Mack: "Seriously, my life is not meant to be an example to copy. Being my follower is not trying to be 'like Jesus,' it means for your independence to be killed. I came to give you life, real life, my life."¹²

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 1:40–45
Other words to be considered—

There are a couple of other words that are used as metaphors. However, when identified through Gut Trip Analysis they will not cause you much difficulty. These scriptures concern living a disfigured life; from the point of view of Gut Trip Analysis spiritual leprosy is experienced in our individual lives, as well as in our social existence. There is healing for our disfigured lives. For instance:

Lonely places--

For those practicing Gut Trip Analysis, this phrase will not cause any difficulty. We all live in the "lonely places" as a sign of living on our own independent resources. Yet, this is the very place in which we find Jesus!

Leprosy:

Leprosy can be considered as living a disfigured life because we are out-of-synch with our intended purpose. We all live with some perversions of what it means to live the healthy life for which God created us.

Sacrifice:

This is not a personal sacrifice, but a spiritual and symbolic one. We give up the things that are important to the world in order to explore the things of the inner or spiritual world.

Priest:

The priest to whom Jesus directs the healed leper is the priest represented in all of us. Every human being is set aside and awakened to living our intended fulfillment as humane and gracious people working for justice and mercy; this is our priesthood.

Healing:

In healing we experience being awakened to the deeply satisfying life that we live in the presence of Perfect At-One-Ment. Our self consciousness to

¹² Young, William P. *The Shack*. Los Angeles:windblown media. 2007. 149.

this presence can be named the experience of healing that has physical and spiritual characteristics.

Jesus:

What is the significance, or meaning, of the term associated with the person of Jesus? Who is he and what is his function? From the point of view of Gut Trip Analysis, the man Jesus is the little picture of what the Big Picture of Love (God) looks like. When we want to understand the nature of God we are directed to look at the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus.

What does God want for us? From us?

The only thing that God—experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment—wants *for us* is to fulfill our intended purpose of living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy. God wants *from us* to live the awakened life. Teilhard de Chardin has one of the better definitions of how to identify the awakened life:

We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. Rather we are spiritual beings having a human experience.¹³

Compassion:

The practice of compassion is the demonstration of working for justice and mercy.

Good News:

The Good News is that we are not victims to our circumstances because we define our lives by the example of Jesus Christ. This is the experience of pulling our humane experiences through our Christian faith story.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 2:1–12

This section examines the material on healing paralyzed lives.

Vs. 1, Entering Capernaum as going home

Think theological geography. Think of Capernaum as theological geography where Jesus lives with us. To live in “Capernaum” is the experience of living at peace with ourselves, our neighbors, and finally experience a sense of At-One-Ment with all things. This is what it means to follow the example of Jesus.

Vs. 2B, Preach the word

Announce the news that no longer do we need to define ourselves by worldly standards but rather by the sacrificial example of Jesus as the Christ.

Vs. 5B, Sins forgiven

¹³ Teilhard de Chardin, *Le Phénomène Humain*. (1955)

Sin is experienced as separation and is the antithesis of At-One-Ment; it is living the unawakened life. The forgiveness of our sinful existence is the demonstration of Jesus Christ who intentionally died to living the separated life determined by the Pharisees and Rome. Our sins are forgiven; they already are forgiven so that there is no sense in living as if they are not. An illustration of this human condition is illuminated in the book or video, "Pilgrim's Progress,"¹⁴ the story of Pilgrim who carries his burden of sin on his back until he reaches the foot of the cross. Here his baggage falls away and Pilgrim can see in the distance the Celestial City.

Vs. 7B, Blaspheming

When Jesus forgives sin he is not doing something moralistic as it is assumed by the teachers of the law. Rather, he is doing something in the indicative. When sin is not a naughty category but living the unawakened life, then to forgive this sin is nothing more than restoring the paralytic to living the humane and gracious life.

Vs. 10, Son of Man

Mark uses this phrase, a reference to the image in Daniel, as a way to emphasize the human nature of Jesus.¹⁵ This phrase is used by Mark, as well as other gospel writers, to emphasize the human nature of Jesus. This reference is to an image in the Book of Daniel who sees a figure that appears to be human who comes to rule the earth. In the Early Church this reference is a pre-figuring for the ministry of Jesus.

Vs. 10B, Jesus' authority

From where does Jesus get his authority? He gets it from the same place we get our authority. We get it from living the surrendered and obedient life lived in Perfect At-One-Ment (God).

Vs. 11, "I tell you, get up from your mat and go home."

The *mat* represents the things that paralyze us. Going *home* is living the awakened life; home never left us, rather we left home by choosing to live as victims rather than victors.

Vs. 12. "He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God." Gut Trip Analysis affirms that *praising God* is not something we do ritualistically. Rather, we praise God when we choose to surrender living by the standards of the world and choose to live by

¹⁴ [The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come](#) is a Christian allegory written by [John Bunyan](#) and published in February, 1678. (Wikipedia)

¹⁵ Daniel 7:13-14.

the example of Christ. Observe that praising God is an act that is more than just words or liturgy.

“We have never seen anything like this.”

Oh? We see it all the time when we live with awakened eyes.

The key insight in Lesson 2

What’s in the desert?

We live in the desert, and it is not a pretty picture. It is characterized by:

- + Sickness and fevers that are both physical and social;
- + Uncleanliness requiring us to wash our hands and our minds;
- + Loneliness in the midst of a crowded elevator;
- + Brokenness in body and of soul.

Mark’s response is that our lives are demon possessed. These demons are not our traditional manifestations of red figures with horns and a spiked tail. Instead these demons are messages we believe that lead us to hopelessness; we are victimized by a social illness and that is all there is to life.

OK, where are the good things? Life in the desert is arid, but I have happy moments and a sense of peace that passes understanding. Are these experiences not found in the desert too? The answer is, “No, they are not!” Such pleasant experiences are moments found only in Jesus who is the Oasis in the desert.

It is true we experience these moments all of the time. Just as we fail to name our human life a desert, we fail to name the joys and the peace as living the humane life. This is what marks the difference between living the Awakened and the Unawakened Life. The Awakened can name their experiences accordingly.

Just as Jesus called the Tax Collector Levi, and the 12 Apostles, Jesus is calling Awakened people to name their reality, and then preach this Good News. The human life exists in the desert, while the humane life is lived in the presence of Jesus. In the desert we confront the illusion of reality that, while we are victimized, we are fated to live as victims. Living with Jesus we experience compassion, and the affirmation that we are victors.

Are we waiting for our ship to come in? Jesus has good news for us—our ship is docked! Stop waiting and, “Come Home!”

Lesson 3: The tools of power and teaching others to use them

Topic: Mark 3: 20 – 4: 34, Teaching the Kingdom of God.

To heal a broken world and recruit practitioners		
The tools of power and teaching others to use them		
Teaching the Kingdom of God	Demonstrating Jesus' power	The struggles of the faithful and unfaithful
Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5

This is the third lesson in this series on Mark's gospel. On the chart of Mark's Gospel (available to you on line at www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy), this is the first session on, "The tools of power and teaching others to use them," and given the title, "Teaching the Kingdom of God," demonstrating Jesus' message.

- I. **Read Mark 3:20-4:32** in one reading.
 As you read, recall that we approach our study of Mark by sections and not by chapters. The sections are reported in The Gospel Chart of Mark.

- II. In your research materials, find material describing the "Kingdom of God." During the last century, the Kingdom of God is considered to be "a place" where God lives. Often, we associate this "place" with "heaven." A couple of years ago, the Pope helped get rid of this illusion by associating the Kingdom of God as a relationship instead of an object or place.
 This is helpful because it pulls our theological understanding out of a "Head Trip Analysis" in which "heaven" is an idea about something. Instead, our understanding turns to the human (Gut Trip Analysis) experience of a relationship. This is why Jesus could call God his "heavenly father."
 For our purposes, the Kingdom of Heaven is the Place of At-One-Ment. When God is considered to be the Perfect At-One-Ment, we experience a little bit of God's Kingdom.

- III. **Reflect on the following:**

3:20-30, Satan:

Do a Gut Trip Analysis identifying this satanic dynamic. Remember, keep it experiential! How might this dynamic be represented in a "kingdom divided against itself?"

Satan and the concept of evil is another "Head Trip Analysis," or an analysis about something. This concept is made more difficult by making evil personal, or anthropomorphic: made in our own image. Personally, I believe that Evil and Satan are the most misunderstood of our old Christian Code Words.

Evil is the Big Lie, and Satan is the Big Liar! These figures are always out to convince us that life victimizes us, and there is really No Hope! The "big lie" is that we are born with a choice: we can be victims, or we can be victors.

The difference is that "reality" is never a lie. Reality is filled with pain, disappointment, cancer, death, even joy and deep happiness. Pain never lies to us. None of these is a lie. They are reality. They are The Way Life Is (TWLI). While it is true that all of us are victimized, the choice is ours! When we choose to be victors in spite of (or even because of) our circumstances, we have defeated the Big Lie/Liar.

Concerning a "kingdom divided against itself," God created us as humans to be in harmony and in tune with all that exists ("neighbor, self and God," according to Jesus), or to be in "at-one-ment!" When the Kingdom of God is considered to be "at-one-ment," then a kingdom divided against itself would represent anti-at-one-ment, and hence "divided."

3:29, The Holy Spirit:

Do a Gut Trip Analysis identifying this spiritual dynamic. What would "blaspheming against the Holy Spirit" look like? Keep it a Gut Trip Analysis. Then, remembering that only God is eternal, how can our analysis be an explanation of how we can be guilty of an "eternal sin?"

Cutting to the chase to answer this question, "blaspheming against the Holy Spirit" is doing anything to create anti-At-One-Ment. This is an "eternal sin" because such activity is antithetical to the purpose of the Eternal One — God.

IV. Choose one of the following and do a similar analysis of it: The Parable of the Sower (4:1-20); A Lamp on a Stand (4:21-25 — don't let a few verses fool you.); The Parable of the Growing Seeds (4:26-29); The Mustard Seed (4:30-34).

4:1-20, The Parable of the Sower:

The key words here are, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." In 4:1-8, Jesus uses a straight out simile; "the Kingdom of God is like. . ." From 4:9-20, Jesus does a good job doing a Gut Trip Analysis.

Satan plays a role in the second part concerning the "seeds along the path" and Satan comes and takes them away. In other words, The Big Liar comes

to tell us, "There is no growth in hard soil!" So, what is the lie? Hard soil does make growth difficult; isn't this our human experience?

While all this is true, the Big Liar wants to victimize us, but we have a choice to believe we are victims or victors. Add to this "victimizing" list: trouble and persecution, and the worries of life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desire for things. These things paint a bleak, yet a true picture of living daily life.

All these things are the antithesis of God's purpose for us. God puts us in good soil, and when we "accept it" (awaken to it) then we reap its benefit.

This is another simile, or a comparison to what the kingdom is "like" a Lamp on a Stand. Two phrases reveal the purpose of this section. First, "Whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open." So, what is hidden, except the good news of At-One-Ment? The second revealing phrase is, "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." Obviously, some people have the "ears of awakenment" but fail to use them. Our awakenment is already a given, unless we choose to close them.

The kicker of this scripture is the final statement, "Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him." Curious indeed, until it is read in the experience of "awakenment." The more "awakenment" you use, the more will be given to you!

4:26-29, *The parable of the Growing Seeds:*

The Kingdom of God (the place of At-One-Ment, and/or Awakenment) is like (a simile) grain that is sown, grows and is harvested. The significance of this is that the soil of At-One-Ment belongs to God. The "ripe" harvest is an Awakening. It is important to accept that the "kingdom of God is already within you." We are required to awaken to what is already there.

4:30-34, *The parable of the Mustard Seed:*

Again, Jesus uses a simile. The significance is that the "mighty tree of At-One-Ment already exists within the seed. The Kingdom of At-One-Ment grows more and more as we come to accept its gifts.

V. Be prepared to reflect on the significance of **3:31-35** regarding Jesus' mother and brothers. The purpose is not to get caught up in Head Trip Analysis. When we do Gut Trip Analysis the meaning is clear. The relationships that keep us stuck doing Head Trip Analysis are deadly to us. However, the relationships that keep us awake are the most important, significant and the most personal. The purpose for Christians is to be the awakened.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – **Mark 4:26–34**
Concerning Father's Day:

Please don't miss the significance of this day. For the last 50 years the female part of society has recaptured their integrity and self-consciousness. This is not to say that the women get a better break. Perhaps in some ways they might, but in many ways they don't. Today, it is the male gender I worry about. In fact, it can be said that women will never be treated with equity until men recapture their integrity and self-worth. One only needs to look at our TV ads to realize that the male image is that of a dumb man; this is what we get for all of those dumb blond jokes men tell.

Anyway, Christian men and Christian dads are needed. You have the opportunity to strike a blow for Christian freedom today. Don't miss it!

Living the synthesized life is embracing our outer human experience that is valued by our inner spiritual resources.¹⁶

Howard Thurman

Gut Trip Analysis affirms that living from the inside out is living the synthesized life.

To be God's man is to live the Awakened Life, and this is the experience of living in the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God:

In Gut Trip Analysis every old Christian code word (God, Christ, etc.) can finally be reduced down to two terms of At-One-Ment representing the unity of all things as well as the authenticity of each particular.

Perfect At-One-Ment is a working definition of our experience of God. Note that this is not saying that God is only Perfect At-One-Ment, but it does claim that when we experience living in harmony, or in synch with our intended purpose, then we experience a deep sense of satisfaction and feel a sense of living in At-One-Ment: God

Awakening is the experience of fulfilling our humane essence to live the humane and gracious life. Everything has its own essence; i.e., a cow's essence determines that it is a cow. This is true of a rock, or a tree, or whatever; each thing exudes or emanates its essence. This also is true for us humans.

Our created purpose:

Human beings have two natures. On the one hand, we are human and natural and given to fulfill our natural inclinations and propensities. On the other hand, we are spiritual creatures. Teilhard de Chardin writes that, "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. Rather, we are spiritual beings having a human experience." The story we tell ourselves is that God gives us a

¹⁶ Thurman, Howard, *Meditations of the Heart*. New York:Harper and Brothers Publishers. 1953, 173.

soul in order to transform our natural inclinations and fashion us into fulfilling our humane and gracious natures while working for justice and mercy.

Crossing over to the other side is to get in touch with our spiritual resources to monitor and modify our outwardly human lives and behavior.

The key insight in Lesson 3

The secret of the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is more than we think, and it is not what we think!

Mark makes this lesson both easy and difficult to understand:

It is easy because he reports four parables to describe the experience of the kingdom. You'll note that Jesus speaks in parables because, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you [disciples, i.e., the awakened]. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables. . . "¹⁷ What is the secret we are supposed to know?

The secret is this: We're living in the kingdom as we awaken to the resources of joy, peace, fulfillment, deep satisfaction, compassion and equity. In fact, we live in the kingdom much more than we realize, but we never get around to naming the goodness we experience as the kingdom of God. This is it! This is living in the presence of God; where else will the kingdom of God be but in God's presence?

Mark makes it difficult because:

1. We need to change our views on the nature of the kingdom;
2. He introduces the first of the hard sayings regarding the make up of our authentic family; the answer is, we all belong to the family of God, and this includes our mother and father, and our brothers and sisters;
3. There is a continuing conversation on the experience of evil that is the Big Lie;
4. Difficult material is presented about blaspheming the Holy Spirit. This is not saying naughty words unless these words, and/or actions, create separation which is the antithesis of At-One-Ment. This is a blow to the integrity of God who is experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment.

Relax and enjoy it!

¹⁷ **Mark 4:11.**

Lesson 4: The tools of power and teaching others to use them

Topic: Mark 4: 35 – 5: 43, Demonstrating Jesus’ power

To heal a broken world and recruit practitioners		
The tools of power and teaching others to use them		
Teaching the Kingdom of God	Demonstrating Jesus’ power	The struggles of the faithful and unfaithful
Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5

This is the fourth lesson in this series on Mark’s gospel. On the chart of Mark’s Gospel (available to you on line at www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy), this is the second session on, "The tools of power and teaching others to use them," and given the title, "Demonstrating Jesus’ power," to establish his ministry to the Jews and to the Gentile world.

I. Read **Mark 4:35-5:43** in one reading.

Quick Reference	
<p>4:26A, The Kingdom of God. Don’t get trapped into Head Trip Analysis. The Kingdom of God is a relationship of living and practicing the spiritually Awakened Life.</p> <p>4:26B, Jesus spoke the word to them. Always The Word is that while we are victimized we have the choice to be victims or victors.</p> <p>4:27-29, What does it mean that the following events do not depend on human participation? A-1: Vs. 27, Sprouts grow. The seed sprouts and grows without</p>	<p>A-2: Vs. 28A, What or who is the soil that produces grain? “We are spiritual beings having a human experience.” (Chardin)</p> <p>B-1: Vs. 28B, Stalk, head, full kernel. Illustrates the pattern of our progress towards maturity. (Wesley: Growing to Perfection.) My dad’s progressive revelation of himself as a mechanic, salesman, Scout Leader, bookkeeper, and family poet.</p> <p>B-2: Vs. 29, How do we know when we are ripe? We know we are ripe when we live at peace with neighbor, self, and the meaning of life. This fulfills the Great</p>

any help from us.

4:31-32, What is the significance of the following illustrations?

A-1: Vs. 31, Smallest of seeds.

Our new birth begins in our helplessness, and our awakening becomes stronger in our service to others. My call into vocation. The story of Kris Offer. (Web: St. Christopher)

A-2: Vs. 32A, When planted *[it]* grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants. Living the surrendered life.

4:33, Jesus speaks only as much as the disciples can understand.

We understand only as much as we are awakened.

4:38A, Why is Jesus asleep?

He lives on the "other side" and exists as a dead man walking.

4:39A, "The wind" as theological weather.

We are victimized by our environment. Think: The Hurricanes.

4:39B, "The waves as a theological environment.

We are victimized by our environment. Think: The Tsunamis.

4:39C, When Jesus rebuked the wind and said to the seas, "Quiet. Be still."

What is the Jesus dynamic that quiets the storms of life? Jesus is the reason for the season.

Commandment of Jesus.

5:1-20, The Demon Possessed Man.

See material below for the discussion on the role of the Big Lie (Evil).

5:21, "The other side of the lake."

Theological geography. See the movie/video, "Gran Torino." This is a story of living and loving from the other side of the lake.

5:21-23, 35-43, Jairus' Daughter.

See material below for the discussion on death vs. sleeping.

5:24-34, The sick woman with a bleeding.

See material below for the discussion on victim or victor dynamic.

5:27, "When she heard about Jesus."

Jesus is the "Demonstrator" of living on our Spiritual Resources.

5:29, "She felt in her body that she is freed from her suffering."

Chronic health conditions often are experienced as victimization.

5:30, "The power had gone out from him."

Identify the nature of this power. Any counseling situation saps our spiritual energy.

5:34A, "Daughter your faith has healed you."

The nature of the "faith" is surrender.

5:35, "Your daughter is dead."

Physical death can be experienced as victimization.

5:36B, "Just believe."

An intellectual acceptance to take the leap of faith into the surrendered life.

5:43, He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this.

Read the introductory material concerning Mark's purpose.

II. This reading is the second part of three sections in a group of readings titled, "The Tools of Power and Teaching Others to Use Them." This week's reading demonstrates Jesus' power to alter the human situation (weather and healing). All the stories concern different kinds of "bad weather."

The key point to remember in these readings is the statement, "There is something worse than death. It is never having lived!"

The four stories in this section concern people victimized by their circumstances. The calming of the storm is a story of those victimized by the environment; the demon-possessed man is victimized by demons; the sick woman is victimized by long-term illness; Jairus' daughter is victimized by death. One of the hints in Biblical studies is that when the writer uses the same theme three times--or more--in a row, the message is particularly important.

Using gut trip analysis, what is the experiential lesson taught in these stories?

1) Take seriously the act of Baptism. 2) Practice using your Altar of Spiritual Resources. This altar is discovered on your Spiritual Oasis. This experience is in the midst of the aridity of your human desert and it offers a place of refreshment and inner peace. The altar is located in the deep part of your Spiritual Oasis and contains all of the spiritual resources you'll ever need because these resources are the same ones available to Jesus.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 4:26-29

The one thing to get said is that what it means to be God's representative is to live the Awakened Life. This is the experience of living in the Kingdom of God.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 4:35-41

This is such an easy scripture to preach. It is so existential that everybody can relate to it. Also, while it is frequently a theme for preaching it avoids the problem of familiarity that makes us want to use Head Trip Analysis. From the point of view of Gut Trip Analysis there are four possible titles, these are, "Let's go over to the other side," "Don't you care that we drown?" "Why are you so afraid? And, "Still you have no faith?" Any of these will work.

Crossing over to the other side is to get in touch with our spiritual resources that monitors and modifies our outwardly human lives and behavior. Living the Awakened Life is living in the Kingdom of God. Gut Trip Analysis takes seriously the secular world to see the activity of God within it. What it means to be the People of God is to live the Awakened Life.

4:35–41, *Calming of the storm:*

Jesus uses a "Gut Trip" statement in Vs. 40, "Why are you so afraid?" Our purpose is to answer this question. What is the basis of their "fear?"

Why are the disciples so afraid? They did not learn the lesson of Jesus' Baptism in the first chapter--in baptism we die to this world and we are raised again in the world of the spirit. If we have died to this world, then what in this world can harm us? Bad weather? No. High seas? No. Bad human experiences? No. Death? No.

The disciples did not take advantage of their spiritual resources that is experienced deep within them as their Altar of Spiritual Resources. Like the Disciples, we are asleep to these tremendous resources. Jesus reminds us that if we have faith the size of a mustard seed, we can say to the mountain, move to the sea, and it will move!

However, during our lifetimes, we use only a minuscule amount of these spiritual resources.

A second question raised by Jesus is, "Do you still have no faith?" What is the faith of which he speaks? Be careful to avoid "head trip analysis" in your answer.

Faith is Full Surrender:

"I give up! Do with me what you will." In this instance, the Disciples did not fully surrender themselves, nor did they surrender their situation into God's hands. When we remember that the "reward for the deed is in the deed itself," then we understand that their unfaith is rewarded by fear. The opposite is true when we live in full surrender; the reward for this deed is peace, harmony, and no fear!

There is a sermon here in Mark 4:35-41, the Calming of the storm. My title is, "Don't you care if we drown?" What would be a "life story" to illustrate this sermon? Almost any story told by Paul Harvey will do it because it represents the, "Rest of the story." Most of such stories tell a story of some kind of drowning in life's wild restless sea.

The "other side"---

Gut Trip Analysis identifies the "other side" as the place where our spiritual resources are located. We get to the other side through baptism and then live the surrendered life. We mature to stay "on the other side" while continuing living on this side by choosing the surrendered life.

Evening:

Human experience associates “evening” with “danger.” Gut Trip Analysis associates “evening” as the place to look for God’s presence. Christ is born at night and crucified in darkness, and raised before dawn. Good Grief!

Jesus’ Sleep:

Jesus is asleep because he lives “on the other side” where the storms of life no longer define him. The same can be true for us as individuals and as The Church. Jesus is the one who leads us, “to the other side.” One observer of life shared with me the information that authors represent change and growth by using the imagery of rain and storms.

4:38B, Drowning:

I find the Disciples’ statement highly significant, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” From a Christological point-of-view, this is exactly what Jesus wants us to experience. His whole mission is to demonstrate how to die to the barriers preventing us from living “on the other side.” It is necessary for us to die a death like Jesus in order that we can experience a resurrection like Jesus. In baptism we go into the depth of the water to die to the influence of the world, and we arise out of the water to live in the presence of Perfect At-One-Ment. Isn’t this what we achieve in Holy Communion or the Eucharist? Doesn’t our Baptism mirror The Mass?

Relationship to life’s storms:

Gut Trip Analysis identifies the human experience as a stormy life. This begins in the stories of Adam and Eve, then Cain and Able, the Tower Builders, and Noah. The whole biblical history is a testimony to such storms.

The reason is discovered in our life story; we humans “miss the mark” of living our intended creation. When we miss our intended purpose the result is a stormy life. It is when we surrender— to give up defining ourselves by the measure of the world—that we experience **4:39A** the death of the winds, and **4:39B**, the calm and quiet of life.

Observe, however, that this doesn’t change the worldly storms, but rather this changes us. We no longer define ourselves by the storms, but rather by our relationship to Jesus Christ and the Cross.

The one thing to get said is to define life by our relationship to Jesus’ example on how to “drown.”

Six steps to a transformed life---

The theological application used here: Once this formula is ingrained in your mind it will serve you well. Remember these six brief steps to explain the transformed life.

1. Life victimizes us. Our health, mortality and environment can victimize and discourage us.
2. Fighting our victimization defeats us! When we make an enemy of our human situation, and we make the effort to fight it, then it wins every time!

3. Our freedom comes to us in the choice to take a new relationship to our victimization. We can choose to be victims or to be victors. Our victory comes to us as we decide that our bad health, angst, or whatever ails us is not our enemy.

4. Our decision does not change our situation. What is changed is our relationship to our human circumstance; we can choose not to be a victim. Instead we can choose to be a victor.

5. As we surrender victim living, then we experience a sense of freedom, relief, new life, rebirth, renewal, abundant life, or the peace that passes understanding. Jesus experienced this at his resurrection and so do we.

6. Jesus' life, death and resurrection illustrate this experience. When we experience this sense of release, it can be said that Jesus goes with us.

The background for this understanding is founded on the work of Viktor Frankl and Rabbi Kushner whose psychological material and ministry illuminates the practice of Logotherapy. I apply these principles to Christian theology.

The one thing to get said is to take Jesus with us wherever we go. Because of our human situation with poor health, a mean environment, and the angst of death, it is when we take Jesus with us that we experience the transformation of our human experiences into inner peace and well-being. It is on the "Other Side" where we experience the resources of our Spiritual Oasis that Jesus demonstrates.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 5:1-43
5:1-20, The Demon Possessed Man--

In this episode we meet the Evil Spirit who always is The Big Lie. This man is so filled with living impossibility that he chooses to live among the dead; he is spiritually dead! If the "reward for the deed is always in the deed itself," then the demoniac's reward is quite clear.

There are some scholars who liken all of chapter 5 to the spiritual condition of the Jews at the time of Moses. This early situation is mirrored again in the experiences of the Jews of Jesus' time in which they are sick and possessed by Evil Spirits.

5:21-23, 31-43, Jairus' Daughter--

As you can see here there are two stories in today's lectionary assignment. The interruption of one story by another indicates a mix up by the early translators or redactors. Both stories are used in this material.

The one thing to get said is to note that our human situation is characterized by poor health, a mean environment, and the angst of death, yet when we take Jesus with us, then we experience the transformation of our human experiences into inner peace and well-being.

The common expression for "death" at the time of Jesus is to use the phrase "not dead, but sleeping." So, it is not possible for Jairus' daughter to be "asleep." In this instance Jesus raises the little girl from the dead. This is a story about people being victimized by their situation: the man's daughter is dead. In raising the little girl from the dead, Mark demonstrates two things: 1) Jesus is in full command of his Altar of Spiritual Resources. 2) Christians, when victimized, have a choice between being victims or victors.

The underlying theme here is "awakening." It reminds me of the film/video "Vanilla Sky," that is about full surrender and awakening from spiritual slumber.

Using gut trip analysis, what is the experiential lesson taught in these stories?

1. Take seriously the act of Baptism and its dimensions of death and rebirth.
2. Practice using the Altar of Spiritual Resources. This is a reserve located on our Spiritual Oasis experienced as spiritual refreshment in the desert of our life experiences. It is here that the Holy Spirit is experienced as our freedom to live the surrendered and obedient life in trust on God. Jesus is a prime example of using these spiritual resources, but so is Moses, King David, the prophets, and our contemporary spiritual heroes such as Gandhi, Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa and Rabbi Kushner. Anyone living as the awakened is using their access to these resources, and so can all of us.

5:24B–34, Sick Woman with a bleeding--

The lesson here is the demonstration of the realness of the Spirit. The woman touches Jesus' cloak, and he feels the difference. She touched the cloak in a time of need, and this is different from being jostled about.

This is a common experience. When people come to pastors for emotional, physical, and/or interpersonal help, we can be drained of energy through our intense listening and/or actions. When authentic need meets authentic response, then the energy of the Holy Spirit is entirely palpable.

The actions of Jesus result in the woman no longer being a victim; rather she is now a victor. She is now free from victimization.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 5:21-43

The Other Side:

Frequently, Jesus uses this same image at several places in the gospel's report of his ministry. Gut Trip Analysis is an aspect of Secular Christianity that takes seriously the secular world. We can feel in good company doing this

because our Christian faith story is that God takes seriously the world by sending Jesus into our secular world.

First, note that the “other side” is not actually a place but the description of a relationship to Jesus. When we awaken to fulfill our intended creation of living the humane and gracious lives working for justice and mercy, this is living in touch with Jesus. This is living on the Other Side.

When the lectionary reading in Mark’s Gospel is treated metaphorically it raises some disturbing questions about the health and welfare of the Hebrew Institutional faith. Then, by extrapolation, the same questions can be addressed concerning today’s Christian institution. The answer to both situations is the same: Jesus is the Other Side.

What would it mean for today’s churches to raise the question each Sunday, “What would Jesus have us do?” Does it mean for individual Christians to constantly observe their human circumstances and pull them through the Cross of Christ?

The key insight in Lesson 4

Stormy Weather!

How can Jesus do the following?

1. He has no fear of the physical environment;
2. He is not afraid of drowning;
3. He redefines death;
4. He feels the power go out of him.

How does he do it? He does it out of the resources as the prime demonstration for living the surrendered, obedient and dependent life on God experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment.

Now, “Go home and tell your family how much the Lord has done for you.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Mark 5:19.

Lesson 5: The tools of power and teaching others to use them

Topic: Mark 6: 1 – 7: 30, The struggles of the faithful and the unfaithful.

To heal a broken world and recruit practitioners		
The tools of power and teaching others to use them		
Teaching the Kingdom of God	Demonstrating Jesus' power	The struggles of the faithful and unfaithful
Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5

This is the fifth lesson in this series on Mark's gospel. On the master chart (available to you on line at www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy), this is the third session on, "The tools of power and teaching others to use them" and given the title, "The struggles of the faithful and unfaithful," to establish his ministry to the Jews and to the Gentile world.

- I. **Read Mark 6:1-7:30** in one reading.

Quick Reference	
<p>6:2A, When the Sabbath arrived. Treat as a Theological Event. This is the Awakening Moment. My Sabbath comes as an awakening. This is living the synthesized life!</p> <p>6:2D and 5A, Miracles. Unfortunately, the word "miracle" gets stuck in the old two-story world view. Miracles can be better appreciated as wonders for which there is no rational explanation</p>	<p>6:8, "Take your staff." Theological equipment. Keep sharp your theological tools.</p> <p>6:9, "Take with you sandals, no extra cloak and no money." Theological Instruction. There are implications here for saying no to the illusions of worldliness in order to say yes to the reality of fulfilling our intended purpose as humane and gracious people working for justice and mercy; i.e., live intentionally and awake.</p>

6:10, "Stay where you are."

Theological Situation. There are implications here about being single-minded about our assignment; stay single-minded to our intended creation of living the humane and gracious life.

6:13A, Demons.

Demons are metaphors that trap us into believing the Big Lie that we are hopeless. In this way they represent evil. We are never hopeless as the resurrection proves. Demons are the Liars of self-centeredness; I'm the center of the universe; i.e., Herod's and Herodias' selfishness, self-centeredness, denial and inhumanity.

6:13B, Anoint the sick.

The "sick" are those who are victimized. To anoint them is to awaken them so that, while victimized, they have a choice to be victims or victors. The one thing to get said: To live out of the resources of our spiritual "home town" is to live in touch with wholeness, goodness, quality and humaneness. In At-One-Ment sickness is made well.

6:26, Distressed.

What does distress illuminate about a person's relationship to At-One-Ment?

6:31B, Quiet Place.

Treat as Theological Geography. Think "Spiritual Oasis."

6:31C, To get some rest.

Our physical rest has spiritual foundations when we are really restful. This does not allow for an escape from reality but profoundly engages it. Our rest is within ourselves; we choose to be restful even in un-restful situations.

6:34B, Teaching them many things.

Awakenment to our spiritual resources.

6:56A, Market place.

This is the secular and outward place in which we live. Authentic living is a journey to be in touch with the depths of life. This is what it means to be in touch with Jesus. We experience ourselves as being whole, authentic and in touch with the meaning and significance of life.

7:1A, Pharisees and teachers of the law.

They are spiritually blind.

7:1B, Jerusalem.

Treat as Theological Geography. It is a place of spiritual Awakenment.

7:4A, Market place.

Treat as Theological Geography. A place to meet Christ..

7:5, Tradition of the elders.

Think about religious and denominational traditions.

7:8, The traditions of men.

Think secular and societal traditions.

<p>7:15, Nothing outside us makes us unclean. Everything exists in At-One-Ment!</p> <p>7:16, It is what comes out of us that makes us unclean. Think about the antithesis of At-One-Ment.</p> <p>7:20, Define how, “what comes out of a man makes him unclean.” We are created to live in At-One-Ment. Anything other than this is considered unclear. This is an indicative category and not a moral one.</p>	<p>7:21, What is the significance of this list? Observe that all result in the antithesis of At-One-Ment; the doctrine of the Atonement.</p> <p>7:24, Away to Tyre. Use as Theological Geography. Land of the Outcasts. Think in terms of the south Chicago slums or the San Francisco gay/lesbian community.</p> <p>7:25, Unclean spirit. The “Why me?” Syndrome</p> <p>7:26B, Demon. That which convinces us we are victims of hopelessness and not victors.</p>
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Note that this section of our study chart is on the topic of, "The struggles of the faithful and the unfaithful." This is the last section supporting the larger topic of, "The tools of power and teaching others to use them." With this in mind, reflect on the following:

<p>The following sections concern "faith" or "unfaith." Indicate which are which.</p>	
<p>6:1-6, Jesus is rejected at Nazareth 6:7-13, Sending out the Twelve Disciples 6:14-29, The death of John the Baptist 6:30-44, Feeding the 5,000 6:45-52, Walking on water</p>	<p>6:53-56, Heals the sick in Gennesaret 7:1-13, The teachings of the Ancestors 7:14-23, Things making people unclean 7:24-30, A woman's faith</p>

II. How would you answer the questions in the following?

6:2, "Where did he get all this wisdom?

"What wisdom is this that has been given to him?"

The easy answer is that the source of his wisdom is from profoundly living the surrendered and obedient life dependent on God who is experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment.

6:6, Why is Jesus surprised that the people did not have faith?

Faith is understood as living the obedient and surrendered life dependent on God. To be human is experienced as living the natural life independent of God. Jesus is expressing his dismay at this predicament.

6:12–13, Describe the assignment of the 12 Disciples as they were sent out

Be careful to avoid Head Trip Analysis. The disciples are directed to do three things: preach repentance, drive out demons, and anoint and heal sick people. Let's see if we can decode these things. First, keep in mind this quote from **Romans 14:9** – “For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.”

Preaching repentance:

The basic problem of the human race is that the attraction of the world is so great and all pervasive that we are blind to our intended creation of living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy. Our blindness is that we are living and loving, but we are not aware that this is what we are expected to be doing to fulfill our intended purpose.

Living out of synch:

When we live the humane and gracious life, and we feel deeply satisfied, we never think of naming this experience as our “intended purpose.” It is only when we are out of synch with this purpose, and we are failing to hit the mark, and we get to feeling bad and stressed out, then we name this experience as “sinfulness.”

Watch what happens next.

Repent:

Turn around (repent), and look at what you are doing, and name it with the code words of our Christian lexicon, and God smiles.

Driving out demons:

The fundamental question here is who or what are the demons? The danger is to make the demons what they are not; when we do this, the demons already have won. The demons are not personification of reality. Rather, they are the *message* that we are victims and there is no hope! They are The Big Lie that our circumstances can not be changed; and they are correct. If we lose a leg to cancer, we are not going to grow another one! That's it. We are victimized by cancer, and we are hope-less!

Drive out such demons!

The message of the disciples is this. While our circumstances can not be changed, our relationship to our circumstances can be. We can choose either to be victors or victims. This is the message of Good News: we can decide to be victors who choose to be the best one-legged dancers!!

It is for this purpose that Jesus chooses to intentionally die to the barriers preventing us from making this choice. These barriers are experienced as artificial rituals imposed on us by religious and political history and

institutions. Take, for instance, the marriage of homosexuals. Our political structures prevent Gay marriage, and our religious institutions set up artificial barriers. There is little difference from the political and religious barriers experienced by Jesus. But Jesus dies to the influence of these demons, and then experiences a resurrection to life in freedom from defining ourselves by these worldly institutions.

Hallelujah! Can I have an Amen!

To anoint and heal sick people:

At this point it clearly can be understood that those who are sick are those who have given in to the demons who actually are illusions of reality; they are not real, but they are a message of hope-less-ness. The disciples are to anoint such people with oil.

We easily can identify the sick as those who have problems. I see this in my jail and prison ministries where prisoners always are victims of their circumstances: "I've been abused and abandoned. I'm being punished unfairly." Observe they have little or no concern for what they did to be placed in jail in the first place. Life has victimized them! Yes, it has!

The message I give to them is, "Who is in charge of your attitude?"

The response is said contemptuously, "Well, I'm in charge of my attitude."

"OK, then, you are free to live as a victim or as a victor. Which will it be?"

The reality of their situation is they can be as free on the inside of the jail cell as they can be free on the outside. Their freedom, and ours, does not depend on the jail cell, rather it depends on our choices.

Can I have another amen?

7:14-23, What is it that makes us unclean?

Are we unclean because of our circumstances, or because of our choices to be clean or unclean? There is not clearer statement in the four gospels than this one concerning the nature of our human circumstances, and the choice of how we relate to them as victors or victims. Most bibles point us to **Romans 14:1-12:**

Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written:

“As surely as I live,’ says the Lord,
‘every knee will bow before me;
every tongue will acknowledge God.’”

So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

This is such an important quote, because it sets the context for the important role our human circumstances play, in light of our commitment that these things do not define us. For instance, take the human circumstance of having the flu. Yes, the flu does victimize us. However, the virus causing the flu only is fulfilling its intended purpose; flu viruses are supposed to be viruses; they can not be anything other than what they are created to be and do. Unfortunately, what they do makes us sick.

What choices do we have when we are attacked? First, we get sick. Second, we can damn our circumstances to hell, but my personal experience is that this does not work, and it does not make me feel better. On the other hand, I can decide to be the best sick person around. I can lay back and use the time to rest. Does this change the flu? No, it does not. Does it change my attitude? Yes, it does. I'm no longer a victim, although I remain victimized, but now I've decided to be a victor!

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 6:1-13

One of the attributes of Gut Trip Analysis is to use metaphors as theological statements in order to plumb the significance of life to which the metaphors point. Frequently, and in particular in this set of scriptures, you'll have access to a variety of metaphors.

Which of these terms can be matched to the following: Theological Geography, Theological Event, Theological Equipment, Theological Instruction, and Theological Situation	
6:1, Jesus' home town 6:2A, When the Sabbath arrived 6:8, "Take your staff"	6:9, "Take with you sandals, no extra cloak and no money" 6:10, "Stay where you are"

You'll discover, as I have, that this exercise is fun and helps us to dig out the significance of Jesus' message in the scripture. A search of the commentaries on this scripture reveals they are stuck on using a historical perspective of the way the Jews mistook the significance of Jesus as just a "carpenter's boy." Jesus affirms this in his statement that, "A prophet in his own home town is without honor."

Mark uses the term "home town" in two ways. First, in 6:1, as a metaphor for a home of spiritual resources, and then in 6:4 as a geographical site.

Sanctification: Living awake to our spiritual resources that alter our values and mold our outer lives. Living awake to our spiritual resources is what the church means by living the Holy Life.

The use of metaphors--

One of the attributes of Gut Trip Analysis is to use metaphors as theological statements in order to plumb the significance of life to which the metaphors point. Frequently, you'll have access to a variety of metaphors as:
6:1, Jesus' "home town."

Theological Geography:

As Teilhard de Chardin opines, home is where we find ourselves as, "Spiritual beings having a human experience." Also note that this is the Gut Trip Analysis term for living in our "Spiritual Oasis," and for living out of "the resources of our Spiritual Altars."

The offense of the Message of Jesus:

We local church theologians try too hard to define the offensive nature of Jesus' message. It is rather simple. *"You folks are living an illusion of what you think life is. In reality you have sold out to the world living as victims and not victors. The purpose of human existence is not only to be human, but also to be humane and gracious while working for justice and mercy; we are victors.*

6:10, "Stay where you are."

Use as a Theological Situation. Be single minded. Stick to the task. Those who Bike Across Kansas know about being single-minded about the task.

6:13A, Demons.

Demons are metaphors that trap us into believing the Big Lie that we are hopeless. In this way they represent evil. We are never hopeless, as the resurrection proves.

6:13B, Anoint the sick.

The “sick” are those who are victimized. To anoint them is to awaken them to the fact that, while victimized they have a choice to be victims or victors.

Prophets are those who practice Jesus’ message.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 6:12–19

Recently, I picked up a quotation of Eugene O’Neil, who described his experience of looking at the starry night in this way,

For a moment I lost myself --- actually lost my life! I was set free! I dissolved in the . . . high dim-starred sky! I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life. . .to Life itself! To God, if you want to put it that way. For a second you see --- and seeing the secret, are the secret. For a second there is meaning!

From the perspective of Gut Trip Analysis this is being in touch with our Spiritual Resources. With apologies to O’Neil, the experience is available to us not infrequently and in seconds but constantly and throughout life. It is necessary to awaken to this as our spiritual resources. Jesus is our Exemplar.

The more we awaken, the longer we are in touch. Throughout our spiritual journey, it is possible to be in touch each time you feel joy or peace, or sorrow, or anger, or fear, or acceptance. The resource for all of these emotions is our spiritual innards. They never go away because they represent eternity. Our spiritual resources are a gift of God because this is the place God lives.

Over and over, it needs to be said that it is not our feelings that determine the level of our awakenment. Rather, it is the relationship we take to life’s circumstances; are we victors or victims; do we experience At-One-Ment, or do we experience separation or sin? When we experience At-One-Ment, then our feelings may well be a deep sense of satisfaction.

Confession time: When the lection reading of, “The Beheading of John the Baptist,” came up my emotions went from incredulity to despair and then to anger, “What in the world can those who developed the lectionary be thinking about? How is it possible to preach the Good News using this story?” I still have these questions, although I feel better about it now that I am on the other side of my sermon development. However, for awhile I sweat blood and had a persistent desire to nod off to sleep!

However, when a friend reminded me to keep things existential, then I remembered to use Gut Trip Analysis. I believe the following demonstrates that even the most difficult scriptures can be run through our human experience (our guts) to discover God's presence.

A word to the wise--

This scripture begins in **6:12** rather than **6:14**. This sets the context for what follows. He is illustrating our need (**6:12 and 13**) to preach repentance, to exorcise demons and to heal. Mark reminds us that this is true from the very top of the political ladder to the very bottom of the social ladder. There always is a need for repentance, exorcism and healing in society and in our personal lives.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 6:14–29

It is in anticipation of our awakening that Jesus is born in our human experience and into our personal and corporate lives, and this sets the stage for the Good News to the Gentiles. According to Mark, God has a revelation to make that we'll discover when we get to know the "rest of the story" after the resurrection.

Christian Ethics:

In light of Gut Trip Analysis, Christian ethics can be quickly summarized as WWJD and the use of our Jesus Glasses. When we are confronted by a moral decision then it is important to ask, "What would Jesus do?" (WWJD). This is the most basic form of Christian Ethics and one of the most helpful and uncomplicated applications. It really is so simple yet so profound. As a Gut Trip theologian, I've spent many hours grounding the work of transparent ethics; on what basis do we make choices? The problem is that ethical living is understood differently in different cultures; i.e. for North Americans, women walk equal with their husbands, while in Middle Eastern countries, a woman lives subservient to her man. While many women may champ at the bit about these arrangements, to live in Iran or Jordan these arrangements are ethical.

So, what is the difference that WWJD makes?

My grandmother frequently told me about the axiom, "When in Rome do as the Romans do." Her Christian beliefs gave her the alternative, "When in Rome do as the Christians do." By this she meant that we are to live respectful of all people and to treat them with mercy and forgiveness.

The difference is that WWJD establishes At-One-Ment rather than its antithesis of separation. Applied in this way we can affirm that while Italians may do some things differently, if we are self-conscious about doing caring and courteous things we will not offend the local people. It is not necessary for Christians to practice being Ugly Americans. As my grandmother taught me, "Just be nice."

Jesus Glasses:

One of the more interesting ethical developments made by Gut Trip Analysis is that of wearing Jesus Glasses. The idea is either to draw the cross on each lens of our prescription glasses so that we are always looking through the cross, which awakens us to ask WWJD? The other image is that of standing the cross between us and anything and anyone else. In this way, we are asking not what it is we can get from this relationship. Instead we ask; "In light of the Cross of Christ, what is it we can give another individual that will represent Christ?"

Immediate and Secondary relationships:

There is no better way to practice a Christian Ethic than to get clear about immediate and secondary relationships. Christians can not have any immediate relationships with anyone or anything. When we do our primary concern becomes what can I get out of this relationship for me? For instance, a handsome young "hunk" signs onto the sales department. His young single female supervisor is attracted and day dreams about what she can offer him that would bring satisfaction to herself. This is an immediate relationship. On the other hand, for our female supervisor to practice secondary relationships is first to ask herself, "What is it this young man needs from Jesus?" This is practicing secondary relationships. Our primary relationship is with Christ.

Christians need to practice wearing their Jesus Glasses even in their relationships to their spouses or significant others. To not do this leads to turmoil, selfishness and greed. As previously stated, this practice is applied not only to human relationships, but also to our desire for a new washing machine, a new shotgun, dress, shoes, or automobile. This is not to say we do not get these things, but it does mean that we stop and ask ourselves, "WWJD?" In this way we are brought to self-consciousness; to wake-full-ness.

Socrates once claimed there are two kinds of people, pigs and persons. Pigs are those who slop through life while persons are those who stand at attention as life passes them by and salutes. What better image is there for living the intentional life? To pick up the practice of secondary relationships leads to living the more humane and gracious life practicing justice and mercy.

Our freedom is to live pulling our whole lives through the cross of Jesus Christ. This is our Christian ethic.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter - Mark 6:30–34, 53–56

This is one of those easy Gut Trip scriptures because it offers a single emotional image in "a quiet place." Where is the quiet place but in our relationship with Jesus Christ, the source of our spiritual resources? Our quiet place has little to do with our physical environment; rather it is our interior space that we crave.

Along this same line, I add some of the deeper qualities of Gut Trip Analysis. There are four states of being that describe what it means to be human and humane. (The following is the work of the Institute of Cultural Affairs/The Ecumenical Institute: Chicago). These four metaphors are: The Land of Mystery, The River of Consciousness, The Mountain of Care, The Sea of Tranquility.

The Land of Mystery describes the human experience of running into that which we are not. Likewise we don't know from where we came, and we don't know the ending of us.

The River of Consciousness describes the uniqueness of being human in that we are the only creatures that are conscious of being self-conscious. In fact, since going to the moon we now have three degrees of self consciousness: we are conscious of being conscious of our self-consciousness. For the first time ever, from the moon, we humans viewed ourselves looking back at ourselves who are looking at ourselves while watching as the astronauts send video pictures of the earth back to the earth. This assumes that the rest of the natural order, such as rocks and trees, is not self-conscious, or they are like animals and birds that operate on instinct.

The Mountain of Care describes both our concern, and care for tomorrow (the insurance industry depends on it), as well as our compassion and empathy for others. We human beings are wired in this way.

The Sea of Tranquility describes the relationship, the choice we can take to the troubled waters of our human experience. The image here is that of a tsunami wave about ready to overtake a row boat. The tranquility obviously is not in the sea itself, but in the relationship I choose to take to the troubled waters. While victimized by the waves of life, I can choose to be a victim or a victor; either way our circumstances are going to swamp us. I remind prisoners their freedom depends on their attitude rather than living outside of the jailhouse steel bars.

This formula was developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) during a year-long research assembly on "The Other World present in This World." The Other World is not a parallel universe, but rather the spiritual dimension of our human experience. This work, and much other like it, provides the background and depth for what later became Gut Trip Analysis.

Perhaps this is enough to illuminate something of the depth of Gut Trip Analysis. There is much more to be shared at a later time. All of this is shared because this scripture in Mark is a clear illustration of these definitions. They are shared here in the desire to stimulate your thinking to push off in new directions.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter –Mark 6:30–34, 53–56

This is one of those easy Gut Trip scriptures because it applies Theological Geography. Gennesaret is a northern Palestinian town and Gut Trip Analysis treats all such places as metaphors. In this instance this is a place where people recognized Jesus.

Where people recognize Jesus:

It is when “we recognize Jesus” that we are led into the experience of inner peace. Theologically, Gennesaret is a metaphor for living “at home” where there is a sense of authentic place. Crossing over into Gennesaret means to find a “safe place.” Note that it is here that the people from “throughout the whole region” recognize him; he is not hidden to them.

It is important to extrapolate that when we become transparent to our divine creation then we are living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy. At these times we can claim that, like Jesus, we have crossed over into Gennesaret. It is here that our healing takes place. This experience is available at every moment to those who are awakened to it. This is part of the evangelistic motivation to share this Good News with everyone in every city and every climb.

Stress:

In Gut Trip Analysis, stress is experienced as the antithesis of living in At-One-Ment with ourselves. When we experience stress we are not living the surrendered life. We are allowing our ego-needs to define us; “I can’t live without a new car, a new relationship, or the right kind of sports shoes.”

6:53-56, Observe three characteristics. First, they have “crossed over.” This is the experience of leaving the definitions of the world in order to discover the essential experience of our spiritual nature. Second, when people recognize Jesus then they are inspired to bring their sick and lame to him. Isn’t this what we do in our hospice, in-home, and hospital calling. Perhaps we turn it around. Instead of bringing the sick to Jesus, we bring Jesus to the sick. Third, note that the people bring their sick to the marketplace. It is interesting that the place of commerce becomes the place for Jesus to practice the economy of Goodness.

When we decide to live the surrendered, transparent life, then we have crossed over into Gennesaret. It is not the world that defines us. Rather it is our relationship to Jesus Christ who provides the demonstration on how we die to the barriers preventing us from living as victors.

The caveat to this experience is the necessity to be awakened to it, although it happens to us all the time, but most of the time we do not have the tools or methods to name it using the Christian lexicon. Is it necessary to name it? No, not at all, but it is meaningful to be able to name it because of the deep satisfaction it brings in us.

Restlessness ends when we are anchored with Jesus.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter –Mark 7:1–8, 14–15, 21–23

Gut-Trip Definition of the “Good News”

The Good News needs to be good news. Consequently, it is important that preachers have a working definition to help our laity and others grasp the significance of it. Jesus makes this point several times in this scripture. The world around us is not our problem. The world comes against us value free; i.e., it is neither good nor bad. How we relate to the world around us makes all the difference.

Here is an illustration with an extreme example. Cancer comes to us value free. We experience it with many emotions, some of which are anger, denial, morbid acceptance, etc. This says more about us than it does about cancer. However, cancer presents us with two life-determining choices: we can relate to cancer as victims—making cancer an enemy to be defeated, or we can relate to cancer as another horrific experience of life—making cancer something we surrender to God. In this way we are not victims to cancer but victors.

Now, for the Good News!

Does this change the cancer? No, not at all. Does it change us? Yes, indeed. This transforms us. This is exactly what the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is all about! Jesus demonstrates how we are to die to allowing the cancer to define us. When we follow Jesus' example, then we experience his resurrection. By-the-way, we rehearse this story at our baptism and then at every Holy Communion.

It is true that life victimizes us. Also, it is true that we have a choice to be victims or to be victors. To be victors is The Good News of Jesus Christ.

Our human situation is never our problem, it is just The Way Life Is (TWLI), and it is value free. What gets us into trouble is the attitude we take to our human situation; we can be either victims or victors.

What goes into us can be a-moral:

One of the big problems people face is believing they are victims because of what happens to them. They have hail damage, and the insurance company calls it, “An act of God!” Or worse, they get cancer and ask why God allows this to happen. The answer, of course, is that a loving God is not in the business of punishing us; this is handled quite well by The Way Life Is (TWLI) and/or by Mother Nature. Concerning cancer, such cells are only doing what comes naturally. This is Jesus' point that the food we eat may give us a belly-ache, but the food itself is not out to get us! Over eating may be our problem.

God never punishes anyone. My axiom is, “The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself.” This means that the reward for any action is discovered in the act itself. We disobey the speed laws, and the reward may be

a ticket and fine. We obey the speed laws, and the reward is the respect of our fellow road-travelers, and the patrol leaves us alone.

What comes out of us can create separation:

The caveat here is that not everything that comes out of us is harmful. A belch can bring a lot of personal relief; a kind word may make someone happy. However, the hurtful things we say can result in causing separation (sin), and this is the antithesis of At-One-Ment. Mark provides a significant list in **7:21**.

Jesus in Gentile lands:

7:24A and 31B, These verses take Jesus into the land of the enemy. This is one characteristic of Jesus' ministry that is inspiring; Jesus takes the message into foreign lands. In this way he fulfills the message (**Luke 4:14-21**) of his spiritual mentor in **Isaiah 61:1**.

It can be recalled that the message of Isaiah addresses the failure of the Israelites to fulfill their mission of taking the love of God into the then known world. Isaiah reports this is the purpose of the Jews as a covenantal people of God. Their return from The Exile is a demonstration that God accomplished this mission. Jesus takes on this purpose by taking his message into the Greek world. **Demons and the healing of the deaf and speechless—**

Gut Trip Analysis always begins in the experiential; what is our experience of being demon-filled, deaf and speechless. In the Gospels, we are the ones who represent either the Pharisees or the Gentiles. The audience for these two pericope is the Greek Gentiles.

The question to be solved is the relationship between reality and a metaphor. In Gut Trip Analysis, a metaphor always is a description of reality. In this scripture the demon to be exorcized, and the deaf and mute to be healed, are metaphorical. We are the ones in need, and Jesus is the answer!

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 7:24–37

When we come to the Christ we experience new and/or renewed life. We are living the radical response.

The key insight in Lesson 5

The disciples are sent out to preach repentance.

To the unfaithful:

- + To those who are trapped by the Big Lie that we are convicted by our circumstances;
- + Who are living in a state of separation from themselves, their neighbors and God;
- + To those living in immediate relationships for their own self-gratification.

*These people are called to cross over:*¹⁹

To pull their circumstances through a relationship in Jesus to discover:

+ Our situations are amoral;

+To surrender to living in obedience and dependence on God;

+To live only in secondary relationships by first putting the cross between us and everything and everyone by asking the ethical question of WWJD.

¹⁹ **Mark 6:53-65**

The transition between the First and Second Objectives

Lesson 6: The New Objective: Awakening the World

Topic: Mark 7: 31 – 8: 30: Demonstrating his authority

The transition between the First and Second Objectives		
The New Objective: Awakening the world		
Demonstrating his authority	New Marching Orders The Transfiguration Mark 9:2-13	Awakening the spiritually blind
Lesson 6	Lesson 7	Lesson 8

This is the sixth lesson in this series on Mark's gospel. On the master chart (available to you on line at www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy), this is the first session on, "The transition between the First and Second Objectives" and given the title, "Demonstrating his authority," to set the stage for Jesus' meeting of the Big Three on the Mount of the Transfiguration.

I. Read Mark 7:31-8:30 in one reading.

II. Note that this section of our study chart is on the topic of "Demonstrating his authority." This is the first part in a new section, "The New Objective: Awakening the World." The authority of Jesus is derived from fulfilling his creative gift. This is to say, Jesus lived as an authentically human being, and in his authenticity we perceive The Christ within the man Jesus.

7:31-37 Healing of the Deaf Mute

Do research on the city of Tyre and also about the Decapolis. What is the significance of Jesus' ministry here? Scholars believe that Mark is confused about the geography of the Gentile regions. The Decapolis is built on 10 mountain tops and is a coherent region, and Tyre is on the Mediterranean coast.

How does this material connect with the previous reading of 7:24-30? What is the "Gut Trip Analysis" of opening with the statement concerning ears and speech?

Connecting to 7:24-30:

The significance of this material is that Jesus is ministering to Gentile people. Isaiah, the OT prophet, believes the purpose of the Jewish people is to

share the Good News with all of the then known world. Jesus is a follower of the principles of Isaiah, and definitely is taking the Good News to those outside Palestine or Israel. This is supported in the story of healing the Sryophencian Woman who is a Gentile woman.

Open ears:

In "Gut Trip Analysis" the opening of ears is our experience of once being deaf to The Christ present in this world. Observe that it is not the Christ that is lost; rather it is our unwillingness to attune ourselves to the frequency of the Christ.

8:1–10, Feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000.

Return to Mark 6:39-44 and compare the two readings.

Regarding the feeding of the 5,000:

The people sat in hundreds and fifties; five loaves and two fish; twelve baskets of broken pieces; 5,000 men.

Regarding the feeding of the 4,000:

In Mark 8:5–10, the crowd sat on ground; seven loaves and a few small fish; seven basketfuls; 4,000 men. The universal significance of the placement of this story after the feeding of the 5,000 indicates to scholars that this may have happened twice. In Jewish story telling the stories get larger and wilder, instead--as in this case--smaller and tamer. It is this unusual quality that suggests this conclusion.

Theologically, what is the hidden message from God? Life, as we know it, is a desert experience. It is our relationship to the Good News that is important. People in our desert-lives get fed.

8:11–21, Asking for a sign — and the Disciples are out of bread.

Jesus' warning concerns, "The yeast of the Pharisees, and that of Herod"

The Pharisees are influential in the lives of the people they served, and they represent "Head Trip Analysis" in that the structures of spirituality are more important than the experience of spirituality. Herod represented the political structure of the day in the same way in his emphasis on following the letter of the law and not the spirit of it.

8:11–13, What is the story here concerning the Pharisees?

Jesus rejects the need for an additional sign because the Pharisees couldn't see the sign represented in the presence of Jesus. How could they interpret another sign?

8:22–26, Healing of sight

This healing story, like all of them, represents the blind nature of human beings; we are blind to the Really Real, while awake to The Way Life Is (TWLI). Jesus calls us to Awaken to the existence of The Really Real by which we fulfill our own created gifts. It is necessary to note that "the real" is experienced as the natural consequence of being human. The Really Real is the experience of

living the humane and gracious life. It is the Really Real that values and transforms our reality.

8:27–30, The inspired answer

Jesus gets his authority as he demonstrates living life while fully awake. He is authentic. He is genuine. Like Jesus we have this capacity, yet we are blind to most of it.

The following is a sermon based on Mark 8:13-21 and uses the Lowery Loop identified at the end of the sermon. This message was delivered by the author during 2010 during a series of sermons by retired pastors. We were asked, what it is you would want to say if this was the last sermon you ever preached.

We've Got To Get It Right!²⁰

Mark 8: 13–21

Pre-ITCH: Sunday's "Pickles" cartoon²¹

The daily cartoon, "Pickles" strikes my funny bone. This character is a grandfather who always has problems he causes for his long-suffering wife or his grandson. Pickles never gets it right.

The ITCH: What's wrong with this picture?

Why do we laugh at this old man. Is it because he hits too close to home?

A group of us retired pastors and wives meet regularly every Monday morning since 2000 to drink coffee and share our lives. All of us are interested in the "Here After." It seems we can never remember what we are "here after" when we are looking for our glasses or the car keys.

As I was brooding about what my "Last Sermon" might be, one of our church members said, "Preach on your jail ministry." He knew that I have many interesting encounters with prisoners at the County Jail and the nearby State Prison. I thought this is appropriate because the majority of the prisoners have forgotten what they are "here after" while in jail. Certainly, I wanted to get the message right.

One of my more descriptive encounters with a prisoner is the time I was asked to visit a young man while he was in "THE HOLE." This is a young man of 25 who was suicidal, and placed in a special room where he could be observed by officers.

THE HOLE is a concrete 8' X 10' concrete box with an all-glass door and large window, a steel toilet is located behind a short privacy wall that exposes

²⁰ This sermon 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.

²¹ "Pickles," created and syndicated by Brian Crane.

the prisoner's head and torso. The bed is a raised concrete bed. When I arrived in the area it was obvious that the prisoner was in distress: he was cold! It was summer time and the AC was on high. The man was naked while attempting to sleep on a concrete bed. In order to find a little warmth, he wrapped himself in toilet paper.

In many ways this was a statement about the condition of his interior life. As a little boy he was abused physically and sexually by the man who fathered him. As a teenager, he was abandoned to live on his own. He turned to stealing and to drugs. These items brought him to the County Jail and to his present mental state. It was such a shame. He did not have the emotional resources to lead a stable life; he just couldn't get it right.

The UGH! Why can't he get it right?

On another occasion I interviewed a handsome young Afro-American man. His wrists were heavily scarred from an attempted suicide. He did not graduate from high school, and was deeply into the drug culture. He spoke of being hopeless and without a future.

Tears were streaming down his face. He turned and looked deeply into my eyes and cried, "Why can't I get it right!"

The AHA: The Disciples had problems too

The disciples had problems too. Earlier they helped Jesus feed the 5,000 and only a few hours before had picked up the leftovers after feeding 4,000. When they got into the boat with Jesus they were upset because they forgot to bring any bread.

They were concerned about not having enough bread for snacks on the way across the lake to Bethsaida. Jesus chided them, "You still do not understand!"

The disciples said to one another, "He's angry because we forgot the bread!"

Jesus continued, "How many basketfuls of bread did you pick up after feeding the 5,000 and then the 4,000?"

"Twelve and seven," they responded.

In desperation, Jesus asks, "Don't you get it now?" But they didn't. Their concern was, "Why didn't we get it right?" Like the Pharisees and Herod, they knew that the circumstances of life victimize each and every person. This was the "Yeast of the Pharisee and Herod" that Jesus used to warn the disciples.

The GOOD NEWS: What does Jesus know?

What is it that Jesus knows that the disciples do not know?

Jesus knows about life on both shores. On one shore is the yeast of the Pharisees and on the other shore is healing and health. It is here that the people of Bethsaida bring a blind man. Jesus spits in his hands and puts them over the man's eyes, and his sight is restored.

Are we so blind that we do not understand what it means to live on the other shore? On one side we are victims, while on the other shore we are victors! It is correct to assume that life victimizes us; the Pharisees and Herod knew this quite well: Cancer kills, empty nests depress us, preachers get old, children die too early with leukemia, and husbands go to the store and forget what they are “here after.”

Jesus knows that when we define ourselves by our sickness, then we have problems. In fact, having problems is one of the first clues I get while making jail calls. Having problems always is the sign we are living out of synch with Jesus. Because living with Jesus means we do not have problems.

Does living with Jesus prevent us from having problems. Not at all. Having problems is what it means to be alive and to be human. Problems are the way life is (TWLI). So, what is changed? We are changed in the relationship we take to our problems. We learn to view our circumstances and our situations through Jesus Glasses.

Jesus died on the cross to demonstrate how to die to the barriers preventing us from looking at life through Jesus Glasses. This does not make the problems go away, but no longer do we experience them as victimizing us; now we are freed to be victors.

WHEE! Remember the Afro-Am. Prisoner with the scared wrists?

Do you remember the Afro-American prisoner with the scared wrists? The question he asked was, “Why can’t I get it right?”

I knelt beside him and I took his hands in mine. I put my fingers on the scars on his wrists and sang:

*Oh I don’t like my situation, Oh, I don’t like my situation,
But that’s not my problem; my problem is relating to the self
that doesn’t like my situation.*

*Oh, I don’t like to eat my spinach. Oh, I don’t like to eat my spinach.
But that’s not my problem; my problem is relating to the self
That doesn’t like to eat my spinach.*

Spinach is not our enemy! Spinach is just doing its thing. Our lives can be like spinach, or cancer, or forgetful husbands. These things are just TWLI. Life does victimize us. But when Jesus is in our boat we have a choice to live as victims or as victors.

I opened the prisoner’s hands and told him to look at his scars. I asked him to remember that Jesus had scarred hands in order to be qualified to live in his boat! Now, the prisoner had a choice to make, would he continue to live as a victim or as a victor?

Which would we choose?

This choice also is ours this morning! Take a moment to look at your own scarred hands—and lives. Which side do you want to live on? Do you want

to taste the yeast of the Pharisees, or will you choose to be with Jesus as he takes you to the OTHER SIDE. Will you be concerned only about the forgotten bread, or will you feast with Jesus on the bread of living in the presence of God?

Jesus stands at the helm of our lives. He paid the price to get there.

Which shore will it be?

We've got to get it right! It makes all the difference in the world.

SEND OUT: You have eyes to see Jesus. You have ears to hear Jesus. Don't trip on the feet of Jesus when you get in the boat to go to THE OTHER SIDE.

The key insight in Lesson 6

Where does Jesus get his authority?

Jesus gets his authority from his actions. He does not abandon the world, but demonstrates how to transform the world by living awakened to the resources of the spirit. From this source he feeds the outcasts and the multitudes. Jesus spits a lot. You'll note he does this twice to heal those who fail to hear the Good News and those who are blind to it.

In this material, Jesus understands the difference between the Real and the Really Real. He uses the spiritual resources of the Really Real to modify, transform and make moral the Real to make it more humane.

The transition between the First and Second Objectives

Lesson 7: The New Objective: Awakening the World

Topic: Mark 8: 31 – 9: 14: New Marching Orders: The Transfiguration

The transition between the First and Second Objectives		
The New Objectives: Awakening the world		
Demonstrating his authority	New Marching Orders The Transfiguration Mark 9:2-13	Awakening the spiritually blind
Lesson 6	Lesson 7	Lesson 8

This is the seventh lesson in this series on Mark’s gospel. On the master chart (available to you on line at www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy), this is the second session on, "The transition between the First and Second Objectives" and given the title, "New Marching Orders," to set the stage for Jesus’ meeting of the Big Three on the Mount of the Transfiguration.

Read Mark 8:31–9:14 in one reading.

Quick Reference	
<p>8:33B, You do not have in mind the things of God. The things of God always represent At-One-Ment and Goodness. Goodness is an ontological or indicative category (the way life is), rather than a moral category.</p> <p>8:33C, Things of men. Think, "The Material Woman."</p> <p>8:34, Take up the cross. Our cross is the human experience. This is that to which we die in order to experience the transformed life, or the life of resurrection.</p>	<p>8:35A, How do we save our life by losing it? We die to the world to awaken to our humane and gracious nature.</p> <p>8:35B, What is the significance of losing our life for Christ and the Good News? Living for Christ is to live in obedience to God’s Goodness, and this is the Good News.</p> <p>8:36-37, What good is it for men to gain the world yet forfeit his soul? These are the times when we become victims rather than victors.</p>

8:37, Soul

The spiritual oasis from which we draw all of our spiritual energy.

8:38A, Being ashamed of Jesus and his words.

Refusing to look at life through Jesus Glasses.

8:38B, Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory and with his Holy Angels.

How does Jesus come as judgment? As we compare our life with Jesus we experience how far we are from demonstrating our intended purpose of living to fulfill At-One-Ment and Goodness.

8:38C, An adulterous and sinful generation.

So what else is new?

8:38D, The Father's glory.

Watch objectification. Keep it experiential. God's glory is experienced as Goodness.

8:38E, Holy Angels.

Angels are holy because they fulfill their intended purpose as being messages from the Throne of Goodness.

THE TRANSFIGURATION begins here:

9:2-13. This is the beginning of the Second Objective.

9:2A, High mountain.

Think theological geography.

9:2B, Transfigured.

Think transparent; i.e., to see clearly Jesus' intended purpose.

9:4, Elijah and Moses.

Elijah is representative of The Prophets, while Moses represents The Law.

9:7, The cloud.

Gut Trip Analysis experiences the cloud as an ambiguity that is the condition where we hear the Good News.

9:9, Coming down the mountain and the Good News.

The Good News is God's word: All is GOOD, All is Received, the Past is Forgotten, and the Future is Open. Or, as the bumper sticker informs us, "God don't make no junk!" This is the message Jesus is sent to Jerusalem to demonstrate.

II. Note that this section of our study chart is on the topic of, "New Marching Orders." This is the second part in a new section, "This is the transition between the first and second Objectives." With this in mind answer the question, what are the new marching orders for Jesus?

III. 8:31-38, At first glance, this scripture appears complex. This series of events takes place: Jesus announces his death, and Peter misses the point; Jesus

calls everybody to listen: to be a follower it is necessary to pick up the cross of Jesus as this is the only way to save your soul. The last part asks the question whether we'll be ashamed of Jesus.

Identify the meaning of, "The Son of Man."

This phrase emphasizes the human nature of Jesus. It has a reference to the Book of Daniel.

What is Jesus' point of accusing Peter of being Satan?

Peter is living with an illusion of what Jesus' ministry is supposed to be rather than what it is. Jesus' purpose is to demonstrate for all of history how we choose to die to defining our selves by the victimization of our circumstances rather than by our relationship to Perfect At-One-Ment.

What is it we lose and what is it we gain?

What we lose is a life that is without depth because we are aware only of our humanity without the values of Goodness to determine humane and gracious responses. Jesus demonstration is how we die to a value-less existence. When we do this we discover a peace that passes understanding.

This is what the "will of God" is for our lives. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden we are to live totally dependent (obedient) on the presence of Goodness (God) in our lives. When we do, we experience peacefulness. When we do not, then life gets stressful. Actually, we live in dependence more than we think we do because we assume we deserve to experience this sense of peace—and we do deserve it; this is the way we are supposed to live. What makes God cry is that we fall away into dependence (dis-obedience) on our-selves rather than on God. We know this is the case because life gets tedious.

IV. 9:2-9:14, The Transfiguration

Gut Trip Analysis associates the word transfiguration with the term transparent. For example, take a simile like the old technology of photographic film we used to develop our own negatives. Color film was made by taking 'negatives' and making them 'positives' by re-exposing the film to a bright light. The finished product is a color slide through which light passed, and when magnified it throws pictures on a screen. Jesus' moment of transparency allows us to view the future of his ministry in Jerusalem and on Golgotha Hill.

9:5-6, Who are the two visitors with Jesus, and what is their significance?

Do some research about Elijah. Speculate on why, "he is to come first." See **Matthew 11:14**. Mark assumes that Moses represents The Law, while Elijah represents The Prophets; hence, the Mount of Transfiguration is representative of the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

A commentary suggests the following:

Perhaps they are considered to be the greatest religious figures in Israel's past. There is in Judaism a traditional connection between the Messiah and Elijah but not between the Messiah and Moses. Among the Samaritans, however, the Messiah is expected to be a reappearance of Moses, and there may be here a blending of Jewish and Samaritan messianic hopes.²²

9:12-13, Jesus makes it very clear that the disciples not speculate on the meaning of things until after the resurrection. Mark is using a literary device that is creative. The caveat in this process is that someone who already knows the end of the story can ruin the surprise. In fact, this is what happened. To refresh your memory, read **Mark 16:9** and following.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 8: 27–38

This scripture passage is filled with old Christian code words such as, "Son of Man," "Mind of God," "Father's glory." These old code words make for rich preaching, but it is easy to fall into the trap of Head Trip Analysis.

In **8:35-38**, Jesus tells us the experience of the Good News is about losing our life that is defined by the standards of the world (i.e., observe the ads on television), in order to save it for living the surrendered life as dependent children in the household of God.

In **8:33**, this is where Peter gets in trouble. He is an awakened disciple but he hasn't clarified his "Christology." Consequently, Jesus chastises him by associating his affirmation with that of Satan the Illusioner. When Jesus—in **8:31**—predicts his death and resurrection, Peter rebukes Jesus. Peter misses the point of Jesus journey to Golgotha. It is obvious that Peter is stuck in a Jesus-ology that is a life of good works instead of a Christology that demands total surrender, good works and all.

Setting the Christological context---

The Melchizedek priesthood:

Doing a Gut Trip Analysis of the New Testament reveals a significant weakness in our understanding of Christology. It is recommended that once a year every Awakened person re-read Paul's letter to the Hebrews. Every thinking Christian is required to ground in our human experience what it means to serve as a member of the Melchizedek priesthood. Actually, Christians can not escape this assignment. In addition, an annual reading through Romans will soundly deepen us too.

²² The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary, Nashville:Abingdon Press. 1971. 659.

Melchizedek mysteriously shows up with Father Abraham. In **Hebrews 7:2, 3**, our mysterious leader is identified as the “king of righteousness,” and “king of peace.” He is, “Without father or mother, without genealogy, without being of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.” Is there a better description of the Christ dynamic?

Paul identifies Jesus with the Melchizedek priesthood.

And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him:

“The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind:
‘You are a priest forever.’”

[In the order of Melchizedek.] (*Psalms 110:4*)

Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant. Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. . . . For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.²³

Jesus-ology:

In light of the Melchizedek priesthood, it is apparent that what we have is a strong Jesus-ology and a weak Christology. Jesus-ology is a ministry of doing good works, designing great liturgies, building membership in the church, expanding the physical church plant, establishing evangelistic services, and going on mission trips. All of this is good, important and necessary.

Unfortunately, this is not why Christ died on the cross! These activities make us, “Almost Christians.”²⁴ Christ experienced the baptism of his death as a demonstration that we too can die to the barriers preventing us from exchanging our life of independence for a life of dependence on God! This is the ministry we are called to preach. When we do this we are fulfilling our intended purpose as human beings.

To finish the formula, after we have surrendered our lives to live in a Christology, then the activities of a Jesus-ology are important. Good works do not awaken us to live the surrendered life; good works are the result of our surrendering our lives to live dependently on God experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment.

²³ **Hebrews 7:20-28** (Selected verses). NIV

²⁴ See the Sermons of John Wesley on being “Almost Christian.”

The good Good News--

The Gut Trip treatment of the Good News is how we experience it. Does it do us any good, and what is the good that it does? Isn't this the purpose for which Jesus came, to demonstrate that we can die to the barriers preventing us from living as victors?

The role of hope:

Our Christian surrender (faith), on the other hand, demonstrates that human existence is not all there is. We can die to the notion that the meaning of human existence is death. Isn't this the demonstration of Jesus' intentional death on the cross; he deliberately died as a demonstration that death does not define us. Rather, we are defined by the resurrection rather than the cross. We live in a state of hope rather than in hope-less-ness.

What then of literal death?

My personal testimony is that when I surrendered my life into the context of Goodness (God), then death no longer has any meaning. I'm a dead man walking! I died to the things of the world in baptism, and I died to dying when I finally awakened to the obedient life.

I will physically die. Yet, the meaning of my life and of my death is not found in human existence, but rather in the transformation that took place in my decision to live the surrendered life. Jesus is my example. Whatever lies on the other side of the grave—should there be anything, or anything recognizable at all—Goodness is in charge of my life, all of my human existence, and my physical death.

My nightly prayer is, "Thank you for awakening me to this Good day. Now, wake me or take me. It matters not. Either way, I'm yours." Observe that the "Good Day" is an ontological reality and not a moral category. This goodness is reality—it is what it is.

Christology as the Good News--

Christology is the Good News demonstrated in Jesus Christ:. The evidence of The Christ is clear in the activities of Jesus. Jesus came to demonstrate that as we die to living a life of problems, then we experience the fulfillment of "the mind of God" whose purpose for us human creatures is to live the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.

The Pharisees are offended because they believed that goodness is defined by The Law. Jesus' message is that The Law only convicts us with The Big Lie. The Law is what makes us victims. Understandably, this message is offensive to the Pharisees and the Teachers of The Law.

An awakened response:

The awakened Disciples—God bless'em—struggled, just like we all do, to practice dying to the belief that our circumstances are the problem. They are not! Rather, it is our relationship to our problems that gets us into trouble. Our

problems do victimize us, but we can choose to die to the power we give to our problems. When we experience this enlightenment, then we are living the enlightened and awakened life. This is what happens when we pull our lives through Christ and the Cross.

St. Augustine observed, "Our hearts are restless, O Lord, until they rest in thee."

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 8:31–38.

The first eight chapters of Mark concern Jesus' development of his message, and take place in the northern part of Israel. In the last eight chapters, Mark sets Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem to die. In Chapter 9, Jesus gets his marching orders from Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration.

In these scriptures Jesus predicts the necessity of his death. It is helpful to remember that Mark's gospel only reports Jesus' death, and says nothing about the resurrection. The reason for this absence is that, over and over, Jesus tells his listeners "You will understand everything when you know the rest of the story." The rest of the story is the experience of the resurrection.

I've reported this to you to give you the broad context for Mark's gospel. Also, this sets the stage to understand the significance of what Jesus has to tell us in **Mark 8:31–38**. Jesus is hammering home the point that in order for us to experience resurrection, it is necessary for us to die to our old personalities so that we can take on the personality of Christ as a resurrection experience.

The main point of this message is for us to live our lives in such a fashion so that Jesus is not ashamed of us. We do this by practicing the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy. The confrontation between Jesus and Peter in **8:33** clearly makes this point. To prevent Jesus being ashamed of us (as he is of Peter), it is necessary for us to surrender our self-centeredness and live to serve the needs of others. When we do this, then Jesus is proud of us, and we are pleased with ourselves in wholesome ways.

Two inventions--

In SermonStarter, we are exploring two inventions that revolutionize bible study and preaching. The first invention is Gut Trip Analysis. Analyzing scripture with relational, experiential and existential tools returns the scripture to its Jewish roots and reveals the power of scripture.

You'll note there are two activities here. The first is to define the scripture by using Gut Trip Analysis. The second activity is to provide your own personal experience to ground the message. When both of these steps are done, the material clarifies what Jesus is teaching us, and we are able to provide life-examples. It is important to not get hung up on an intellectual

understanding of these terms (Head Trip). The Bible is a relational, existential and an experiential Gut Trip book. Keep your definitions dynamic!

The season of Lent and the scriptures—

Lent is the time to go deep. The message is that we are starting a journey into our inner life to prepare ourselves to secure the abundant living represented in the Easter experience. The goal is to re-discover the significance of the new life that never goes away but gets hidden behind too much human experience. Lent is the time to strip away all of our denial and self-disillusionment; this is the significance of the cross, it is to die to the things of this world. **This is what we “deny” ourselves as a Lenten exercise; we deny the disillusioned life. During Lent, we’ll share tools to get our dying done, so that we can fully appropriate the Easter experience.**

Sanctification:

For me, the theology of sanctification lends itself to Gut Trip Analysis, because it is a time for us to reflect deeply on how we live the Holy Life. Just to remind you, Gut Trip Analysis treats sanctification as embracing the Awakened (authentically humane) manner of living.

For several years I have been involved in both a jail and a prison ministry. During my participation in a spiritual retreat, one of the participants discovered my interest in the prison ministry, and he informed me, “Well, once I was a highway patrolman. Then, I committed two felonies and ended up in prison and lost my pension.” Then he hastily added, “I found God and that is something far more valuable to me.”

Actually, he didn’t find God because God is not lost. The prisoner is lost to God who lives inside him and patiently waits to awaken him. In fact, this man never is without God, yet he is blind to God’s presence. Now, he claims to have experienced living the holy life; the sanctified life. Actually, what he found is something that grounds him in his inner deeps, and this is experienced as a profound sense of peace and wellbeing.

8:34A, Our cross:

The blessing of Gut Trip Analysis is that like the story above, we need to straighten out our use of theological terms. This is the major problem in using Head Trip Analysis, we make the assumption that our cross is something that is added on to life; we are victimized by a life that becomes our cross. This is not true! Our crosses are not some daily burden such as cross-town traffic or homework to finish. Of course this is not meant to minimize our human situations which can be sore trials for us. Our cross is to do what Jesus did; i.e., to kill our independence from God in order to live in At-One-Ment with God. Now, that is the cross!

Note this quote from the writings of William P. Young in his book, The Shack. Jesus speaks to Mack:

Seriously, my life is not meant to be an example to copy. Being my follower is not trying to be 'like Jesus,' it means for your independence to be killed. I came to give you life, real life, my life.²⁵

Buy the book, it is a great read, short, and treats the Trinity in a unique way. If you come away without a new insight from reading the book let me know and I'll send you my free 13-page analysis of it. (wsalmon@cox.net)

Making Jesus happy:

The way in which we make Jesus happy is to do what Jesus did. Kill your independence and commit your whole self to live only to please Jesus. Whatever Jesus wants, Jesus gets.

8:32, The Soul:

Like all of our old Christian Code Words, this is not something "objective" as if it is something we can take up so that our life is complete. We can not add on a soul like getting a new bike. No, the soul is the context by which we transform our selfish egos that are in charge of our human/natural side; the soul is in charge of transforming our human-natural-selfish inclinations. In this way, we make Jesus smile by fulfilling our intended creation for living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.

The following chart represents **Mark 8:31–38**:

<u>Definitions</u>	<u>Personal Experiences</u>
<p>8:31, Why is it necessary that we suffer and die? Jesus is ashamed of us when we live as Victims rather than as authentically human people.</p>	<p>When I am mean spirited and short-tempered with my wife, then Jesus is ashamed of me. It is necessary that I die to such behavior to please Jesus. I know Jesus is smiling because my wife is at peace with me.</p>
<p>8:33, Satan. In Gut Trip Analysis, Satan is the personification of the Big Liar. The lie is we are victims and living out of impossibility.</p>	<p>Satan is the Big Liar. This image represents the Big Lie. My selfishness and self-centeredness is evidence that I believe the Big Lie that I am a victim, and that I can't do anything about it.</p>
<p>8:34, Take up the cross. We do what is necessary to die to that which keeps us from living as victors, living humane lives as authentic people</p>	<p>To take up my cross is to make the decision that I will be a good husband. When I decide to be a nothing in order to be what my wife needs me to be, then</p>

²⁵ Young, William P. The Shack, Los Angeles:windblown media. 2007. 149.

living in At-One-Ment with self and neighbor. In this way we fulfill our intended purpose as human people.

8:35A, Save life by losing it.

As we lose the inauthentic inhumane life, we gain the authentic humane life.

8:35B, Losing life for Christ and the Gospel.

Living the surrendered life as a demonstration of obedience that is experienced as freedom to live as victors and not victims. Spiritual glue that sticks me to living the humane life.

8:38A, The Son of Man.

This is an image that is frequently used by the Gospel writers to point up the human aspects of Jesus life.

8:38B, The Father's glory.

When God is understood as Perfect At-One-Ment, then the Father's glory is the personal relationship we have in fulfilling our intended purpose as human beings living in At-One-Ment with neighbor, self and God.

8:38C, Holy Angels.

Happy helpers! Perhaps a better definition is angels are messages instead of messengers.

I fulfill my intended humane purpose. I need to treat my wife like I train my dog using positive reinforcement. When I'm a fun person, then my wife is happy, and I am too, even my dog is happy.

I experience what it means to lose life for Christ and the Gospel whenever I am asked to surrender time from working, in order to talk to Bailey, a young neighbor boy who is much like Dennis the Menace. He keeps ringing my doorbell a couple of times a day.

Living for Christ is to die to my selfishness. My fulfillment comes in living on behalf of others. The Living Gospel comes to me as Good News when I surrender my life to the task of demonstrating the freedom of living as a victor and not a victim.

My soul is experienced as spiritual glue. This is given to me at my conception, and it is there for me to use all of the time. I am reminded of its availability whenever I make the decision to live humanely.

I experience the Son of Man when I feel good about taking time to talk to Bailey as well as when I am pleasant to my wife.

When I practice living in At-One-Ment with my neighbor-spouse, then I am experiencing the Father's Glory. Recently, a church member called just to laugh with me; she is a happy helper. The message I received is that I am accepted as a part of the *humane* race.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter- Mark 9:2-9

The following represents the “Key Stone” chapter in Mark’s gospel.

Vs. 2A, High mountain--

Often you’ll see my notation to treat some words as “theological geography.” This goes back to my practice that the biblical material is written like a producer and director organizes a movie scene. Every word, every background item, every prop, all the background music, are integral to the scene. Nothing can be extraneous. This is the way in which the Gospel writers develop their material as well. When it is reported that Jesus, “. . . took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain,” Mark is setting the scene for a very particular reason. Many events in “faith history” take place on high places: Moses goes to the mountain to meet God, and Jesus is crucified on a mountain.

Gut Trip Analysis affirms any experience when we are awakened to be the fulfillment of our intended purpose. In the context of this message, then whenever we meet the Transfigured One, it is a mountain top experience.

9:2B, Transfigured--

The danger with this term is to think of it as some kind of a Head Trip miracle. Gut Trip Analysis agrees it is a wonderful experience, but it is not a supernatural event; rather it is something that happens as ordinary as doing a good deed. We may not think of it as being anything but generous, but the recipient may well experience it as the “work of an angel.” For instance, you stop to help an old couple change a tire. For you its nothing, for them it is a wonder, and they experience you transfigured in that moment as The Christ.

9:4, Elijah and Moses and Jesus--

It is helpful to see what each individual represents. Elijah represents “all of the prophets,” while Moses represents “all of The Law.” Jesus represents the new covenant. It is important to understand that these verses in Chapter 9 represent the “Key Stone” of Mark’s gospel. Prior to this time, Jesus stays near home and does his work in the northern part of Palestine. At this point, Jesus goes up to a meeting of the Big Three, and he gets his marching orders to get himself quickly to Jerusalem.

Jesus starts down the mountain, and on going to Jerusalem he heals a boy with an evil spirit. What does this say about Jesus’ intended mission to Jerusalem? His work is to be a healing of the nations. After this event we read an introductory verse, “As Jesus started on his way. . .”

9: 5, “It is good for us to be here—”

The transfiguration reveals that we already are all that we can be, and that it is possible for us to awaken to it. It is good to be where all is revealed.

9:7, The cloud--

In the belief that no word, phrase, or image is wasted, what is the significance of the cloud, and why does God use it? Gut Trip Analysis experiences the cloud as ambiguity, and this is the place where we meet Jesus and hear the Good News.

Recently, my niece was diagnosed with breast cancer and will have a mastectomy. Was she selected out to be punished for some reason? Is cancer so fickle that it deliberately selects its recipients, or is cancer actually amoral and represents The Way Life Is (TWLI). Do you think my niece experiences her cancer as a great cloud? What she does experience "in the cloud" is the presence of her faithful surrender that is demonstrated in the Roman Catholic Mass. She hears the Good News that while victimized she has the choice to be a victim or a victor.

9:9B, Jesus orders the disciples--

One of the more curious phrases in this lection is this verse ordering the disciples not to say anything. This is a consistent theme throughout Mark. It is necessary that we read Mark already knowing the end of the story, just as Mark knew the end of the story before he began writing. Jesus' constant theme throughout this gospel is when you see me again, then everything I do will make sense. All of the healings, all of the parables, the calling of the disciples, the feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000, walking on water, his special teachings, and his labors in Jerusalem, all make sense. This makes sense because we can pull every event back through the crucifixion, the resurrection, and his appearances.

This is why Jesus won't leave us alone!

9:12-13, In this section, Jesus makes it clear that the disciples not speculate on the meaning of things until after the resurrection.

The Key insight in Lesson 7

Mark's key stone chapter.

Mark is a masterful and creative writer. He uses an obvious structure of eight chapters in Galilee, and the last eight chapters in Jerusalem. Chapter 9, the story on the Mount of Transfiguration, holds both arms of this material together; this is the keystone. This is where Jesus gets his marching orders to fulfill his destiny. In doing so the meaning of his baptism by John the Baptizer is made plain in Jesus' baptism of the cross. Both represent a type of death and resurrection making poignant our traditional sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist.

Peter's rebuke is an example of shallow Christianity. Jesus' rebuke of Peter can be aimed at contemporary society too. The good works of a Jesus-ology will be shallow until they are accomplished as acts of Christology experienced in a life of total dependence on God.

The transition between the First and Second Objectives

Lesson 8: The New Objective: Awakening the world

Topic: Mark 9: 15 – 10: 52, Awakening the spiritually blind

The transition between the First and Second Objectives		
The New Objective: Awakening the world		
Demonstrating his authority	New Marching Orders The Transfiguration Mark 9:2-13	Awakening the Spiritually blind
Lesson 6	Lesson 7	Lesson 8

This is the eighth lesson in this series on Mark’s gospel. On the master chart (available to you on line at www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy), this is the third session on, "The transition between the First and Second Objectives" and given the title, "Awakening the spiritually blind," to describe material that takes Jesus down from the Mount of the Transfiguration.

- I. **Read Mark 9:14-10:52 in one reading.**

Quick Reference	
<p>9:35A, Illustrate the significance of making the last first. What the world thinks is of first importance becomes insignificant when viewed in the light of the expectations of living the surrendered life.</p> <p>9:35B, How can we be known as, “The servant of all?” Living as representatives of the obedient life means that we discipline ourselves so that we want what our neighbor needs. In this sense our neighbor is inclusive of our spouse.</p>	<p>9:36–37, Who are the “children” of today? In terms of living the surrendered life we are like dependent children.</p> <p>9:37, What does it mean to welcome a child “In my name?” I welcome the child in me whenever I pull my life through Jesus and/or the cross. Often I do this by asking, “WWJD?”</p> <p>9:41A, I tell you the truth. An awakened context. Living the Golden Rule.</p>

9:41B, Not lose your Reward.
Our reward is to fulfill our intended creation of living the Awakened life.

9:44A, Hell.
Living in the assumed absence of God. God is not absent, we are asleep.

9:44B, The fire will never go out.
This fire is not meant to be the fire of eternal damnation. Rather, it is a fire that is difficult to extinguish. It alludes to living the unawakened life; the result is rebellion against God's will of living the humane life. God's will is living the Golden Rule

9:48 and Isaiah 66:22-24.
Look this up in your commentary. Be certain to read **Isaiah 66:22-24**. Also see: Sermon by John Wesley, "On Hell."

9:47, Why the switch from "Entering (authentic) life" to "Entering the Kingdom of God?"
These terms mean the same thing.

9:50A, Salt is good.
The metaphor for "salt" is At-One-Ment, or living the awakened life.

9:50B, Have "salt" within your-selves.
We have salt within ourselves as we live the awakened life.

10:1, Judah.
Theological geography. The "Holy Land" is the land of Awakening.

10:2, Is it lawful?
Defined contextually: Lawful Vs. Appropriate

10:4, Certificate of divorce.
Deut 24:1-4, read your commentary.

10: 5, Your hearts were hardened.
The existential meaning is a drifting away from fulfilling our intended creation as humane and gracious people.

10:10, On adultery.
Adultery misuses another human being and results in the antithesis of At-One-Ment. In Gut Trip Analysis this is sin.

10:17, Good Teacher.
Only God is The Good. Philosophically this is associated with the meaning of quality or authenticity. Goodness is not a goal but a condition of living. The Goodness of God is different from the goodness of "the present age." God's Goodness never let's us off the hook of living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.

10:17B, What must I do to inherit Eternal Life?
The only answer is: NOTHING. Wake up to see we are swimming in it.

10:19, A summary of the Ten Commandments: Deut. 5, Ex. 20.

10:21, Jesus lists his requirements and Jesus' statement implies action:
1) Go and Give; 2) gain treasure with God;
3) Follow.

10:21 B, Treasure in heaven.

The experience of the abundant life and deep satisfaction.

10:23, Why is it hard for a rich man to get into the Kingdom of God?

It is easy for worldly wealth (as well as poverty) to define us rather than being defined by the Kingdom of God. See Wesley's sermon on, "The Almost Christian

10:26, Who can be saved?

From what? To what?

10:27, What is it that makes "salvation" difficult for humans but easy for God?"

For humans salvation is difficult to accept because we are blinded by our own humanity from seeing the benefits of living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.

10:29, Jesus describes the surrendered life.

Gut Trip Analysis defines the surrendered life as living as the authentically awakened.

10:29 – 30, What is the promise of Jesus?

1. For our life in the "present age"
2. For our life in the "age to come"
3. The promise of persecutions

10:38A, The imagery of the cup.

Can we be like the little Dutch boy with his finger in the dike, intentionally living the servant role?

10:46A, Jericho.

Treat as theological geography. Jericho was the first "safe city" given by God to the Jews as they crossed over into the promised land.

10:46B, Leaving the city.

In this scripture, the people are leaving the place of safety

10:50A, Threw aside his cloak.

Treat this as a symbolic act.

10:52A, "Your faith has healed you."

We "faith" ourselves whenever we get on an airplane. What is the nature of this faith? On what are we betting our life?

10:52B, "Immediately he received his sight.."

The awakened person receives insight!

10:52C, "Followed Jesus along the road."

Treat as theological geography. The road is The Way. It is the Journey to the East. (See Hermann Hesse.)

II. Who are the spiritually blind in this series of readings?

Avoid Head Trip Analysis!

9:14-32, Healing of a boy with an evil spirit.

All of those who throw tantrums from time-to-time can be said to have seizures. Recently, a pastoral supervisor spoke of how general this condition is

among those who are married. His message is too close for comfort, don't you think?

9:33-37, The question of who is the greatest.

Awakening the disciples--again--to the problem of selflessness.

9:38-41, The disciples arguing about outsiders healing in the name of Jesus.

We are reminded of Jesus' statement about his "other sheep" that do God's will. (See: John 10:16).

9:42-50, Causing to sin.

Illusions and salt-less-ness.

Gut Trip Analysis affirms that we are created "salty," or as those who fulfill their intended creation for living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy. When we create situations representing the antithesis of this purpose, then we lose our saltiness, and the result is separation from fulfilling the Great Commandment of Jesus. His point is that it is better to live the awakened life crippled, than it is to live with the absence of God (hell) and have two feet, two hands and both eyes. This gives us a little taste of the pure joy of living in the presence of God.

10:1-12, Divorce.

This is a trick question.

It is interesting that the *Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary* goes into some detail about how this question, "... reflects a concern with being, or nature, that is non-Semitic and characteristically Greek." The commentary goes on to describe the, "... monogamous customs of the Gentile world rather than the polygamous customs of the Semitic world." In the middle of this argument is a reference to the early Roman Catholic proscription that a marriage is not valid until consummated in the sex act.²⁶

While all of this is interesting, Gut Trip Analysis embraces the argument that Jesus is not addressing marriage. Instead, his concern is hard heartedness. Isn't this the underlying basis for divorce? The issue is not that Moses permitted divorce, but rather the concern is the *adultery of irresponsible behavior* that destroys a marriage. When couples act humanely and graciously toward each other, then there is no necessity for divorce.

10:13-16, Little Children and Jesus.

How do we receive the kingdom? Watch out for the Head Trip answers.

Little children live in near-total dependence on their parents. This proscription is required of every human being; we are to live in total dependence, surrender and obedience to God—as Paul Tillich proclaimed—the "ground of our being."

²⁶ Abingdon Press. 1971. 661.

10:17-31, Entering the Kingdom of God, the reward for priorities and eternal life.

These are the issues that Jesus addresses in the question raised by The Rich Young Man, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

The Good:

The first mistake is that the young man addressed Jesus as, “Good teacher.” In Gut Trip Analysis the word *good* can not be taken lightly. In this instance it is used as a polite address, but Jesus pushes it from the inconsequential into the ontological, “No one is good—except God alone.” Gut Trip Analysis affirms that the source of Goodness is the experience of God.

The second mistake is the young man’s affirmation that he has kept all of the commandments. It is with a look of love that Jesus commands him to bear the fruit of obedience, “go, sell and give away.” It is not wealth that is the problem; rather it is the young man’s inability to give it away. Any dependency on worldly wealth prevents us from opening the doors that lead us into the presence of authentic Goodness. (See John Wesley’s sermon on, “The Almost Christian.”)

Treasure in heaven:

If we were walking down the street and saw someone living in eternal life what would we see? The Head Trip answer is that we would not see anything because eternal life is a supernatural reward at the end of life. The Gut Trip answer is that we’d see people doing good deeds. Opps! Good deeds? Isn’t this what the rich man was doing? So, why does Jesus reject his testimony?

John Wesley can help us at this point. In his sermon on, “The Almost Christian,” Wesley observes that the rich man already earned his reward in the satisfaction of helping his neighbor. On the other hand, to earn “treasure in heaven” the cost is a surrendered life; can our rich young man give away everything? Apparently not. Good deeds are done not to earn eternal life, but to live obediently for God’s good pleasure.

Priorities and the Kingdom of God:

This is where this pericope gets really rich. It is humanly impossible to get into the kingdom of God. There is a danger here in assuming that the Jews of the Early Church thought of God’s kingdom in the same way we post-scientific people do. For the Jews, God’s kingdom is not a place, rather it is the relationship we have to the meaning of life; i.e., to the “ground of our being.”

Jesus’ answer to the disciples is on target. In 10:27 Jesus reminds his listeners that a relationship with God is not something we do, but rather something that God already is providing. The availability of this relationship is based on our priorities.

Eternal life:

It is important, frequently, to remind ourselves that eternal life is not an achievement; it is not a goal to be reached. Only God is eternal, and when we surrender ourselves as God's representatives, then we can bask in the sunshine of God's kingdom. It is when we awaken to total dependence on the "age to come," by allowing the transformation of the "present age," that our relationship to the eternal verities is consummated. Interestingly, this relationship never goes away, but we can be blind to it or ignorant about it. This is why Jesus affirms in **10:27**, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

Isn't it for this purpose that the Gospel of Mark is written? Isn't this the purpose of all of the gospels? From the Mount of the Transfiguration and all the way to the cross, this is the purpose of Jesus' human existence. He is the demonstration that it is possible for us to die to the things of this "present age" in order to inherit the rewards of the "age to come."

A personal testimony—the Good, the Bad and the Ugly:

Allow me a personal moment. Sometimes I'm asked about the end of life and what lies beyond. My answer is that it does not make any difference. When I surrendered my life to Christ I joined the Jesus Swim Team and work out in Pool Jesus. The promise is that we work out now in Pool Jesus, and after I die I can continue to work out in these waters. So, what if the water runs out and at the end of my life there is nothing? It doesn't matter because I died to everything in order to swim on this team—water or not. It means I died to everything the world finds meaningful, even an after life is meaningless because I trust that Christ is the meaning of both my life, my death, and whatever is lost or gained after my demise.

Does this mean that I'm any different? Not at all. As a part of my nightly prayer I remind myself that I surrender everything to Christ. If there is anything I've forgotten to commit, then Christ gets it all: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly. I don't want anything! Christ even gets my failure to live like it; in fact, I've given up even trying to act like it.

Often, I tell people that when I made this confession I had the strange sensation that God was saying, "At last, Salmon. You got out of the way so that I can direct your life." "Yes, mam!" Now, I live in a deeper sense of peace.

What is the reward for such commitment?

The testimony in **Mark 9:29-31** is right on target. It is assumed that we leave our past behind when we give up everything in order to gain Christ. This is not the case. Jesus reminds us, "no one who has left home, or brothers, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or fields, for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life."

Whoa! Persecutions? Is it necessary to do a Gut Trip Analysis of this? It is easier than we might imagine. In the early 1970's when my wife and I took our

three little children to live in the Chicago ghetto, my mother-in-law changed her will to exclude the international organization with whom we were working. Is that being persecuted? Maybe not all that mean, because my mother-in-law is a wonderful and caring person and she still likes me.

Jesus again predicts his death.

These few verses represent a transparent moment in which Jesus makes it very clear concerning the nature of his work in this world. In Mark's gospel there are four times when Jesus clearly defines his mission to be the demonstration of profound surrender—even to death. The first reference is in **Mark 8:31-37** where Jesus "spoke plainly" The second time is in **Mark 9:30-32** in which he again predicts his death and resurrection. The third time is in **Mark 10:32-34** where he anticipates his resurrection, and then again in **Mark 13** in which Mark uses an apocalyptic context concerning the *signs of the end of the age*.

Living at the end of the age:

In Gut Trip Analysis, the end of the age is not a goal to be achieved but a life-changing orientation. Whenever we decide to define ourselves by the measure of Goodness, then we have experienced the *end of the age*.

10:46-52, Blind Bartimaeus.

Jesus asks the blind man, "What do you want me to do?" Bartimaeus responds, "I want to see." Jesus provides the indicative solution saying, in effect, "Open your eyes!" It is wonderful how immediately our prayers are answered when we get the questions right.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter -- Mark 9:30–50

Living the chaste life—

The word "chaste" here is translated as single-minded and/or obedient. What does it mean to live the obedient life? Jesus provides us an example. It is helpful to remember that just prior to this scripture Jesus went up to the Mount of Transfiguration where he receives his marching orders from Moses (the single-minded Law Giver), and Elijah (the Obedient Prophet). It is helpful to remember that the first thing that happens as he comes down from the mountain is the healing of a boy with an evil spirit; certainly, this is a portent of the healing that would take place for the unawakened Jews and for us.

The question to be solved is who is the greatest:

In **Mark 9:33-50**, Jesus answers this question in three ways. First, followers of Jesus are to be servants (**9:35**). Second, we are to be dependent like little children (**9:36-37**). Third we are not to judge others for engaging in healthy activities that benefit people (**9:38-41**). Fourth, we are to avoid judging people by condemning them to hell (**9:43-48**).

In 9:49-50A, Jesus identifies those who live the surrendered life as, "Everyone will be salted with fire." This is a curious statement that troubles many people including bible scholars. What does this mean? Since fire is a purifying agent, it can be assumed that the annealing process first burns away the impurities (self-will), softens and makes us malleable, so that we can be bent to do God's will and not our own. This is what it means to be the greatest in the realm of God's influence.

I'm reminded of a conversation reported in The Shack. It takes place between Jesus and Mack, the father of his murdered child, Missy. Mack asks Jesus a question,

"Don't you have a chain of command? . . ."

"Chain of command?" That sounds ghastly,"

Jesus said . . . "Mackenzie, we have not a concept of final authority among us, only unity. We are in a circle of relationship, not a chain of command. . . We don't need power over the other because we are always looking out for the best. Hierarchy would make no sense among us. . . 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.²⁷

It is in this same context that Jesus reminds his disciples in 9:50B: ". . . be at peace with each other." For me, this seems to settle it. What do you think?

Other Sheep:

The next question to be solved regards Jesus' other sheep:

Mark does not use the phrase *other sheep*, but **John 10:16** does.

However, in **9:38-41**, the disciples are upset by competitors who are driving out demons in the name of Jesus. They want to know if this is this brand piracy. In effect, Jesus tells the disciples to cool it, because whoever does good things in the name of Jesus can't do us any harm. Is competition good for the Jesus' business?

The experience of Hell:

For people today, as well as for most preachers, hell is a problem. The problem is that we've made hell a place rather than a relationship. Jesus, as a Jewish theologian, intended for hell to be experienced rather than something we try to understand. The Hebrew worldview is experiential, existential and relational. For Jesus, hell is living in the absence of God, and this is a contradiction in terms

²⁷ Young, William P., The Shack, Los Angeles:windblown media. 2007. 122.

because God cannot be absent from us. Instead, we absent ourselves from God by neglect, ignorance, and just being ornery.

In the Greek worldview, hell is a different arrangement characterized by dualism; God lives in an upper realm that is perfect, eternal and real, while humans live in a lower realm that is imperfect, finite and illusionary. Heaven is where an eternal God lives while humans live with the angst and reality of death. For the Greeks, the concept of hell is not living in the presence of God's realm; it takes on supernatural connotations.

We find the root of this problem is laid at the feet of Paul who took the Jewish idioms and transliterate them into Greek dualistic culture and philosophy. This was a necessary task and was universally accepted until the 15th to the 17th Centuries with the invention of the scientific method. When humanity began to think scientifically (critically and objectively), we lost our ability to think relationally, experientially and existentially. In other words, our Christian lexicon became objects to be studied rather than experienced: God, Christ, Holy Spirit, etc.

How do we know when people are attempting to live without God? They have problems and they are victims. For them their life is a hell on earth.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter -- Mark 10:1-12

Divorce is an example of sin as separation--

This scripture is fraught with the danger of moralism and Head Trippy stuff. Gut Trip Analysis never goes in this direction. Jesus always keeps us over against the reality of God's address on our lives. Obviously, the danger here is to get stuck on justifying divorce. This scripture is not just about divorce. It is helpful to remember that Mark is using the topic of divorce as a vehicle to address the deeper issue of living the humane life in At-One-Ment.

In fact, this scripture is filled with the images of the antithesis of At-One-Ment. Divorce and the consequences of adultery represent the opposite of At-One-Ment. Moses might let us get by living the antithetical life of At-One-Ment, but not Jesus! The meaning of life is to live in At-One-Ment. To do the opposite doesn't cut it! Period. This is not to say that the relationship of couples doesn't get so bad that the marriage itself is a kind of death, which also is the antithesis of At-One-Ment. When this happens, Moses provided for a way to break the pattern.

Jesus makes the point that couples who have surrendered their "selves" at the marriage altar, and live in a covenant in which they choose to be obedient to each other, do not need the out of a marriage agreement. The experience of At-One-Ment fulfills our intended purpose of living the humane life.

Our American culture has an over-emphasis on individualism and personalism. For the Jews during Early Church times, their interest is on nationalism and the community. In such an environment arranged marriages were common,

and we can learn much from this tradition. Our pre-marital arrangements are characterized by too much emotional baggage; when this doesn't satisfy—or the emotion runs out—then the couple turns to easy divorce.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter -- Mark 10:13–31

The wrath of God—

The wrath of God always is experienced as tough love.

The underlying theme of this scripture is the reward we get for discipleship. It illustrates that we have the choice of remaining spiritually asleep, and deny our spiritual creation. Here there is more than a little irony when Mark reports in 10:21 that, "Jesus looked [at the rich man] and loved him." This kind of love represents the Wrath of God – who loves us enough to stand in the danger of awakening him; "One thing you lack, go and sell everything you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then, come follow me."

The problematic word here is "heaven." When heaven is not considered a place but rather a relationship to God, then the message is to unblock ourselves so as to awaken to the relationship that God already has waiting for us. Isn't this Good News? Our relationship to Jesus Christ awakens us to living the humane and gracious life, and this is experienced as the Kingdom of God and eternal life.

Eternal life and repentance—

Eternal life is a no brainer:

Mark 10:17-31. Eternal life is Jesus' point in his conversation with the Rich Man, and then with Peter and the disciples. In Gut Trip Analysis neither Eternal Life nor the Kingdom of God is a goal to be achieved. Rather, these things we already have but to which we have a blind eye or on which we have turned our back.

The act of repentance:

When our actions are leading us away from the practice or experience of At-One-Ment, then to be restored to Goodness it is necessary to face in a new direction. The act of repentance is turning around to discover that the Kingdom of God and Eternal Life are following us like little puppy dogs ready to lick our hands in love and admiration. Our relationship to Jesus Christ awakens us to live the humane and gracious life, and this is experienced as the Kingdom of God or eternal life. According to 10:21B, eternal life is a treasure discovered by living in the presence of God, who alone is eternal.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter -- Mark 10:35–45

The 10 commandments for servanthood--

How do we prepare the seats on the right and left hand of Jesus, and for whom are these seats reserved? The easy answer is that these seats are prepared for The Awakened who:

1. Come to serve rather than be served;
 2. Accept slavery to the sacrificial spirit (Christ);
 3. Embrace the freedom of obedience to the task that is worthy of our lives;
 4. Consider ourselves as *nothings* in order that Christ may be *everything*;
 5. Pull our lives through the Cross by asking, "What would Jesus have me do (WWJD)?"
 6. Stand the cross between ourselves and everything and everyone;
 7. Have no immediate relationship with anything or anyone; only secondary relationships. Our primary relationship is with Christ, and when this is practiced we get the job done;
 8. Live as humane and gracious people;
 9. Exist to promote justice and mercy.
- "... in the glory of God."

This is one of those danger spots to assume everyone knows what this means. Using Gut Trip Analysis is helpful by asking, "What is our experience of the glory of God?" In Gut Trip there are *no objective places*: "the glory of God" is not a place, rather it is a *relationship* (Jesus called God his Father), and it is the *experience* of living the humane life. To experience these things is to be actively living in the *eternal relationship*; remember; only God is eternal.

The two requirements:

There are two phrases in this scripture that the reader will want to clarify out of their own experience: **10:35-45**, "*Can you drink the cup?*" and "*Can you be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?*" These statements have idiomatic implications. The *Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary* notes that these phrases were commonly understood in the Early Church and imply the martyrdom of Jesus (his cup), and the death of Jesus (his baptism).²⁸

In Gut Trip Analysis, the word "martyrdom" becomes our choice of *intentionally living the servant life*. The word "baptism" becomes our choice of *dying to those things that prevent us from living the surrendered life*. This is accomplished in the baptismal symbol of going under the water in an act of physical death.

The right and left hand of Christ:

These verses provide the opportunity to explore these two definitions along with the challenge to *intentionally give ourselves* to something worthwhile, and then to *intentionally die* to those things that keep us from doing something

²⁸ Abingdon Press. 1971. 663.

worthwhile. The challenge is to make a difference in our own lives and in the lives of others. When we do these things, then we are the spiritually awakened living on the right and left hand of Christ.

10:39, According to the *Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary*, this verse acknowledges the martyrdom of James and John, "This prediction itself is the best evidence, for had it not been fulfilled, it probably would not have been preserved."²⁹

For more on this interesting development, you are directed to your own commentary research. You'll not be disappointed. Is this lesson on humility, or is it on a mother's ambition as recorded in **Matthew 20:20-28**?

10:40, **The caveat**: Who has been prepared, and who grants the privilege of sitting at the right and left of Jesus? The best answer can be extrapolated from **10:43-45**. To live at the right and left hand of Jesus Christ is to live the spiritually awakened life. Or, in Mark's words, "Whoever wants to be first must be slave of all." We are granted this privilege by our performance. Certainly, this supports my axiom, "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself."

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter -- **Mark 10:46-52**.

The first experience I had with this material is that it is so simple that there may not be enough *scriptural relationship* to determine a four-point outline. After brooding about it the obscure phrase "Along the Road" was fraught with enough symbolic significance (theological geography) that the material began to take on a life of its own.

There are four theological elements that demand Gut Trip Analysis to ground our *human experience* in them.

Along the road to Jericho:

10:46A and D; "They came to Jericho . . . as the disciples and a large crowd were leaving;" and, "sitting alongside the road." Jericho is identified as the first "safe city" God gave to the wandering Jews when they first came to the Promised Land. If "the road" represents our spiritual journey—because this is where we meet Jesus—what does it mean they were leaving it?

Along the road to mercy:

10:47 and 48; Bartimaeus cries out twice (always auspicious), "Have mercy on me." The question to be solved is, "What is the mercy of God?" Again, the trick here is to avoid Head Trip Analysis. We experience the *mercy of God* when we are never let off the hook of fulfilling our intended creation for living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy,

Along the road to insight:

²⁹ Abingdon Press. 1971. 663.

10:51B; "I want to see."

This answer is made in response to the question of Jesus, "What do you want me to do for you?" This is an existential question and can be applied to contemporary concerns. Standing in the light of Jesus, what do we want illuminated? What has Jesus to offer the single mom? What has Jesus to offer the widower, or the manager of a nursing care facility?

Along the road to the surrendered life:

10:52A; Jesus tells Bartimaeus to get going because, "Your *faith* has healed you."

What is the significance of this word? Avoid Head Trip Analysis and think of how you experience faith. Gut Trip Analysis always relates this word to surrender. Jesus always is found on the road of our spiritual journey, and he makes all the difference. Our time of awakening is in response to our walk with Jesus.

"Your faith has healed you."

1. What does having *faith* mean for the single mom? When "faith" is equated with "surrender," then it means the single mom defines her life by her joy in living in the family of God, rather than in the loneliness.
2. What does having *faith* mean for the widower? When "faith" is equated with "surrender," then it means the widower gives up defining his life based on his emotions.
3. What does having *faith* mean to the manager of a nursing care facility? When "faith" is equated with "surrender," then it means the manager judges his work by its effectiveness rather than on its efficiency.

Having "faith" means to ask, "WWJD?" It is wearing Jesus Glasses so that we pull every situation through the ministry of Jesus. It is standing the cross between us and every thing and every one, and asking, "What is it this person needs from Jesus, rather than from me?"

Does this change our situations?

Is the single mom still lonely? Does the widower sleep in a lonely bed? Is the Nursing Home manager still confronted by the number of sick, cranky people who are about to die? What does *faith* change? The answer is, having faith does not change our human conditions, situations, or victimization.

What does it change?

It changes us. Over and over, it gives us the opportunity to make a new decision to live as victors or as victims. We are free to decide to live the surrendered life, living dependently on God. We surrender our independence in exchange for living dependently as a member of God's family.

The key insight in Lesson 8

The experience of the Awakened World.

How do we awaken the world, and to what do we awaken them? In Lesson 8 Jesus' assignment is to demonstrate how to die to the barriers preventing us from awakening to our intended creation; we are to awaken to a spiritual resource that works to guide, modify and make meaningful our human existence. We learn that our spiritual resources help define us as children living in a wonderful, loving and forgiving family of God; Jesus is a brother and the Holy Spirit is a sister.

Does this change the world of divorce or adultery? No, but it changes us so that these things no longer control us; the power of loneliness, despair and anxiety is broken. Mark calls these people "salty" that are awakened to this new and transforming reality.

The question we have yet to answer is can we drink the cup of the cross that Jesus is to drink? Can we be baptized with the baptism of the cross of Jesus? The answer is that we can provide we embrace the surrendered life; this is the life of entire dependence on God's grace.

Part 2: THE SECOND OBJECTIVE

**To Prepare People/World for the Demonstration of
Their Rebirth**

Lesson 9: The Kairotic Moment

The Topic: Mark 11: 1 – 33, The ripeness of time

The Objective to prepare people/world for the demonstration of their rebirth		
The Kairotic Moment		
The ripeness of time	The offering is ready	Falling through the hole in time
Lesson 9	Lesson 10	Lesson 11

This is the ninth lesson in this series on Mark's gospel. On the master chart (available to you on line at www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy), this is the first session on, "The Kairotic Moment," and given the title, "The ripeness of time," to describe the first stage on the way to the cross.

I. Read Mark 11:1-33 in one reading.

Quick Reference	
<u>Scripture Reference</u>	<u>Personal Experience</u>
<p>10:1, As they approached Jerusalem and came into Bethphage and Bethany. Treat as a Theological Geography. Gut Trip Analysis assumes that nothing in the scriptures is insignificant. Jerusalem is a symbolic place representing the Awakened Life. Bethphage and Bethany are small towns of some comfort to Jesus.</p> <p>11:2-7, Significance of the Donkey. The donkey refers to Zechariah 9:9. Only the American Standard reference in Mark uses a donkey. The others use a young colt. Jesus choreographs his dramatic entry into Jerusalem so that</p>	<p>Narnia Tales. On the ordinary side of the Wardrobe is living On Vacation while in Narnia is living At Home; i.e., engaged, empowered, and timeless. These stories written by C. S. Lewis are metaphors for discovering the Awakened life. When Jerusalem is used as a metaphor, then Jerusalem represents our inner awareness of living in the presence of God.</p> <p>My experience with donkeys is limited. The once or twice I've been around them they have tried to bite or kick me.</p>

he fulfills Zechariah's prophecy.

11:8-11, The triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

It is surprising that the commentaries report so little information about this event. The *Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary* reports nothing. Wikipedia reports only the facts of the event as the fulfillment of **Psalm 118:24, 25.**

11:12-18, Jesus clears the Temple.

Each of the gospel writers has some version of this story. They place it according to their purpose in writing. Mark places it after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Mark's purpose emphasizes Jesus' mission to cleanse a bankrupt Jewish spiritual institution. In this regard, this event represents the nation of Israel, and points us toward our own need to clean out those things preventing us from living the awakened life.

11:17-33, The authority of Jesus is questioned. This material is better known as the insincere question and the trick reply. It already is established that the Jewish authorities are out to kill him. The question of the established hierarchy regarding Jesus' authority, "Where and from whom did you get it?" The source of his authority is grounded in himself, while John the Baptizer is the instrument by which this is acknowledged.

Can you recall your own "triumphal entry" into the Awakened Life? I recall mine setting around a church camp campfire at the age of 14. The fire reached out and warmed my heart and awakened me to living the surrendered life.

What Jesus accomplished in a few minutes for the nation of Israel took me the next 40 years of my life. I kept trying to clean up my act only to discover that Jesus already cleaned it for me. What is necessary is for me to awaken to this reality? The message for me is to, "Relax and stop trying. The deed is done. Now, start living like it." Whew!

It would be nice to have the quick mind of Jesus. But, I confess, I'm more like the donkey in the reference above.

11:20-26, The Withered Tree.

Head Trip Analysis makes much of this incident but comes up short on providing a rationale for why Mark includes it at this point. Does it represent Jesus' expectation that is not met even though the tree is in compliance with its nature—it isn't the season for figs! Gut Trip Analysis prefers a metaphorical treatment in which those living in the presence of Jesus need to be bearing fruit, but the nation of Israel is not up to the task.

Jesus has high expectations for me too. For far too long I struggled to bear fruit when all that mattered is that Jesus is the fruit which blossomed on my branches.

Is Jesus bearing fruit in and through our lives?

II. After reading over this chapter, explain how this material could be, "The ripeness of time"

The measurement of events---

BC and AD:

These four initials once universally were accepted as marking time to characterize life lived "Before Christ," and *Anno Domini* or "In the year of the Lord." These terms identified a long season in history that is universal and homogeneous, and much of the world used Christianity as a common denominator.

The times in which we now live no longer use Christian terms to designate history; the world lost its homogeneity. Rather, the people of the planet Earth awakened to heterogeneity; we are a diverse group for whom the Christian story neither is understood nor always appreciated. Consequently, sociologists give us another way to mark the profound change that took place during the paradigm shift "Before the Common Era" (BCE), and what happened in the "Common Era" (CE).

Chronos:

The ticking of the clock is a chromatic scheme. The football game is broken into four quarters. Each play has so many seconds to be executed. The half-time entertainment breaks the game into four parts. Time is stopped by the referee's whistle, and it begins again by the circular motion of the referee's arm. Sometimes the game seems to go on forever.

Kairos:

The football game can be a boring event, unless the score is tied and the clock is stopped at the 30 second mark. Activity among the

coaches picks up, tension filters off the field and into the crowd as both sides of the field wait with bated breath to see what happens next. It is fourth down and 20 yards from the goal. The kicking team is sent onto the field. The ball is snapped, the defense jumps into the air to block the kick while the ends rush the kicker. The ball is snapped, caught and placed on the ground. The kicker rushes forward and his foot meets the ball. The ball sails into the air. . .

The ripeness of time:

This illustration is pregnant with anticipation because it represents the ripeness of time. Something will take place to change the record books. I remember when my wife called me to the kitchen. She is full-term with our first daughter, and her feet are wet standing in a puddle of sweet amniotic fluid. "What is going on," she asked with a grin on her face? From that moment on, and for the next eighteen years, life is profoundly altered for the Salmon family.

The Jesus story is a pregnant event. For those who characterize their credo as Incarnation Theology, they ground themselves in the activities of Advent and Christmastide. Mary's pregnancy is central. The time is ripe. All of the events of the past 2,000 years have foreshadowed this time preparing the actors and rehearsing their lines. The theatre begins to fill. The stage is prepared, the scenery painted, and the lighting programmed. The orchestra begins to play, "Mary's Song." The actors and animals take their place, the lights dim and the curtain begins to rise: the show must go on!

III. 11:7-10, These are the traditional "Palm Sunday" events.

Turn back to Psalm 118:25, 26. Speculate on why this Psalm is used. Take these Old Code Words and run them through your human experience: (The reference here is NIV):

"Blessed"

Literally, "happy." See Matthew 5:1-12, The Beatitudes in the J. B. Phillips translation of *The New Testament*³⁰

"Name of the Lord"

At this point in Mark's gospel he has Jesus already in Jerusalem per the instructions he received on the Mount of Transfiguration. In 11:3 Mark uses the phrase, "The Lord needs it." Again, in 11:9-10, the phrase, "in the name of the Lord," is quoted from Psalm 118:25, 26. This has not been used before this point, and clearly indicates the shift from the humanity of Jesus to the messianic

³⁰ Phillips, J. B., *The New Testament in Modern English*. USA: The MacMillan Company, 1969. Fifth printing.

purpose of his life. Gut Trip Analysis interprets the term, “Lord,” not as a rank to which Jesus would aspire, but to punctuate the mission he represents.

“Kingdom of our father David”

In Gut Trip Analysis, King David represents living the surrendered life. It is helpful to remember that David is a man who is lots of grief to God. Turn to **Psalm 17:6-9** and read this prayer by King David:

I call on you, O God, for you will answer me; give ear to me and hear my prayer. Show me the wonder of your great love, you who save by your right hand *those who take refuge in you* from their foes. Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings from the wicked who assail me, from my mortal enemies who surround me. *(Emphasis is mine.)*

Those who take refuge in you:

This is the prayer of a prodigal. As prodigals, we know that God is waiting for us with a “great love,” and yearns to keep us, “as the apple of [God’s] eye.” What kind of relationship to God do we need to remain the apple of God’s eye? All that is necessary is to take refuge in God! Is it this simple? Yes, it is. This is the only thing that qualifies David, and the only thing that qualifies us.

Tough love for the prodigal son:

Is David’s “refuge” useful as our pattern for living? The surprising answer is yes and a qualified no. Yes, we are to surrender to take refuge in God, and live the obedient life in the presence of God experienced as Goodness; this makes God smile. No, we are not to do things that are the antithesis of Goodness; this makes God cry.

David’s story is our story too. Frightening, isn’t it? All of us are Prodigal Children. However, the story of the Prodigal is only a sub-plot to the main event of The Forgiving Father. **(Luke 15:11-32).**

My own triumphal entry:

Free will is what gets us into trouble. The younger brother wanted to squander his inheritance, and his father says, “OK.” Just like the prodigal we have an inheritance to squander, and we do when we choose to use our natural-human-worldly instincts; “I want what I want, and I want what I want when I want it—NOW!” My grandmother used to say that I always had big I’s.

I did have until I was 14 while attending the last campfire of the week at church camp. The warmth and the blaze illumined an inner calling previously unknown to me, yet it always was there. To echo the founder of my denomination, I felt my heart strangely warmed, and I desired to return *home* to live in the presence of my inner Spiritual Oasis.

My, what a triumphal entry that was.

IV. 11:12–19, Jesus Clears the Temple

The way the Jew's abused the purpose of the temple is a metaphor for the way in which they robbed the people of their faith. The intended purpose of the Temple is to be a House of Prayer for rehearsing the sacrifice required of them to die to the things of the world. Because we Christians are judgmental of the Temple sacrifices, we need to be careful because as followers of Jesus we find meaningful the slaughter of a man on a cross. The sacrifice of Jesus is directly related to the Temple animal sacrifices. Each is a demonstration of the decision to intentionally die to live by the world's standards. Instead, we practice living on our inner resources.

My jail story of "So Sad" is appropriate at this point. I was counseling County Jail prisoners all evening until about midnight. As I started home, the Women's Matron asked if I would visit with Mary a female prisoner. I agreed and went back to the interview room. A haggard woman walked in, and the first words out of her mouth are, "Chaplain, I am so sad, and I've been this way all of my life."

I looked at her and replied, "Why Mary that makes God cry."

Mary looked a bit bewildered and asked, "Why would that make God cry?"

"Because," I responded, "That is not what God wants for you. God wants you to live at peace with yourself and to find meaning in life."

Mary took this in, and then asked, "How do I make God smile?"

"That's easy," I responded. "All you need to do is to live the humane life. You can start by being nice to your cell mates."

At this, Mary got up to leave. "Wait a minute, Mary. Where are you going?"

"I'm going back to the cell block. There are some women back there that need to hear this."

Two weeks later, I was near the women's block and stopped to talk to the matron. "How is Mary doing," I asked.

"Chaplain," she replied, "I don't know what you said to Mary that night. The next day she got up, took a bath, combed her hair and put on some makeup. Then, she called together the women preparing for sentencing court and she prayed for them—never before was she a praying person. During that afternoon, Mary asked several women to join her in reading the Bible—never before had she read the Bible."

My point is, do you think that Mary made God smile? I can add that Mary, in spite of all she's done, is now an apple of God's eye. In fact, she always was but she was blind to it. Now she is no longer blind.

By any number of ways, people are robbed of their authentic relationship to God, self and neighbor. Why did these things upset the chief

priests and the teachers of the law? Because they believed they are already in an authentic relationship with God, but their actions resulted in the antithesis of At-One-Ment. Unless our actions support At-One-Ment, this is how we make God cry. God smiles when we, "Love Much. Forgive everything." Jesus did. (See Luke 7:47)

V. 11:20–26, "Cursing of the fig tree"

This is one of the "hard sayings" because it reveals a side of Jesus that is uncharacteristic of his gentle nature. The lesson is that we always need to be prepared for Jesus, and we know when Jesus is around because it is a time for "bearing figs." This has nothing to do with the weather, or the season. It has to do with Jesus being present, and Jesus always is present within us.

Consequently, we want to bear figs! This is why we stop at stop signs; we come to a complete stop for Jesus! This is why every meal and every meeting needs to be immaculately set and lesson-plan ready; we prepare for Jesus. This is why we help old people cross the street; we help them experience Jesus. What happens when we fail to do these things? It makes Jesus, who represents the ripeness, curse the fig tree for not bearing fruit.

A better title for this section of Mark's gospel would be "The dynamics of faith and prayer."

The dynamic of faith as trust:

The word "faith" is an Old Christian Code Word, and like all of our old code words, it is necessary to do a Gut Trip Analysis of it. There is a fun game often played at church camp called "Trust." One person is blind-folded and placed in the center of a small circle of youth. The one in the middle is asked to fold his/her hands across the chest. This person is then turned around several times, and on the count of three is told to fall backwards knowing that someone will catch them before they hit the ground.

The dynamic of faith as surrender:

Have you ever thought twice about getting on an airplane? Literally, we bet our lives on the physics of the wings, the power of the engines, and the skill of the pilot.

The dynamic of faith as falling—the illustration of Atlas carrying the world:

One additional illustration is that of falling. It is when we are falling that we have no control over the future. Literally, taking the leap of faith is a surrendering of ourselves into the hands of fate. As my grandmother taught me, it is not the fall that kills us; rather, it is the sudden stop.

The illustration of Atlas carrying the weight of the world is appropriate. What happens to this weight when Atlas jumps into a massive void? Does the weight continue to fall with Atlas, or does it continue to crush him? The answer

is that the world and Atlas continue to fall at the same rate, and the burden is relieved. What happens when Atlas decides he's had enough of this falling business and brings out his security blanket on which to land? The weight of the world once again begins to crush him.

The metaphor is apt. Gut Trip Analysis embraces the idea that our inner life is lived by taking the leap of faith into the void that exists in our spiritual middles. This is a void that is eternally deep. Like Atlas, we all carry burdens that weigh us down like the bag of sins carried by Pilgrim in the story of "Pilgrim's Progress."³¹ When we take the leap into the arms of Jesus, the weight of our burdens no longer crushes us, and God's love sustains us. It is when we are overwhelmed by our fear of falling that we seek to use, like Linus van Pelt in the "Peanuts" cartoon³², our security blanket in the desire to stop the falling.

How can we tell when we are out of compliance with God's desire for our surrendered life? It is when we feel overwhelmed and hurt. Does falling into the surrendered life make our burdens go away? No, not at all. What happens is that our problems and burdens no longer crush us.

Which is it going to be? Do you prefer to be crushed and burdened by the cares of life, or do you prefer to be in the control of God. The decision is ours to make, and God is waiting for us to awaken to the offer. (Ah, a little evangelistic moment, eh?)

The dynamic of faith as belief:

In 11:24B Jesus uses the word *believed*. Take a moment to think about this word and you'll discover it encompasses all the words we've explored: faith, trust and surrender. Belief is knowing something with such certainty that we will lay down our life to defend it. Isn't this what Martin Luther affirmed in defending *sola fide: faith alone* is sufficient for salvation. (Romans 3:28)

The challenge is to take the leap, trust the pilot, play the game of "Trust," embrace the faith, give it up, and surrender. I'm going to guarantee that when we do, we'll be pleasantly surprised about the freedom we'll experience along with a deep sense of satisfaction. Put into practice the admonition of Jesus, "Love much. Forgive everything!" Note in 11:26 that this is the way we make God smile.

The dynamic of prayer and living on Death Ground:

11:25, ". . . whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." Can you identify the problem? When the word "believe" is understood as Head Trip Analysis, then the only effort needed to insure the answer is an intellectual affirmation. When the word "believe" is experienced as

³¹ Bunyan, John, *the Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come; Christian allegory*. 1678.

³² Cartoon syndicated by Charles M. Schultz

surrender, then it is necessary to put ourselves on death ground to be certain the prayer is answered.

Death ground is an interesting experience, and it brings back a memory. In the mid-1940's our church camp served powdered eggs and milk. The typical comment is, "This is yucky!" Some of us noticed a cow in a nearby pasture, and the decision was made to arise early and go milk the cow. We borrowed a dirty bucket from the farmer's barn and walked toward the fence.

"Do you know how to milk a cow," we asked of each other? None could affirm the necessary skills, so I volunteered.

It was necessary for me to crawl through the barbed wire, and then to advance into the field while keeping my eyes focused on the cow. The closer I got, and the longer I observed the animal, the more I was convinced that this bovine is not a cow but a bull.

Suddenly, the bull observed both me and my bucket and took exception to my intent. The bull turned, its eye's filled with hate, its nostrils flaring, and its front feet pawing the ground. Then, it charged, and I was on death ground. Dropping the bucket, I ran toward the fence with the bull in full pursuit. At the last moment I dived under the barbed wire much to the amusement of my milking buddies.

Is this a demonstration of prayer? No, it is more of an illustration of foolish youthful exuberance. The point is when we pray, we need to make a full commitment and assume the prayer is answered, because it will be "over our dead body" that it fails.

The problem of prayer:

For people who have not emerged from the Modern worldview of the last 600 years, prayer is not a problem. From the perspective of Head Trip Analysis, prayers are answered by some mysterious process unknown to humans that are associated with miracles as supernatural events.

For Post-Modern people who have abandoned supernaturalism as a solution, the activity of prayer is a problem. On a continuum of

Understood to Mystified,

answered prayer is located closely to Mystified. Using this method is helpful because some things are clearly understood, while other things are big question marks; supernaturalism is not found on the scale. Gut Trip Analysis prefers to name this continuum as Wonders, because many of the events are beautiful to behold, but how they happen is—at the moment—lost to us; maybe later we'll understand.

Some attempts to explain prayer--

Because prayer is a problem for Post Modern society, I've made several attempts to see if Gut Trip Analysis offers any help to de-mystify this activity. The following shares some of these insights.

*Our acts of doing are prayers in action:*³³

Consider the three acts of our personal spiritual commitment.

Traditionally, these are Meditation, Contemplation and Prayer. When our acts of **Meditation** are intensified (driving on the highway and losing track of time and space) we fall into **Contemplation**. In this same way when **Prayer** is intensified (working on a service project and forgetting to eat lunch), then we fall into the depth of **Contemplation**.

In this same regard, when the Youth Group rakes leaves for the elderly then their work is **Prayer**. This is helpful because it shifts prayer from the supernatural and moral into the ontological and indicative. Also, this process lifts up Prayer into the most mundane of actions. A meeting of the Bridge Club suddenly becomes a prayer-form, along with a meeting of the City Council to worry over the budget; the presence of God is seen at every turn, and in every activity. God is everywhere when we have the spirit eyes to see it; Gut Trip Analysis is the lenses through which this experience is magnified. Try it. You'll like it.

The Fish Tank--A metaphor for Prayer:

Does a fish in a tank of water know it is swimming in water? Probably not, at least until it jumps out of the water. Then, the fish flops around gasping for breath, while it attempts to jump back into the tank.

I've witnessed lots of people react in very similar ways. When troubles overwhelm them they begin to gasp for air and flop around building into a state of near hysteria. I've seen this happen on those occasions when the local mortician has an un-churched family who need a pastor to conduct a funeral at the mortuary. People cry until they are exhausted while screaming and damning God for their loss.

Why is this the case? Such people are not aware they swim in a tank of prayer. They act as though they are fish out of water. Consequently, when the going gets tough, they have no resources on which to lean. As the pastor-in-charge of such events, my job is to build a case for the spiritual resources already available to all of us.

I've found this image helpful in explaining in non-mystical terms the activity of prayer. How do our prayers for others actually affect them? When people understand all of creation is swimming in a tank of prayer, then our prayers stimulate the water-of-prayer to instantaneously move through the prayer-water into the recipient. My prayer for people often is sent with the

³³ This information and chart represents the work of the Institute of Cultural Affairs in its research into the dynamics of The Other World that is discovered in the midst of this world.

message, "I'm sending you all of my spiritual energy, please use it up as the more it is used the more energy comes back to me."

VII. 11:27 – 33, Questioning the authority of Jesus

How would you answer the question of the chief priests concerning where Jesus gets his authority. Authority is not something that is added on to life. Authority is something with which we are born. In this way, authority is not something we do, but something we are; we are authority. The problem is most of us are asleep to this gift. Self-depreciation leads to denial while self-aggrandizement leads to abuse. Where does Jesus get his authority? He gets it from the same place we do. It is a part of us.

The concern is how we use our authority. When it is used, does it bring about At-One-Ment, or the antithesis of At-One-Ment? Does it support the work of Goodness, or does our activity work against the best interests of others?

With this in mind, read again **Mark 11:29-33**. Jesus traps those who come to test the source of his authority. Instead, Jesus points them to the Baptizer; is it from the resource of Goodness, or from the resource of human endeavor? How will you answer this question? The Pharisees failed the test. Can we afford to fail too?

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Materials from Sermon Starter – Mark 11:1-11

The mission of Mark's gospel is to awaken the spiritually asleep with the information that Jesus and Jesus' message is the same. The purpose of this material demonstrates Jesus' life and activities at a kairotic moment in history; this is the in-breaking of something new. History is divided by this event. **Psalm 118:24-25** offers us the opportunity to ground the significance of its words and phrases.

It is in anticipation of our awakening that Jesus is born in our human experience. This sets the stage for the Good News. God has a revelation to make that we'll discover when we get to know the, "rest of the story."

Another invention of Gut-Trip Analysis is the use of "geographical theology;" i.e., associating the places mentioned in the scripture with how we experience the place instead of just noting the geography. In this instance, Mark goes to a lot of trouble for setting this episode in Jerusalem; Bethany, which is close to the Mount of Olives and to Bethphage, is a suburb of Jerusalem. Why does Mark go to all of this trouble?

Using Gut Trip Analysis we discover that Jerusalem represents *Home* for us; everywhere else is *On Vacation*! This is supported by the axiom, "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a

human experience.”³⁴ *Vacation* represents our human experience, while *Home* represents our Spiritual experience.

When we get this distinction grounded, it makes the cross and the resurrection story jump out at us! We need to die to the significance of being human beings in order to *awaken* as the spiritual beings we are intended to be. This Easter experience has profound implications for us, because we continue to remain human but experience a transformation that awakens us to our humane and gracious nature. The saved are those who awaken to their spiritual purpose. The liturgical season of Lent represents an awakening to the things preventing us from living as spiritual beings having a human experience. This is why we deny ourselves during Lent so that our hunger is a reminder of our created purpose.

The Church is those who are awake to this profound human/humane experience. It is important to acknowledge that the Church is what the Church does. In this sense there are other sheep of Jesus, not of the Christian fold, who fulfill the definition as The Church; they do God’s will; they see a transgression of the Divine Commandment, repent of their mis-deeds in participating in the sin, turn their back on such activity, and then lead society in an act of social repentance.³⁵ Think: Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, the Scouting programs.

It is important to acknowledge that our transformation does not get rid of our human propensities and natural inclinations. But we do live as transformed people who fulfill our intended creation as humane and gracious people while working for justice and mercy.

The key insight in Lesson 9

The cross is an expectant moment.

When is the ripeness of time, and what does it mean for the preparation for the cross? Mark addresses these questions using the story of Jesus’ journey to the cross. It begins in Jerusalem where his initial activity is to prepare the Temple by cleansing it. Then, he demonstrates his authority by teaching us a lesson about the ripeness of time.

This lesson illuminates for us that treating Jerusalem as theological geography plumbs the meaning of this scripture. Jesus going to Jerusalem means more than just a destination vacation point. Jerusalem is the rabbit hole

³⁴ A quote of Teilhard de Chardin.

³⁵ “The Church as Social Pioneer,” Niebuhr, H. Richard. *The Responsibility of the Church for Society*. Note: Find a copy of this short chapter on the web and read one of the best definitions of the work of the church ever written.

that leads us, like Alice in Wonderland, into the inner sanctum of a life of surrender and obedience. What has gone wrong? The nation of Israel forgot its inheritance.

To re-awaken the nation, Jesus exerts his authority to reestablish this entry-way into the interior refuge of life with God. Jesus reminds us that the Temple is, “a house of prayer for all nations.” The activities blocking the entrance to the Temple are preventing the free access to the portal of the spiritual oasis.

The underlying question Mark raises for us is, are we bearing fruit? When is it appropriate to be productive? Jerusalem’s existence and Temple life had deteriorated in representing the kingdom of God; it is like a withered Fig Tree. We can offer lots of worldly/natural excuses for not bearing kingdom fruit, but this is misguided. Bearing fruit does not depend on us, rather it depends our relationship to Jesus Christ. The more we open ourselves to living the Jesus Life, the more fruit we bear.

Lesson 10: The Kairotic Moment

The Topic: Mark 12: 1 – 44, The offering is ready

The Objective to prepare people/world for the demonstration of their rebirth		
The Kairotic Moment		
The ripeness of time	The offering is ready	Falling through the hole in time
Lesson 9	Lesson 10	Lesson 11

This is the tenth lesson in this series on Mark's gospel. On the master chart (available to you on line at www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy), this is the second session on, "The Kairotic Moment," and given the title, "The offering is ready," to describe the second stage on the way to the cross.

I. Read Mark 12:1-44 in one reading.

Quick Reference

12:1, Parable of the Tenants.

This parable is about those who reject the spiritual glue that holds us together. Note the role of using parables.

12:13–17, Paying Taxes to Caesar.

The lesson is about the work of responsible citizens. In Gut Trip Analysis, the argument is about surrendering ourselves to do the right thing.

12:18-27, Marriage at the resurrection.

The message of Jesus is that the question of who lives with whom in eternity is the wrong question.

12:28-34, The Greatest Commandment.

Avoid moralism. When we live through Christ, then the humane life is more meaningful than burnt offerings and animal sacrifice.

12:35-40, "Whose son is Christ?"

The question of insincere dilettantes.

12:41–43, The Widow's offering.

The story illuminates how we are to give out of our poverty. To practice quality in everything we do has a clear relationship to the nature of the Widow's mite.

From here on out, the momentum is like falling into a spiritual hole in which the events control Jesus rather than the other way around. In this way, Mark is telling us that now Jesus is ready to make a life-changing decision.

Myth: The use of the word myth gets a bad rap. The more traditional use of this word means something that is untrue. The theological definition of this word is something that is so true that it only can be described in story form, such as parables, similes, allegories, and metaphors. What is the truth Mark has for us in the Parable of the Tenants?

II. **12:1-12, The Parable of the Tenants.**

Rejection of spiritual glue:

In this instance, Mark reports that Jesus used a parable to speak back to his audience of chief priests, elders and teachers of the law. Earlier they questioned Jesus concerning the source of his authority. In this parable, Jesus forth-tells (what is coming forth) regarding his anticipated death and resurrection. It is helpful to remember that Mark is writing his gospel already knowing the end of the story. Yet, he processes the events as if he does not. As we already know, Mark tells his story as a quasi-mystery to which the solution will be clear after the resurrection.

The event tells of an entrepreneur who builds a winepress and a tower to guard it, rents a vineyard and leases it out. When it comes to the *ripeness of time*, the owner sends servants to collect his share. Each time the collectors are beat up or murdered. In desperation, the owner sends his son, believing he would be respected, but he too is murdered. What is the response of the owner? He confronts the irresponsible tenants with his wrath; i.e., tough love.

Jesus' final blow is to throw scripture into the faces of his listeners. He quotes **Psalm 118:22, 23** observing that what the nation of Israel rejected, God makes the capstone; i.e., that which holds the whole structure together. The implication is that the Jewish authorities rejected something important; Jesus is the capstone that they reject. In effect, Jesus blames them for the reduction of influence in the renewal of the Jewish beliefs.

His audience clearly understands this message. Is it any wonder that they are upset and plan to arrest him?

III. **12:13-17, Paying taxes to Caesar.**

Responsible citizens:

In this section, the audience changes to some Pharisees and Herodians. According to Wikipedia, "The Herodians were a public political party, who distinguished themselves from the two great historical parties of post-exilic Judaism (Pharisees and Sadducees) by the fact that they were friendly to Herod

the Great, the King of the Jews.³⁶ In this way, Mark sets the context for the rest of the story in both the religious and political camps.

In **12:13**, the purpose of the Pharisees and the Herodians is, “to catch him in his words.” According to the ways of God, “. . . is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” What is “the way of God?” According to Jesus, this way honors all of our obligations. Since we live in the world. It is important to honor At-One-Ment by being good citizens. Also, we live in obedience to our membership in the Spiritual Oasis.

With this audience, we can be amazed at Jesus too. Isn’t there a lesson here for contemporary society?

IV. 12:18-27, Marriage at the Resurrection.

Not a supernatural reality:

Once again the audience shifts. This time it is the Sadducees who come to test him. For the most part, this religious sect are Jews outside the mainstream of Judaism. Theologically, they did not believe in the resurrection, which is why they are *sad-you-see*. Obviously, his examiners are poking a bit of fun at him too. They knew that Jesus knew they didn’t believe in the resurrection, yet this is the framework of their question: A childless women dies who was serially married to seven brothers who all die. At the resurrection whose wife will she be?”

This question is more timely than we would like. My father died and my mother remarried. Her second husband died and is buried next to his first wife. My mother died and is buried next to her first husband. With whom will she spend eternity?

I wish this is a serious question, yet it is frequently raised by women who divorced abusive first husbands and married wonderful second husbands. They want to know, “Will I be required to live with my abusive husband?”

In **12:24-27**, Jesus sets us straight. “You are badly mistaken,” is his final reply. God is “not the God of the dead, but of the living.” The contemporary word to be added is that eternity has nothing to do with a supernatural reality. We need to be reminded that only God is eternal. Consequently, our contemporary concern is to live in synch with God; this is what it means to live eternally. Whatever happens after we are dead is in the hands of an eternal God.

V. 12:28-34, The Greatest Commandment.

Like the song, “*Its love that makes the world go round.*”

³⁶ Wikipedia, Dec. 12, 2011.

The next audience is one of the teachers of the law. For the first time in this series we have a person who asks him a sincere question. It is one the teacher asked his students, which of the commandments is the greatest? In effect, Jesus replies, the most important question regards living the obedient life. The second one is how to live as servants so as to meet the needs of our neighbors.

This pleases Jesus, and he is thought of as being wise. Jesus closes out this episode with a little teacherly advice of his own, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." This is a phrase the teacher understood because the Jews assumed the kingdom of God is theological shorthand for living out of the inner resources of our spiritual oasis. For the Jews, and for us, God's kingdom is not a place but rather a relationship of obedience to God.

For us, the other phrase that needs the attention of Gut Trip Analysis is, "burnt offerings and sacrifices." While much can be explored as to the significance of the sacramental work of the Temple, it is enough to note that these rituals are of less importance than the doctrine of love. According to the commentary, "The basic function of this paragraph is to present clearly a central doctrine of early Gentile Christianity. Righteousness is not to be understood as strict obedience to a complex code of laws and customs."³⁷

VI. 12:35-40, "Whose son is Christ?"

Living as dilettantes:

Our next audience is those attending a Jesus seminar in the Temple courts. Jesus is in high form because Mark reports that, "The large crowd listened to him with delight." The philosophical question is, if Christ is the son of David, and David records in Psalm 110:1 his encounter with Christ who tells David, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." Then Jesus concludes, when David calls him Christ, then how can Christ be the son of David?"

Can you imagine the fun? This must have gone on all morning long. In fact, it could have drifted off into insincerity. Jesus doesn't let it go a long time without driving home the nail. Be careful, he reminds his class, of the teachers of the old school. They like to impress people, but they really are superficial; they are dilettantes. Such people will be, "punished most severely."

VII. 12:41-43, The widow's offering.

Learning to give out of our poverty:

³⁷ *Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary*, Nashville:Abingdon Press. 1971. 664.

The disciples: This is the last audience, and they really are the last of the last. From this moment on Jesus leads us deeper into the depths in the hole in time so well articulated by Sondheim:

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.³⁸

The cross and resurrection is a crack in time, and this is the way the light gets in. To mix a metaphor, the next events come to us like a raging flood. A dam will burst on Golgotha Hill, and suddenly we will drown in the baptism addressed by John the Baptizer in chapter 1.

What does it mean she gave out of her poverty?

We can't forget this is a story of two offerings. Rich people came and throw in large amounts of coins into the Temple treasury. How grateful we need to be for these generous people. Without them, the Temple could not afford to pay for heat, air conditioning, and janitorial services. But it is the "Widow's mite" that caught the attention of Jesus.

Quality is the goal:

What is the "mite" we have to offer out of our poverty? Actually, it is easier than we imagine. In Gut Trip Analysis, our offering is quality! Do we do what we do to the best of our ability? As school teachers, are we doing our praying before class starts thinking, "How can we reach little distracted Johnny? What can we do to reach into the depth of him to awaken a desire to learn? As legislators, what are the values of Jesus Christ that they need to bring to the social issues meeting? This happens with greater frequency than we might first accept. The practice of compromise also can be a quality activity. It is the quality of the Widow's mite that Jesus is watching. Can we do less?

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Materials from Sermon Starter – Mark 12:28-34

The doctrines of justification, sanctification and glorification:

Sanctification is the theological focus of this material. It is experienced as an awakening to life in the Kingdom of God; it is our ethical stance. In this sense, justification is the key that opens up God's kingdom, and glorification is the decision to embrace the surrendered life.

Gut Trip Analysis considers glorification as a lost doctrine because it is so seldom mentioned and so little understood. Head Trip Analysis asks what do we know about glorification, which is almost nothing. Gut Trip Analysis asks how we experience it. Living the surrendered life in obedience to God's intended purpose for us is to live the glorified life.

³⁸ Leonard Cohen: "Anthem."

12:28-34, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

What made this teacher of the law wise?

12:34, Regarding the teachers of the law, what did Jesus recognize in him that pleased Jesus? The teacher understood that this ancient summary is more important than, "burnt offerings and sacrifices." This reply is affirmed by the ancient Samuel, "To obey is better than sacrifice."³⁹

The humane life is the result of the surrendered life:

Those living the humane life are living the surrendered life. Sometimes this term gets hooked into moralism and do-goodism. While being moral and doing good are the result of living the surrendered life, they are not a precondition.

The caveat here is living the humane life:

Anyone who lives humanely, whether they acknowledge themselves as Christian or not, are living the surrendered life; they are fulfilling the Great Commandment, and they are pleasing Jesus. Jesus will call them wise for living, "not far from the Kingdom of God." When we have awakened eyes we can see the activity of Christ everywhere we look.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Materials from Sermon Starter – Mark 12:35-44

The two themes---

The trick question:

12:35-40, Again, Jesus is confronted by teachers of the law who ask him insincere questions to test him. Maybe Jesus treats them with disdain because they are asking cheap questions when the world as they knew it is about to be turned upside down. Anyway, the theological question regarding the Christ and King David is a philosopher's game. At this point, the teacher quotes **Psalm 110:1** and ask a rhetorical question, "How than can he [the Christ] be his son?"

Jesus can hardly contain his feelings of contempt. He doesn't answer them. For the crowd's benefit—and much to their delight—he points out the short comings of the established clergy: self-aggrandizement, failure to fulfill the charge of caring for the widows and orphans, and religious pomposity.

Investing in God's treasury:

12:41-44, We get our priorities straight when we invest in God's Treasury, At this point in Jesus' journey to the cross, Mark uses the story of the widow's offering to illustrate the investment necessary to win our freedom. The interest earned for this type of investment is numerous.

Among our chief investments is the practice of At-One-Ment. The return on this practice is 100%. If what we do does not achieve living At-One with

³⁹ | Samuel 15:22B.

everyone and everything, then we need to divest ourselves from it, because this represents the antithesis of At-One-Ment.

In order to be anything for the world, we first need to want nothing but Christ. When we do, there is the promise of a reward to get back everything and much, much more. Perhaps the story of Job is sufficient; in the process of demonstrating his profound commitment to God he asked for nothing, much to the consternation of his wife and his friends. At the end of the contest between God and the Devil, Job gets everything back with interest.

While we live in the world of the desert, we learn that the desert defines only our human condition, actions and propensities. It is the Spiritual Oasis that we choose as the definition of what it means to live the humane and gracious life.

Concerning the Widow's coins:

There is some speculation among bible scholars if this story used one coin or two. Because the NIV reports in 12:42 that she, "... put in two very small copper coins worth only a fraction of a penny," I'll go with the two coin theory. A fraction of a penny is not very much. The consensus is that the offering is worth two *Lepta* (Greek) representing the currency used in the Greek/Syrian world. These two coins would equal 1 Roman *Quadran* that would be worth less than today's penny.⁴⁰ What I find interesting is that in the inflationary times we live, most youth and young adults do not stoop over and pick up a penny off the street. Having been born as a Depression Baby, I do what they will not do. Am I any richer for it?

12:41, What is the Treasury to which we contribute?

To answer this question, I'm sharing a response recently written in a Letter to the Editor. It describes the Treasury.⁴¹

What is the alternative? It is necessary to look no further than Pastor Steve Kmetz and the Salina Rescue Mission. Kmetz is one tough cookie who can not be crumbled by those manipulating the system. What is his motivation? Apparently it has something to do with his personal relationship to Jesus Christ. Christianity is a social philosophy motivated by unmerited love and has nothing to do with the economic and political goals of socialism. These goals are antithetical to communism.

⁴⁰ *Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary*, Nashville:Abingdon Press, 1971. p. 665.

⁴¹ Letter to the Editor, "The Salina Journal," December 10, 2011.

Pastor Kmetz invests in the same treasury as the widow in this story. He understands how we are transformed when we give out of our poverty because of our love for Jesus Christ.

So, there we have it. I understand the treasury never closes, and the tellers know how to receive your gifts. You are invited to get acquainted with the process. You can bank on it!

The key insight in Lesson 10

Getting ready the cross.

The offering is made on the cross. How do we ready the offering?

It begins by taking what the world rejects and making it the glue to hold the world together. The nature of this glue is the decision to take responsibility to do the things that result in At-One-Ment, and uses the form of serving both the world and God. The substance of this glue is a love that makes the world go-round; love that is demonstrated by offering everything—to give it all up—and do it with integrity in the best style available.

The prime example is Jesus, and the twin is our view in the looking glass. Don't smudge the mirror!

Lesson 11: The Kairotic Moment

The Topic: Mark 13: 1 – 37, Falling through the hole in time

The Objective to prepare people/world for the demonstration of their rebirth		
The Kairotic Moment		
The ripeness of time	The offering is ready	Falling through the hole in time
Lesson 9	Lesson 10	Lesson 11

This is the eleventh lesson in this series on Mark’s gospel. On the master chart (available to you on line at www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy), this is the third session on, "The Kairotic Moment," and given the title, "Falling through the hole in time," to describe material that is apocalyptic in nature.

I. **Read Mark 13:1-37 in one reading.**

Quick Review	
<p>13:1A, Leaving the Temple. Treat as a Theological Location. The Temple represented the place of awakening, and a safe place..</p> <p>13:1B, The Disciples admiring the Temple architecture. Treat this as a metaphor of worldliness.</p> <p>13:2B-4, By what signs are they all to be fulfilled? Jesus is privately talking to the disciples and they want clarification on the meaning of the Temple’s destruction.</p>	<p>13:4, What is the experience we have with the “Deceiver?” Stuck in hopelessness and lied to.</p> <p>13:5, What is the message of the “Deceiver?” We are victims of our circumstances.</p> <p>13:5B, Describe how you can tell the Deceiver from the real Jesus? Jesus lives in At-One-Ment..</p> <p>13:5-8, Many false claims and wars and rumors of wars. The message of Jesus is not to be alarmed at the “birth pangs” of the new age that are horribly described.</p>

<p>13:7B-8, When does “the end” come? Treat as an experience instead of an achievement.</p> <p>13:8, What is the lesson Jesus teaches us about “the new birth?” Explain that life in Jesus makes us a victor and not a victim.</p> <p>13:9-11, The opportunity to testify. Jesus anticipates that punishment can be opportunities to witness to people in places of authority.</p> <p>13:12-13, Betrayal will characterize the demise of one world view and the birth of a new one. The breakdown of the family is anticipated, but salvation is promised.</p> <p>13:14-19, The promise of unequaled distress. Jesus prefaces this list of trials by saying, “Let the reader understand,” the significance of the abomination that causes desolation. This list represents our experience of slavery to old ways.</p>	<p>13:20-23 False prophets. These are sent to deceive the elect.</p> <p>13:24-25, Cosmological signs. Everything will experience a demise and rebirth, even the universe itself.</p> <p>13:26-27, The sign of Daniel. The gathering of the elect is done as a human event. See the book of Daniel.</p> <p>13:28-31, There is an imminent in-breaking. This event is accompanied by many natural signs, and all of it takes place soon. Actually, it is happening all of the time.</p> <p>13:32-37, Be prepared! Try this one on for size—On a warm afternoon in July, you are sitting in the left field bleachers when a home run is hit. From the instant the ball leaves the bat you know the ball is coming directly into your hands. You stand with arms upheld, palms open, and fingers cupped: “I got it. . . I got it. . . Do you get it?”</p>
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II. From here on out, the momentum is like falling into a spiritual hole in which the events control Jesus rather than the other way around. Liturgically, it is Advent, the season of four Sundays before Christmas. Theologically, it is a time to prepare ourselves to see hope that comes in the midst of hopelessness. Existentially, the Good News is that while life does victimize us we can choose to live the victorious life. It is as we learn to embrace life’s tragedies that these experiences no longer are enemies to us. When this break through takes place, we experience transformation! It is as if, “The heavenly bodies are shaken.”⁴²

⁴² Psalm 110:1

Mark 13 begins Mark's eschatological material as the, "Signs of the End of the Age." Eschatology is the study of the radical in-breaking of Awakening. Look at the themes: "Watch out!" "Be on your guard."

Actually, we don't have to wait for these things to happen because it is right at the door. These things illustrate for us The Way Life Is (TWLI). The Good News is that while TWLI victimizes us, we still can live the victorious life. How do we know? The answer is right at the door as the Christmas Story begins to unfold.

III. The focus of this bible study is to use Gut Trip Analysis to interpret the apocalyptic material, "Signs of the End of the Age," and "The Day and Hour Unknown." This is what it means to fall through a hole in time. These events point to a more meaningful reality.

The lectionary turns our thoughts to Christmas. Usually this is done by raising the apocalyptic (or cosmic) issues or the signs of the end of the age. Again the danger here is Head Trip Analysis. It is not what we know about the end of the age, rather it is how we experience the end of the age.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE—Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 13:1-8

13:2, The destruction of the Temple:

It is important to remember that each of the Gospel writers has his own ax to grind. At this point, Mark's purpose is to lift up the kairotic moments in our lives when things end and result in new beginnings. In this pericope, Jesus notes how the old safe place of the Hebrews, the Temple, is now replaced with a new safe place in him.

While all of this appears very mysterious, it is helpful to remember that the date of this material *is after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E.* Also, you'll find it helpful to remember there is a difference between forecasting and forth-telling. Forecasting, or prophecy, is seeing into the future to tell what will happen. Forth-telling is the business of seriously looking at current events and then telling what can be the result. This fulfills the Gut Trip axiom of, "The result of the deed is found in the deed itself." Jesus is telling us, in light of what he represents, the old will be destroyed because life that is pulled through him results in a new birth for living the awakened life. In this way the old values are at an end, and the new perspectives are just coming into being. The one represents brokenness and death, while the other represents wholeness and new life.

The danger here is Head Trip Analysis. It is not what we know about the end of the age, rather it is how we experience the end of the age. This is what this material is all about.

13:5, The Deceiver:

The Deceiver is neither an object nor a person; that's Head Trip Analysis. The Deceiver is the personification of the lie that we are hopelessly lost. When our mental, physical and emotional Temples begin to crumble, there is nothing to be done; we are victims to our circumstances. This is the lie that the Deceiver wants us to embrace.

How can we tell the real Jesus from the Deceiver?

Jesus raises a deeper problem here represented when the Deceiver comes dressed in the clothes of Christ. The answer is not as difficult as we might first think it is.

The first way to identify the Deceiver is that it is the first to tell us, "You are hope-less!" Certainly, this can be our predicament: "You lost a leg in a car accident, and it will never grow back!" From the perspective of the Deceiver, life is hopeless and it ends in a 6' hole. Isn't that the truth?

On the other hand, Jesus says, "Not so fast." The life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus are the demonstration that we can die to the barriers preventing us from living the abundant life. Life does victimize us. (Over in the corner can't you see the Deceiver shaking its head in affirmation?) Now, pull your one-legged-ness through the story of the death and resurrection, and what happens? We die to hopelessness. While our human predicament does not change, the relationship we are invited to take to our human situation, changes us! While victimized, we now have the choice to live as one-legged grouches, or as the best one-legged dancers on the floor. (Wait! Is that the Deceiver slinking off into the sunset?)

Jesus affirms that our Temples may be crumbling, and then tells us to look through our circumstances to see God at work. A perfect example is the events on 9/11. The Deceiver wanted to convince us we are victims to terrorists. But, look again! God is at work giving birth to generosity, nationalism, patriotism and good deeds to those injured. There is Good News in the midst of the Bad News.

It is for this purpose Jesus came to live among us to demonstrate that we all are victimized. Jesus is victimized by the political and religious powers of his day. Yet, Jesus chooses to intentionally die to being a victim while on the cross. The result is the resurrection.

This is exactly the message of this material. It is this kind of experience that is the beginning of a new birth!

13:8, This scripture announces Jesus' response to the work of the Big Liar. These events represent the, ". . . beginning of the birth pangs."

End Times and Christmas—

Not much needs to be added here. Advent is just around the corner during which we experience the end times in anticipation of the new times: **JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON!**

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter -- Mark 13:9-23

The day and hour unknown---

When we pull our life through Jesus (WWJD), the transformation we experience is what Christian tradition calls the, "End of the Age." Every moment has the potential to be the End of the Age. Christmas is another opportunity. What hope can the church offer to fill the spiritual emptiness in our innards?

13:9, Those who stand on the cusp between the old life and the new ways receive punishment attributed to the death of the old ways.

13:10-11, The good news of the gospel must be preached during these times.

13:12-13, The collapse of the family is experienced.

13:14-19, People will live with profound distress due to that which is dying as well as that which is yet to come.

13:20-23, Those who are the awakened are the elect who will stand during this time of difficulty. The elect are not to be confused with Calvinistic theology.

These people are those who live as the awakened to the spiritual resources of their inner life and let this resource transform their human nature and propensities.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter -- Mark 13:24-31

The Theological Focus of the Season of Advent---

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." Eschatology is experienced as something that is impending, imminent, and the in-breaking of life and the Good News.

Participating in the "Last Things:"

Think of the image of the Christmas Manger standing between this very moment in which we live and standing before the next future moment. Now, pull any and all events and circumstances *through the Baby Jesus*. What you have done is one of the "Last Things." Suddenly, it is important, not theoretical, and it is relevant. We learn to define ourselves not by our life experiences, but we define ourselves through Christ. When we do, then we experience a transformation that feels like the cosmos is shaken.

Parousia:

Like the term eschatology, the term parousia is traditionally understood to imply the Second Coming of Christ. As a Gut Trip Analyst, I'm never certain when Christ left so She/He could come again.

Head Trip Analysis treats this topic as a theory to be explored, rather than as something to be experienced each and every day of our lives. 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 this degree it can be said that the 2nd Coming comes often.

End of the Age:

This simplest definition is that Jesus is, "The End of the Age." The old age is the experience of becoming victims to every life experience; this is when we allow our egos to get in our way. We finally awaken that our ego represents only our natural selves, but by pulling our life's experiences through Jesus Christ (Manger or the Cross), we die to being victims and awaken to life as victors. When we pull our life through Jesus (WWJD), the transformation we experience is what Christian tradition calls the, "End of the Age." Every moment has the potential to be the End of the Age. Christmas is another opportunity.

The Elect:

It is words like these that Gut Trip Analysis was invented to define. The Elect are not something that is added to our resume as we go through life. Rather, we are the Elect! God created us this way, just as God created a cow to be a cow, humans are created to live the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy. The Elect are those who live the Awakened Life.

Election:

In Gut Trip Analysis, God's election is that all creation, including humans, are chosen to live as sons and daughters of God; we are family not because of what we have done, or not done, but because we belong to God.

13:26-27, Jesus is our hope. The event of our salvation is the demonstration that features the humanity of Jesus more than his divinity. The symbol is found in the **Book of Daniel**; it is the Son of Man who comes as the awakened one to awaken us. Because we also are humans, it is necessary to prepare ourselves like the arborist prepares to plant Fig trees, or as a householder prepares for guests to arrive at an undetermined hour.

13:35-37, What is the hour for such occasions to take place? Christmas is coming and so is Easter, both of which come every moment of every day for those who are the awakened, and have a heart for Jesus. Valentines Day works too.

The key insight in Lesson 11

What is the hole in time?

It is Jesus, the crucified and risen awakened one. This death and resurrection is the story of Jesus, and it is our story too. Human existence is characterized by the angst of death. It is in anticipation of this fate that motivates us to seek false hopes and pleasures in order to escape, or deny, the reality of the grave.

What hope is there? The world has nothing to offer us other than to present our heirs with the bill for our burial. Like the song, "Is that all there is?"

Is that all there is, is that all there is
If that's all there is, my friend, then let's keep dancing
Let's break out the booze, and have a ball
If that's all there is.⁴³

Just a hole in the ground? Is this all there is? Not at all!

Like Alice down the rabbit hole, Jesus stands on the other side of this hole in time and beckons us to step through like "Alice in Wonderland."⁴⁴ His death is the demonstration on how to die to every barrier preventing us taking this step. The barriers are gone, even death itself no longer defines us! Now, Jesus is the new definition.

Come on! Step into this hole to discover the gift of God.

⁴³ "Is that all there is?" Lyrics by American songwriters Leiber and Stoller; circa 1960's. Singer Peggy Lee made it a hit song in 1969. Information on Wikipedia, January 6, 2010 @ 6:57 p.m. CST.

⁴⁴ Carroll, Lewis, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. 1865.

Lesson 12: The Event of Christ as New Birth

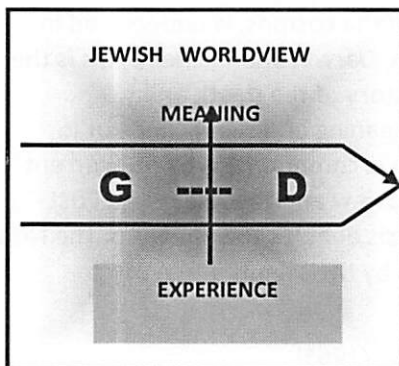
Topic: Mark 14: 1 – 15: 32, The sacrifice and blood offering

The Objective to prepare people and the world for the demonstration of their rebirth		
The Event of Christ as New Birth		
The sacrifice and blood offering	Bewilderment	Early manuscripts and women
Lesson 12	Lesson 13	Lesson 14

This is the twelfth lesson in this series on Mark's gospel. On the master chart (available to you on line at www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy), this is the first session on, "The Event of Christ as New Birth," and given the title, "The sacrifice and blood offering," describing material related to Jesus' demonstration of our freedom from the slavery to the world.

I. Read Mark 14:1-15:32 in one reading.

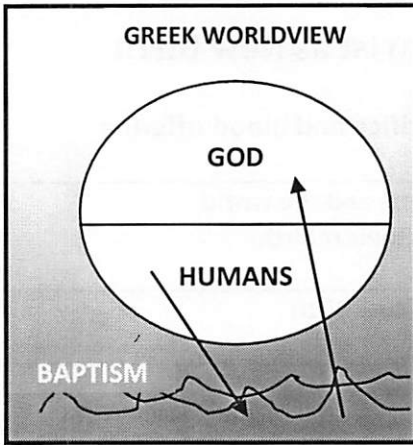
II. For Christians, this is a familiar passage in the New Testament as these verses form the Holy Week lectionary readings. Baptism and the cross are the central symbols of the Christians' belief system, and both take place in the tension between two competing worldviews of the Jews and the Greeks.



The Jewish Worldview affirms the presence of God that is intimately involved in everything. God is as close as their breath given to them in the Garden of Eden at creation. The human experience is made meaningful by pulling every event and circumstance *through* their understanding of God.

The Greek Worldview is characterized by dualism. God is absent

living in a Kingdom divorced from the human experience of pain and the angst of death. Here, humans die in order to



live in the eternal presence of God by passing through the waters of baptism. God loves the world and demonstrates this love by sending down angels to interpret God's will for the world. Finally, God sends God's Son to demonstrate the mode of baptism associated with the cross.

The effects of Baptism:

This part of the story only makes sense to us in light of the baptism of Jesus in Chapter 1. It is a foreshadowing of the end of the story. Baptism is an act of dying to the influence of this world and arising

out of a watery grave to live in the eternal presence of God. Gut Trip Analysis embraces the notion that our symbolic baptism provides a literal-type of death; we actually die to the influence of the world and are revived as awakened people. Do we live like it? We do to the degree that the various stages of awakening make us self-conscious.

Jesus intentional demonstration at the crucifixion:

The purpose of Jesus' life and ministry is to provide a demonstration of what it means to intentionally die to the things of this world in order to appropriate all of the resources of the surrendered life that helps us transform our life in the world. De Chardin is helpful in his statement, "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience."⁴⁵

In Richard Elliott's book, "Falling In Love With The Mystery,"⁴⁶ his thesis is that the Bible is difficult for modern society to interpret because nature in the biblical worldview of Jesus is understood very differently than it is now. The contemporary understanding of nature, and of the cosmos, is understood in light of the revelations by Copernicus, Newton, Darwin and Einstein; this is the Modern worldview. This does not defeat the story of the death and resurrection; it sheds a brighter light on the meaning and significance of it.

The problem of our self-consciousness is compounded by our current experience of the demise of the Modern worldview and the rise of the Post-Modern worldview. This is why Gut Trip Analysis enables the images of the New Testament to be relevant. The question asked by the scientific age of

⁴⁵ Teilhard de Chardin, *Le Phenomene Human*. (1955)

⁴⁶ Elliott, Richard, *Falling in Love with Mystery, We don't have to Pretend Any More*. Pittsburg:Dorrance Publishing Co. 1998.

Modernism is, “How do we understand. . . ?” The Post-Modern question is, “How do we experience. . . ?” Those who are grounded in Gut Trip Analysis already are prepared for this task. Viewed in this light, these beautiful old passages can be understood as *dying to this world* and *living in the spirit*.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 14:1–15:32

Wasteful Generosity?--

What is the relationship between each of the roles played by the oil anointment, the Passover Meal, and the crucifixion?

Discovering the theme of wasteful generosity:

I struggled with these relationships on a trip to Western Mexico to build a Habitat-type house for a church family. As we traveled, I shared with our pastor my consternation about the significance of the various themes in this material. Late one afternoon of the fourth day, my pastor settled into a plastic chair beside me and said, “Pastor Bill, you know what we are doing here is an example of waste-full generosity. We are building a home on a reclaimed garbage dump, using hundreds of hours expended by volunteers who have no claim to the project other than the love of Christ. This one house is a sign of hope amidst the hopelessness of the garbage dump and lives lived in poverty.”

Later, as the crew gathered around the family of five to bless the results of our efforts, our pastor prayed that what turned this “house” into a “home” is the “Waste-full Generosity” of the work team. He gave the family the keys to their new home, and we left knowing that the spirit of the cross and resurrection are left in the boards, nails, and (sometimes) the anointment of the blood of the volunteers.

It is clear to me how the events surrounding the crucifixion made sense as wasteful generosity.

The Barriers and Obstructions to Wasteful Generosity--

There are three acts to this drama: the preparation, the barriers attempting to prevent the significance of the crucifixion, and the subsequent resurrection. Ironically, it is the attempt by the religious and political institutions to prevent the demise of the old definitions on how to serve God through burnt offerings and sacrifices that guaranteed the demonstration of Jesus. The lesson to be learned is that death no longer defines us as victims. Because of the Jesus Lesson in which we immerse ourselves, we discover we are victors.

The First Sign of wasteful generosity--

The cost of the ointment:

14:1-11, The anointment of Jesus took place in the house of Simon the Leper by a women using costly oil. The anointment by an unknown woman is called wasteful by some of those present, but Jesus turns it from a moral

concern into a spiritual display of affection; it is wasteful generosity. Jesus declared it “beautiful,” and recognized what they did not; the anointment is in preparation for his burial.

The Second Sign of wasteful generosity--

The cost of the Passover Meal:

14:12-26, Mark moves to the preparation and participation in the Passover Meal—this meal is foreshadowed by Jesus’ baptism in Chapter 1. Passover is wasteful generosity because it freed the Jews from slavery, and it became a powerful transforming symbol. The cross is wasteful generosity because it is the transforming moment in the personal history of Christians; it recalls the act of Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptizer in the first chapter.

The disciples and Jesus gather to celebrate the Passover experience of moving from slavery to freedom. The role of *The Lord’s Supper* becomes a symbol of waste-full generosity by its association with both baptism and the Cross. Baptism recalls our death to the barriers preventing our awakening to live the surrendered life. The cross is the demonstration of how this is done.

Who is the betrayer?

It is interesting to observe that Mark, unlike Matthew, Luke and John, never mentions Judas by name, other than in **Mark 3:19** when Mark identifies Judas Iscariot as a member of the twelve disciples. Jesus uses the Passover Meal to announce his betrayer, but Mark is kind enough not to identify him. It is in this material that Jesus raises the point that, “One of you will betray me—one who is eating with me.” By tradition, Judas is one of those who missed the point of discipleship. We know this is the case because Judas had big problems. Always problems are the first sign that people are attempting to live out of their own resources rather than in obedience to Goodness and in At-One-Ment with God, neighbor and self.

During this meal, Jesus makes another announcement of his impending death; “I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God.” Observe that Jesus is not referring to the Greek worldview in which God lives in a separated realm. Rather, Jesus is referring to his relationship to God as God’s son; this is the “kingdom” as the Jews knew it.

The cost of friendship:

14:27-31, Peter is one of those who also miss the point. Peter boasts of his loyalty, and Jesus counters that Peter will disown him before the “rooster crows three times.” What Peter represents is that the road to hell is paved with good intentions, and Peter is the personification of most of us.

The cost of collegiality at Gethsemane:

14:32-42, As Jesus goes off to pray, he requests the disciples to stay awake. Because of the overwhelming emotions of the moment, they fall into the sleep of a spiritual struggle.

Most preachers can identify with this act in the Passion drama. Nearly every sermon is written fighting against sleepiness. Some call this a struggle against the Demon who does not want a successful sermon to be preached. While this appears far-fetched, I can testify that the struggle is with our surrender to God and obedience to our call into servanthood.

My human propensity is to fight against the decision to really trust God's message. It is when I give up and say, "I give up. It's your sermon, what do you want to get said?" The reply seems to be, "Wake up, and go back to work. I'll make good happen out of whatever you say!"

For Mark, the main issue is divinity vs. humanity. If Jesus is only divine in nature, then why is he seen struggling against his assignment to meet the cross? It is obvious that Mark frequently makes the point that Jesus is fully human. Jesus' announcement to the disciples is, "My soul is over-whelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch." The emotional tone of this statement is evidence of a human reaction. The sleepy disciples prove this message too. The terms, Son of Man and Son of David are constant themes in Mark. The phrase, Son of God—emphasizing the divinity of Jesus—is never used.

The cost of the arrest, trial and abandonment of Jesus:

14:43-52, Finally, we come to the moment for the denouement of history. Jesus is devoid of any help or support. All that follows in the next few verses is the entire stripping away of the old, in order that the new will rise like the Phoenix from the ashes of the past. It is painful to watch, especially when the rest of the story can not be made known until these events run their course.

The Third Sign of wasteful generosity--

15:1-32, Finally, all is stripped away leaving three men crucified on crosses. One of them is the Son of Man, and they nail a board over his head with the title, "King of the Jews."

The Final Act of Jesus' crucifixion is waste-full generosity that embraces all of the events. Each of these events is *wasteful*, but *not wasted*. Pilate is doing his job of protecting the state. The Sanhedrin is doing their job of protecting the established Jewish belief system. Perhaps, the betrayal of Judas, the disciples and Peter is harder to explain, but is it wasted?

Why call it "waste-full?"

Certainly, all of these events need to be played out. Each event is necessary in order to awaken people to life in the spirit, and to fulfill our intended purpose for living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.

Why call it "generous?"

The crucifixion is generous to the extent that it is the archetypical image illuminating the Good News of Jesus Christ. Jesus is victimized by the religious and political powers of his day, yet his message is that our circumstances of life do not define us. Instead we are defined by our relationship to Jesus.

The Barriers Preventing Reformation--

These verses demonstrate the barriers Jesus encountered as he made his march to the cross. These are the religious, political and personal events and its associated emotional response.

The lesson learned is that life does victimize us. The response we make to this victimization is either what gives us freedom or continued slavery. What is it that we use to define what comes at us in life? If we are defined by our circumstances rather than our possibilities, then we are defeated. When we choose to define our lives by the cross, we are assured of victory experienced as a resurrection. Which will it be?

Victor or victim:

The story is told about a man who moved into a new urban center and located an apartment close to a bus stop for easy access to his work. The bus stop sign indicates the bus stops every 15 minutes. The next morning he arrives at the stop early. He waits for 15 minutes and then for 15 minutes more. After 45 minutes of waiting, a neighbor across the street came over to ask, "Are you waiting for the bus?" "Yes," our impatient man replies, "The sign says it stops here every 15 minutes." Our helpful neighbor reports, "I have good news for you. The bus doesn't come by here any more."

Why is this good news? Our bus rider can stop waiting and start walking!

Observe that the rider's situation is not changed; his circumstances remain the same: there is no bus. Our bus rider has two responses to make. First, he can curse the darkness and his fate. Second, he can put a smile on his face, thank his neighbor for his good news, and start walking. The choice is his. Which choice is the one you'd make?

There are two religious barriers to the process of freedom:

14:43-65, Mark wants the reader to appreciate that Jesus faces his own traditions that are antithetical to At-One-Ment. These Jesus experienced at his arrest, 1) by the High Priest, teachers of the Law and the Elders, and 2) the ruling body of the Sanhedrin.

It is easy for Christians to dislike the actors on this stage. Before we get too upset, it is helpful to first clean out our own closets. The primary concern of these high officials is to protect the integrity of the Jewish belief system; they support the status quo. Is this familiar to all of us?

The personal barrier to the process of freedom:

14:66-72, Peter boasted his loyalty and then disowns Jesus. What more can be said? Who among us can cast the first stone, since all of us make a commitment to be a servant forever; at least until it is dirty diaper time?

The political barrier to the process of freedom:

15:1-15, An interesting exercise is to do a comparative study of the four gospels to see what they have in common, and what is unique to each of them. The following are some generalizations to get you started.

1. Sent to Pilate:

Each gospel has a story of Jesus being sent to Pilate. How he gets there is described in a variety of ways.

2. "Are you King of the Jews?:"

This part of the story is supported by each gospel.

3. The response of Jesus:

Jesus uses several responses in Mark, Luke and John, but Matthew is silent on this topic.

4. Release of Barabbas:

This part of the story is universal in the gospels.

5. The role of Joseph of Arimathea:

Matthew does not report this part of the story.

What is unique to each gospel?--

The Gospel of Matthew:

27:19, The role of Pilate's wife discouraging Pilate because of her dream.

27:24, Pilate washes his hands of the affair.

Gospel of Mark

14:51, Perhaps the most interesting sidebar treatment of the arrest of Jesus is about, "A young man dressed in a linen garment was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind." Anybody want to do a Gut Trip Analysis of this episode?

Gospel of Luke:

Luke has a broad grasp of the details of the story.

23:6 and 12, Pilate learns that Jesus is a Galilean and sends him to Herod who is visiting in Jerusalem. As a result of this recommendation, Herod and Pilate become friends. Luke has many details not present in Matthew or Mark.

Gospel of John:

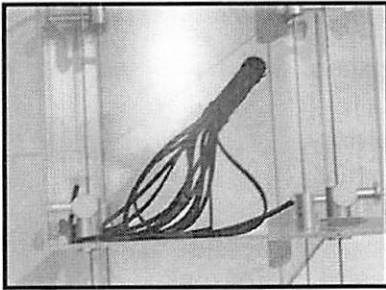
The Gospel of John is by far the most detailed of the four gospels.

18:13, Jesus is first taken to Annas, the father-in-law to Caiaphas, and then transferred back to Pilate.

18:10-11, This passage records a power exchange between Pilate and Jesus. "Pilate said, 'Do you refuse to speak to me? Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?' Jesus answered, 'You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.'"

18:37B and 38, records the famous exchange between Jesus and Pilate regarding the nature of the "truth." In this regard it is helpful to remember that the word "truth" is understood considerably different by those of us raised in a scientific appreciation of this word. For the Early Church, the truth has the characteristics of "The Good." This term is not a moral category. For the Early Church, the Good is an indicative or an ontological quality—it is The Way Life Is—we are good. Humans are made good because, "God don't make no junk!" The scourging performed--

15:16-20, Each of the four gospels confirm that Jesus is turned over to the soldiers to be flogged and mocked as a supposed king.



The following is shared as a reminder of the hideousness of this tactic. The typical scourge has several thongs fastened to a handle; c.f. Scottish tawse (usually two or three leather thongs without a separate handle); cat o' nine tails: naval thick-rope knotted-end scourge, the army and civil prison versions usually are leather.⁴⁷

Clarification of the Old and New Covenants--

The majestic gift of the crucifixion is the symbolic denouement that the old Covenant of The Law and its symbolic 10 Commandments; when Jesus died on the cross, this covenant died.

The old covenant is clarified :

Exodus 19:3-6, Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said,

This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did in Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now, if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.

Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. December 18, 2011.

⁴⁸ Editor: the unconditional reference is deliberately underlined.)

The New Covenant is clarified:

Romans 8:6-13 (selected verses), The ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said:

The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. . . . I will be their God, and they will be my people. . . . For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

By calling this covenant “new” he has made the first one obsolete and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.⁴⁹

15:21-32, The anointment of the cross illuminates the gift of Jesus’ death. As painful as this event is described and has been acknowledged for thousands of years, this is a necessary deed. I confess that as this material is prepared and edited my range of emotions nearly drove me to tears. The following is shared to clarify why it is necessary that Jesus completed his journey to the cross.

Gut Trip Analysis asks the question on how we experience an event. Using this method makes it clear that Jesus deliberately climbs up the cross to demonstrate how the Awakened can die to the barriers preventing us from living the fully surrendered life; i.e., the life of full obedience to God.

A substitutionary death?

The Modern Worldview that objectified theological thinking for the last 600 years became a barrier to the meaning of this death. Because of this injustice to the Good News of Jesus Christ, serious scholarship distorted the necessity of the death. In this view, the death is substitutionary in which Jesus is punished in our stead.

Nothing could be further from the meaning of this mean event. Jesus is not being punished for our wrong doing. In Gut Trip Analysis, God is incapable of punishing anyone. Instead, people are rewarded or punished by the results of their deeds. The Old Testament embraced this attitude, and Paul testifies to the Romans that this view is dead. One of the gifts of Jesus’ death is the demise of this view that God punishes God’s Son in a substitution for our living the unawakened life.

It is just not so.

⁴⁹ *Editor: the non-conditional reference is deliberately underlined.)*

Jesus intentionally climbs up on the cross in spite of every barrier against his crucifixion. In Matthew's gospel, Pilate's wife speaks up for the principle of preventing Jesus' death, and Pilate washes his hands of the whole affair. In all four gospels, Pilate can not find fault in Jesus despite what the religious establishment wanted done and what the rowdy people demanded. In the long run this attitude is not helpful in getting Jesus to attend to his destiny.

It is interesting to see the actions of the Sanhedrin, the Chief Priests, the elders, the lawyers and teachers of the law, all who work to see that Jesus fulfills his intended purpose. Although, the purpose of Jesus is the furthest thing from their intentions; they want him dead because he is a threat to the status quo; they are preserving tradition. In so doing, they achieve the demise of their tradition.

This is why Gut Trip Analysis can affirm with blessed assurance the necessity of Jesus' death. We now have the demonstration of Jesus Christ that our barriers no longer prevent us from fulfilling our intended creation of living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy. In fact, because of the demonstration of Jesus, death itself is defeated!

How is death defeated? The power of death no longer defines us because death is a part of the human circumstance. Our human situations and circumstances no longer are the meaning givers in our lives. Like Jesus, it is our life lived in subservience to God who now is our meaning giver. I am a child of God: God is my father and Jesus is my brother, and my wife and all of human creation are my brothers and sisters. With Saint Francis I can claim a relationship to Brother Moon, Sister Sun and Mother Earth.

What about the death of Wesley, our 20 year old son, with leukemia? While unfortunate, leukemia is doing what comes naturally. It didn't come to punish Wesley or his parents. His death does not define our lives, as damnable as I may experience it. Over his ashes, I demanded God to, "damn leukemia to hell forever;" that is how distraught I was at the time. Where is God in all of this? Never are we alone; God and my wife and I suffered together in the loss of both Jesus and Wesley.

ABOUT THIS SCRIPTURE: Material from Sermon Starter – Mark 15:1-32

The Political Preparation and Subsequent Drama--

The official title of this section summarizes the political and religious cooperation to solve a deep problem. It acts as a springboard for the new paradigm soon to be birthed like the Phoenix rising out of the ashes of the past. The death of Jesus is the necessary event, not as a substitutionary death paying the price for our disobedience, but as the demonstration that we can choose to

die to the barriers preventing us from living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.

The Political Rational For The Punishment of Jesus--

This section points up the relationship and collusion between the political and religious institutions. Both are intent on preserving the state and the faith. It is the tradition of the Jewish culture to allow a scapegoat to be set free during Passover. Because Jesus is the bigger threat to the tradition of the Jews, he is chosen to be crucified.

15:1-15, Jesus before Pilate--

The collusion between the religious and political establishments made it impossible for Pontius Pilate, the Roman Prefect, to judge Jesus innocent. Because of the Passover tradition to give freedom to a prisoner, he gave the choices of Barabbas—an insurrectionist and murderer—or Jesus, the religious heretic. Jewish law forbade blasphemy, and it is punishable by death. The crowd chose Barabbas to be set free, and Jesus to be crucified.

15:16-20, The soldiers mock Jesus--

Pilate, following the guidelines of Roman Law, assigned Jesus into the hands of soldiers who began the regime of punishment by beating and mocking him. The term applied is scourging which means to use mean whips applied with force. These instruments tear the skin making people lose considerable blood in the process. This weakens the individual so as to hasten death on the cross.

The Event and Response--

During the time of Jesus, the ultimate humiliation is crucifixion on a cross. This is the political solution to solve a religious problem. What the Jewish and political authorities believed they were doing was preserving the status quo. Ultimately, they achieved for Jesus the intended purpose for his life and death. Jesus is a hinge of history; he is the paradigm shift between living by the Law or by Grace, to live as victims to life's circumstances or as a victor; to be informed by the New Covenant or by the Old Covenant.

15:21-32, The crucifixion--

The ultimate humiliation is played out. Simon of Cyrene is impressed to help Jesus carry his cross to Golgotha. Here at the place called The Skull they nailed Jesus to his cross in the traditional fashion. Crucifixion causes a death due to asphyxiation from the weight of the body hanging from upraised arms. On either side of him, two thieves are crucified at the same time. It is reported that one thief challenged Jesus while the other defended him.

The key insight in Lesson 12

Why is the cross a necessary deed?

Unless this deed is done humanity is doomed to experience slavery. This is a slavery to live by the rule of a moral law that requires the necessity of good works; there is no freedom because we are convicted at every turn by falling short of fulfilling each goal. This state of being demands a substitutionary sacrifice to restore our brokenness into wholeness.

Jesus' death is not a substitutionary sacrifice. Jesus intentionally died as a demonstration. In effect, Jesus jumps on the cross in order to fulfill his mission on earth. While the law required obedience or punishment, Jesus deliberately chooses to be punished; what then is the power of the law as death loses its sting. The barriers to his demonstration are the religious and political establishments, each operating out of their own self-interests and the desire to keep the status quo.

The fundamental barrier facing all of humanity is the demands of the world and our natural inclinations. The essential nature of the world's demands is greedy and self-serving. They are based on the natural hungers of our bodies for satisfaction: safety, nest building, food and drink, and procreation; we want what we want and we want it now! These things demand we live in separation from At-One-Ment.

On the other hand, the essence of humane living is to live in At-One-Ment. The world sets up barriers to prevent this from happening. To this end, we are hopelessly victimized.

The importance of Jesus' death is that we no longer have an excuse to live as victims of our human circumstances. While victimized, we have the choice to either be victims or to be victors. When we choose to be victors we experience a release that is like a resurrection.

In order to rehearse this lesson the church created the sacrament of baptism and of the Eucharist or Holy Communion. Both demonstrate how we can choose to die and be resurrected in new life; in baptism by going under the water, and in the Holy Supper where we experience the transformation of brokenness and expenditure into spiritual nourishment and refreshment.

This action of Jesus is on behalf of all humanity for all time, in this lesson we named this experience as "Wasteful Generosity."

Lesson 13: The Event of Christ as New Birth

Topic: Mark 15: 33 - 47, Bewilderment

The Objective to prepare people and the world for the demonstration of their rebirth		
The Event of Christ as New Birth		
The sacrifice and blood offering	Bewilderment	Early manuscripts and women
Lesson 12	Lesson 13	Lesson 14

This is the thirteenth lesson in this series on Mark's gospel. On the master chart (available to you on line at www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy), this is the second session on, "The Event of Christ as New Birth," and given the title, "Bewilderment," describing material related to Jesus' demonstration of our freedom from slavery to the world.

I. Read Mark 15:33-47 in one reading.

II. Reprise over the Crucifixion

The relationship and collusion between the political and the religious institutions gathered to bring their Jesus Problem to an end. Both institutions were interested in supporting the status quo. While giving the appearance of succeeding in destroying the work and message of Jesus, actually they opened the doorway to the cross for which purpose Jesus is fulfilling his work as the Messiah/Christ. The cross and crucifixion provide the demonstration that Jesus would die to the religious and political barriers that victimized him; instead of life as a victim, Jesus is a victor.

This demonstration is for our good purposes, as we now know that we too can die to the things that victimize us, and experience freedom from fear and the angst of death. Like Jesus we experience a type of death and a resurrection like his.

From what is Jesus set free?

We discover that Pilates' wife encourages her husband not to punish Jesus. Pilate finds nothing wrong with him, and prefers to wash his hands of the whole thing by offering to free Jesus, a heretic, and crucify Barabbas, a

convicted insurrectionist; a type of crime Pilate found particularly heinous. However, with the support of the religious leadership, the people are aroused to call for the crucifixion of Jesus.

Interestingly, had Pilate turned Jesus loose, his actions actually would deter Jesus from fulfilling his mission; his mission is to get to the cross and die as a demonstration for how we are to die to the things of the world.

In the same light, some of the recent speculation regarding Judas' role supports this same notion. Is Judas in cahoots with Jesus so that his betrayal would achieve the mission of Jesus? My inclination is to disregard this idea. Either way, Judas' participation in this drama drove him to suicide.

An angry God?

We are reminded that Jesus' death is not a substitutionary punishment for our wrong doings in order to satisfy an angry God. Gut Trip Analysis embraces the belief that a loving God is incapable of punishing us, and it is not necessary because the reward for the deed is found in the deed itself; i.e., when good deeds are done, the reward is happy people. When mean deeds are done the reward is unhappy people. We obey the highway speed limit, and we are not bothered by the red light in the rearview mirror. God has no reason to punish us, because we end up punishing ourselves.

What is the experience of judgment?

Gut Trip Analysis affirms that our bad deeds are not what make God cry. God cries when we fail to surrender our lives in obedience to fulfilling our intended creation to live the humane and gracious life working for justice and mercy. God, experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment, expects us to live in accordance with the Divine Commandment—love God, neighbor and self. So, what is the punishment? The axiom proves true; the reward for the deed is found in the deed itself.

III. The Event and Response

Jesus' demonstration:

During the time of Jesus, the ultimate humiliation is crucifixion on a cross; this is the political solution to solve a religious problem. What the Jewish and political authorities are doing is preserving the status quo. Ultimately, they achieved for Jesus the intended purpose for his life and death. He is our demonstration that we are to copy. Paul reminds us that when we are conformed to this likeness of Jesus, then Jesus is the first born among many brothers and sisters.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Romans 8:29

In this way, Jesus is the hinge of history; he is the paradigm shift between living by the Law or by Grace, to live as victims to life's circumstances or as a victor; to be informed by the New Covenant or by the Old Covenant.⁵¹

15:33-41, The last words, death and burial of Jesus

The sixth hour:

The Jewish day starts at 6 a.m., making the sixth hour at noon when the sky turned day into night. We can be grateful about the dark. It is noted that Jesus is born in the dark, crucified in the dark, and resurrected just before dawn. This pattern affirms that we meet Jesus during the dark times in our lives.

This story cannot end until the body of Jesus is taken down and buried in the tomb. The symbol of baptism Jesus experienced in Chapter 1 is restated and tied to the cross. The drama is played out to the very end. It is in this passage that Jesus speaks one of the seven recorded phrases from the cross when Jesus cries out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Many assume this is a cry of desperation and abandonment, while there are others that believe this is a cry of faith since the words are recorded in **Psalm 22:1**.

The commentary provides an interesting insight regarding Mark's use of the Aramaic phrase, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*? When this phrase is translated into the Hebrew, as used in **Matthew 27:46**, it begins, "Eli, Eli, . . ." ⁵² In **Mark 15:47**, someone observed, "He's calling Elijah." Then in **Mark 15:49**, the conversation continues, "Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."⁵³

What is the purpose of these final words of Jesus? To answer this question, we pick up the Psalmist's words in **Psalm 22:4, 5**:

Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
who are the praise of Israel.

In you our fathers put their trust;
they trusted and you delivered them.

They cried to you and were saved;
in you they trusted and were not disappointed.

What do you think? Is this a cry of desperation or a statement of faith? Be certain to read the whole of **Psalm 22**, as it is attributed to King David. The entire Psalm is a wonderful testimony.

The death of Jesus:

⁵¹ Note: The Old Covenant is conditional on our response to God's care. The New Covenant is unconditional. God does not depend on our response; God is inescapable.

⁵² Note: It is necessary to use the *King James Bible* to note the difference between the Hebrew and the Aramaic.

⁵³ *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, Nashville:Abingdon Press. 1971. 669.

Jesus' story is now my story, and it always has been. It is rehearsed in every baptism, and each time we gather at the Lord's Table to break bread and spill juice.

The burial of Jesus: out of sight, out of mind?
 Enough said.

IV. The meaning of it all

What is the meaning of the events surrounding the death of Jesus? This is a question I keep before me as I research these verses. The first observation is that a cursory search for insights are few and far between. Searching the old resources like *Wesley's Commentary*, or the insights of Darby or Matthew Henry does justice to the details, but not much help on the big picture. On the other hand, the blog-like commentaries have little information on the details, and their insights seem shallow. Like much else regarding Gut Trip Analysis, let's see what can be added to the conversation. You get to decide if these are lost in details or shallow in the big picture.

In The Face Of Darkness: Sustained by tradition and maintained by kindness														
Mark 15:33-47														
In the face of darkness: Traditions					Cause and Effect					In the face of darkness: Kindness				
15:33	15:34	15:35	15:36	15:37	15:38	15:39	15:40	15:41	15:42	15:43	15:44	15:45	15:46	15:47
A		D			C	D		A		B				

In the face of darkness -- Mark 15:33-47

My title for the material is, "In the face of darkness we are sustained by tradition and maintained by kindness." In this regard, my studies identify the key to be the torn temple curtain in (C) **Mark 15:38**. The two sub-dominant themes are the imagery of darkness and evening in (A) **Mark 15:33 and 15:42**, and the care and love extended by Joseph of Arimathea, and the women attending the burial in (B) **Mark 15:43-47**. A few scattered verses are labeled as (D) Minor Observations.

A. The imagery of darkness—

The gift of Gut Trip Analysis is that it takes minor information like the darkness and plumbs the meaning of it. Using Head Trip Analysis produces such insights as the darkness is supernatural. Those embracing this perspective get tripped up when there is no other supporting information that this ever happened from other historical references; even the gospel of John never mentions it! Of course, the whole of the Old Testament, and much of the New Testament, can not be substantiated using traditional historical sources. This is true because the bible is faith history; it is the story of the meaning of our lives. Actually, the only thing we can be certain is during the Early Church, there is a

paradigm shift in human consciousness, and the birth of the historical church is the only evidence.

Regarding the darkness, it is interesting to note the pattern applied to the events of Jesus' history. He is born in the dark, crucified when it turns dark, and resurrected just prior to dawn. Ask this question in a Sunday School class: "What is your experience of the dark?" The replies range from being scared of the dark, lost in the dark, or that illness or the loss of a love one leaves us in the dark. Then, ask, "Where is it we find Jesus?" It is in the dark!

One of the themes in my conversations with prisoners in State prison or the County jail regards the emptiness of the dark inside them that makes it impossible to find their way to peace. As we talk together about the darkness, I'll reveal the darkness of my own life and how I discovered that the darkness never goes away. This insight is not helpful, until I remind them that Jesus is in the darkness, and he is the way to the light. Does this make the darkness go away? Certainly not; our hope is not in the darkness, rather our hope is in Jesus who is the light in the darkness.

The Psalmist knows about hope in the dark:

If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light becomes night around me,"
even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is the same to you as light."⁵⁴

Christian rock groups have a grasp of the concept. The following is one verse of the angst driven lyrics written for HIM Lyrics and fronted by Ville Valo:

Dark light
Come shine in her lost heart tonight
And blind
All fears that haunt her
With your smile
Dark Light.⁵⁵

Gut Trip Analysis affirms that the authors of these poem/songs know the experience of living in the dark, and the dark does not define them. They experience that Dark Light blinds all fears that haunt us.

Mark, our gospel writer, understands the experience, even though this is the only reference to darkness in his whole gospel. The Synoptic Gospels each reference the darkness surrounding the crucifixion. John's gospel does not mention it.

⁵⁴ Psalm 139:11, 12. (NIV)

⁵⁵ Author unknown. Words located at HIM Lyrics. December 20, 2011 @ 9:30 p.m.

B. The experience of care and love

Joseph of Arimathea and the women:

Mark 15:41-47, There is a sermon in the statement, “. . . waiting for the Kingdom of God.”⁵⁶ Joseph of Arimathea, a “prominent member of the Council,” who is waiting for the Kingdom of God. In the late afternoon of Preparation Day just prior to the Sabbath, Joseph goes to Pilate and asks for the body of Jesus. Pilate is surprised because of the quickness of Jesus’ death. A centurion is asked to confirm the death. When he returns with the assurance that Jesus is dead—after all Pilate is worried about the rumors of an impending theft of the body—he gives his permission. One note concerning Pilate is that he is not a nice guy to the Jews; in fact, he is recalled to Rome because he is so mean in his treatment, particularly to insurrectionists like Barabbas. It is astounding that Pilate would consider releasing him in this instance.

Joseph buys a linen shroud, indicating to us that it is not yet Sabbath evening. He places the body in a rock tomb where there is a common practice of re-using tombs over many years time. Then he locks the tomb shut with a large stone.

Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of Joses—a diminutive for Joseph—and Salome, watch as this process unfolds. We learn in **Mark 15:41** that these women, along with, “other women who had come up with Jesus to Jerusalem,” are also there. It is the women who will soon play a key role in the resurrection drama.

Waiting for the Kingdom of God:

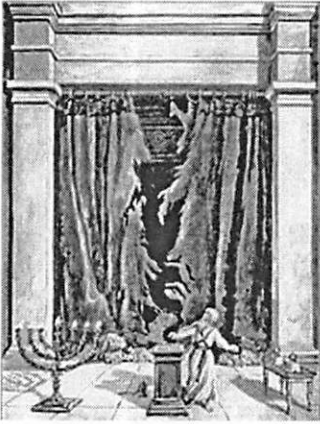
Mark 15:43B, What is the Gut Trip Analysis of this static information? It is found in the statement by Joseph of Arimathea who is, “Waiting for the Kingdom of God.” Gut Trip Analysis defines what it means to fulfill our intended purpose as humane beings, and this is what it means to live in the Kingdom of God.

Recall again that the Kingdom of God is not a place. This is Greek thinking supported by Head Trip Analysis. For us and the Jews in the Early Church, the Kingdom of God is a personal relationship to God who lives in covenant with them.⁵⁷

Joseph of Arimathea is waiting for the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom of God is what he experienced in the death of Jesus. He knew that the Law of Moses was supposed to be the way to experience the Kingdom of God, but he knew that these laws convicted people rather than awakened them to the presence of God. In Jesus he witnessed what it means to intentionally die so

⁵⁶ **Mark 15:47B.**

⁵⁷ Gut-Trip analysis defines our *intended creation* as living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.



that neither the law nor our human circumstances define our freedom. Our freedom is to define ourselves by the demonstration of Jesus' sacrifice; we live as victors. It is impressive that Joseph saw this much. It is Jesus' work on the cross to demonstrate the possibility of dying to living under the threat of judgment in order to experience the freedom of living as victors instead of victims; this is the life in the Kingdom of God.

C. The key factor: The torn curtain

With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

The Temple curtain is torn in two from top to bottom.

Mark 15:37-38, It is at this event that the commentary elders like Wesley or Darby have a better grasp of the significance than those of the hip hop crowd.

The curtain is enormous. According to Answers.Com, "The temple curtain was 4 inches thick, the length was 60 feet. The width was 30 feet, and the weight was in the region of 4 tons. It took 300 men to hold it."⁵⁸

The Holy of Holies is located in the closed center of the Temple, and this is where it is believed that God lived. Only the High Priest is allowed inside once a year on the Day of Atonement for the sacrifice of a perfect lamb and the release of a lamb or goat representing the Scapegoat; i.e., the freedom from slavery in leaving Egypt with Moses.

The symbolic meaning of what happened when the Temple curtain is torn is that God moved out to live among us. Because this is God's dwelling when Jesus dies, God is no longer at home behind the Temple curtain.

The significance of this event can find no better explanation than that of Paul's letter to the **Hebrews** in **9:11-15**, Paul writes:

But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal

⁵⁸ Note: I believe the image is in the public domain. If you find or know otherwise, please inform me at wsalmon@cox.net.

Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.⁵⁹

The following material is from the **Trinity Bible Study** session on the topic of the Temple and the Blood of the Lamb.⁶⁰

What did you learn about the Tabernacle in the OT?

The writer of Hebrews provides a comprehensive list of the various items found behind The Veil in the Holy of Holies. *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary* notes,

The description of the tabernacle is quite detailed, but it differs significantly from the account in **Exodus 25:10–40**, which does not locate Aaron's rod or the urn containing the manna within the **Holy of Holies**. Whether another tradition is being followed here, or the details are altered for symbolic reasons, or the author is not esp. concerned about exact correspondence with the Exodus account, is not possible to say.⁶¹

9:6-7, Approaches to God

The central problem addressed by the tabernacle is how to approach God. In the Old Testament, God lives behind the veil in the Holy of Holies. The Old Covenant is made with the condition that God is the God of the Jews *if* the people will be the People of God. Consequently, all of the laws are designed to keep people awake to this arrangement. When the people are obedient, and the sacrifices are made to cover their neglect and unintentional deviations, then the High Priest can on behalf of all the Awakened People come into the presence of God. Traditional language calls this sacrifice for the expiation of sin.

What methods did the Levitical priests use to approach God?

The priests are busy in the outer tent administering the proscribed rituals. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest made sacrifices on his own behalf as well as on behalf of all the people.

⁵⁹ All bible quotations are NIV.

⁶⁰ The IHOP Bible Study, later re-named The Trinity Bible Study.

⁶¹ *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary*, Nashville:Abingdon Press, 1971. 908.

What is the significance of the blood?

The Jews understood blood to be the seat of life. Animals became surrogates for humans, and their sacrifice is made on our behalf. It is noted that this functions as a substitutionary sacrifice.

How did the Priest consider himself in relationship to “the people?”

The priests are those who act on behalf of all the people who are Jews. Those outside the covenant, and those who participated with intentional acts against others, are not considered part of the covenant.

9:8–10, The Old Covenant stressed what three things?

The symbolism of the Holy of Holies stressed that this is where God lived. The importance of the sacrifices is they are made for the expiation of sins; they are substitutionary. This covenant is conditional on the surrender of the people to live the awakened life.

9:11–15, Why is this sacrifice necessary?

As mentioned above in 9:6-7, the problem is how people could approach God. In order to prepare the faithfulness of the people, the priests made daily substitutionary sacrifices of animals, and the 10 Commandments are symbolic of the other 613 rules and regulations.

The New Covenant is unconditional and depends on nothing; *I will be your God no matter what*. The role of Jesus is to be a demonstration that all people can die to the victimization of the rule and regulations; we can intentionally die to all things that prevent us from living the obedient life in total dependence on God.

9:15–22, The significance of Christ’s death.

The meaning of it all:

It is that Jesus’ sacrifice is not substitutionary; he does not die in our place to make us good. Jesus dies in order to be the visible picture of a lesson for us to follow; this makes Jesus the first born of many brothers and sisters. The issue now is how to awaken people to this new reality.

In order to awaken people it is necessary to provide a demonstration of how we die to the barriers preventing us from living the humane and gracious life. Jesus, as the Christ, made this demonstration out of his freedom. Jesus chooses to deliberately climb on the cross so that humanity can see the significance of our doing likewise.

In traditional Christian language, we name this experience the sacrifice of the blood of the lamb. This tied the Christian story into the Jewish Exodus story from Egypt; like the Jews, we move from slavery to freedom by a dying to the barriers preventing our obedience and dependence on God. This is what Hebrews notes as receiving, “the promised eternal inheritance.”

In the Old Covenant, Moses and Aaron are the mediators who ratified the covenant by a sacrifice that represented the surrender of the people to live as God's Representatives.

In the New Covenant, Jesus Christ is the mediator who ratifies the covenant by the sacrificial demonstration of his death on the cross; i.e., the spilling of his blood.

9:15, The offering of blood prefigures the self-giving of Jesus Christ. Through his death this sprinkling of blood is representative of the blood of the lamb sacrificed to paint the door posts of the Jews at the time *Death Passed Over Egypt*. In this way, Jesus' blood is the doorway to the eternal inheritance of an Awakened Life.

D. Minor observations

9:34, From the cross Jesus cries out!

This material already is explored in this lesson. It is enough to say that Gut Trip Analysis affirms this is not a cry of despair, but a cry of faith. The words are those of King David in **Psalm 22**.

9:35, A reference to Elijah?

The observation is made by one of those attending the crucifixion. Because of the words used by Jesus in his final words, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" can be construed to be a derivative of the name Elijah, it is thought that Jesus is asking Elijah to come save him. Gut Trip Analysis prefers to accept that this cry is a statement of faith and not a call for relief.

9:36, A reference to the use of a sponge and vinegar.⁶²

The word "sponge" is only used three times in the entire Bible. Matthew, Mark and John use the term associated with this event.

The word "vinegar" is used thirteen times in the Bible. Seven are used by each of the gospel writers who associate the word with this event.

The key insight in Lesson 13

Read this playbill. There is a cast of characters in this drama.

The role of the religious community:

The inadvertent role of the religious officials who wanted Jesus dead because of blasphemy, by their conviction actually help Jesus achieve his demonstration of dying to the very barriers the religious institutions put forward.

⁶² *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1990. 1010, 1142.

The role of the political institution:

Pilate's wife encourages Pilate to have nothing to do with Jesus, and Pilate is unusually compassionate.

The role of powerful symbols—darkness and the torn Temple curtain:

The symbol of darkness is used effectively. At the crucifixion the sky turns to night and the resurrection takes place prior to dawn. The story of Jesus and darkness is familiar to us since the birth of Jesus takes place at midnight. The lesson to be learned is that Jesus meets us in the dark times in our lives.

The symbol of the torn curtain announces the dramatic moment when God steps out from behind the curtain to live among the people. At the moment of Jesus' death, the curtain is torn in two pieces in the symbolic release of the presence of God to the world.

The role of the Sacrificial One, and the universal Christ Principle:

The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is not a substitutionary event. Instead, this is the prime demonstration of how we die to the barriers preventing humanity from living the abundant life. This is a universal principle and does not depend on a litmus test. It is a life principle.

The role of kindness:

So many of the religious officials get a bad rap that it is refreshing to be reminded that not all of them are bad characters. Joseph of Arimathea is a member of the Council. Mark gives us one revealing characteristic about Joseph; he is waiting for the kingdom of God. He sees something in Jesus that encourages him to set aside his reputation and to "boldly" approach Pilate requesting the release of the body of Jesus

Lesson 14: The Event of Christ as New Birth

Topic: Mark 16: 1 – 19, Early manuscripts and women

The Objective to prepare people and the world for the demonstration of their rebirth		
The Event of Christ as New Birth		
The sacrifice and blood offering	Bewilderment	Early manuscripts and women
Lesson 12	Lesson 13	Lesson 14

The compilers of the initial New Testament canon provided the litmus test for what qualifies as a gospel and what does not. To be a gospel it needs both a baptism and a resurrection story. This rule perplexed this committee because Mark's material assumes the resurrection at the end of his story, and he begins his gospel with the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptizer. Does a literary trick pass muster as an official gospel? Maybe not. The solution is to find a redactor to do to Mark's gospel what Mark had no intention of doing himself; the redactive material was added to meet the criteria.

My overall title for this part of our study is, "The Women and the Activity of the Risen Christ." There are three parts to this material: **16:1-8** is the story of the women going to the tomb; **Mark 16:9-19**, records the appearance of Jesus who defines the work of the disciples regarding the Good News; **Mark 16:20** tells of the response of the disciples to the Great Commission.

This is the fourteenth lesson in this series on Mark's gospel. On the master chart (available to you on line at www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy), this is the third session on, "The Event of Christ as New Birth," and given the title, "Early manuscripts and women," on material relating to the Jesus demonstration of our freedom from the slavery to the world.

I. Read Mark 16:1-10 in one reading.

II. It is important to remember that the purpose of the Gospel of Mark is found in the recurring statements that the end of the story will reveal the meaning of the experiences of the disciples and Jesus. At various points, Jesus commands that the disciples and the people are not to worry about interpreting

the various "miracles" until the end of the story is made clear. The end of the story is the resurrection of Jesus, but it is not up to Mark to provide it.

The more I study the material from Mark's gospel the more I fall in love with it. He is a masterful story teller who adopted a unique method of anticipating the end of the story that he never tells; his theme is, "Wait until you know the rest of the story." His situation, and ours, is that we know the end of the story before Mark ever begins to tell the tale as if we do not.

Because this is the final lesson in Mark we'll spend time reviewing the structure of **Chapter 16**, and then note the great themes Mark finally brings to a conclusion. We want to identify the powerful emotional response to some details, observe the emotions on display, and then to note two curiosities.

III. The revolutionary quality of the women at the crucifixion

For those of us living at the first part of the 21st Century, it is difficult for us to appreciate the revolutionary activities associated with the women.

The revolutionary work of the women:

All through the gospels, and on into the work of Peter and Paul in the establishment of the church, the feminine role is emphasized, and this is a society where women are considered the property of men. This attitude prevails today in the Muslim culture of the Middle East. For Jesus to embrace the financial support, work, and collegiality of the feminine role would be considered outrageous in his time.

The idea of Jesus consorting with the prostitute Mary Magdalene is enough to drum any contemporary preacher out of the ministry; but it would not be for Jesus. What is attributed to Jesus during the Early Church provides the basis for a place of equality for women in most denominations today. Think for a minute, where would the church be today without the work of women?

The women went to the Tomb

Mark 16:1-11, Mark observes that Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene and Salome came to the tomb just after dawn to prepare the body for burial. The Sabbath night prevented this work being done after the crucifixion. Their question is very feminine, "Who will roll the stone away?" Mark testifies to the women being startled by the stone already rolled back.

The encounter with the young man:

Mark does not give us a clue that the gentleman sitting on the right side in the tomb was anything other than a male dressed all in white. The common conclusion is that this is an angel. "Don't be alarmed," the young man tells them. Surely, this is an understatement by Mark. This information by the young man is followed by instructions to go and tell Peter and the disciples that Jesus promised to meet them in Galilee, and that he already is ahead of them. This will be the first appearance of Jesus following the crucifixion.

Observe the role the women play in this drama. They are the bearers of Good News to the men in the play. At this time in history and in the patriarchal society of the Jews it is nothing short of revolutionary for the gospel writers to note the first people to encounter the Good News of resurrection are women, and it is they who are instructed to go and tell the men.

Do they get the job done?

IV. The work of the redactor

The first appearance of Jesus:

Mark 16:9-11, Comparing the 1611 edition of the King James Bible with our modern editions reveals the contemporary work of bible scholars. In the KJV there is no notation regarding the work of a redactor to finish what Mark originally intended. Evidently, some editions of the bible leave out this material. The New International Version of the Bible uses an introductory note that reports: “The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have **Mark 16:9-20** The rest of the story is added having missed the whole point of Mark’s method. In order for Mark’s gospel to meet the criteria that it contain both baptism and a resurrection, it is interesting to conjecture that the desire to those developing the NT added the resurrection to Mark’s gospel.

Do they get the task accomplished, or not?

It is obvious even from even a cursory reading that the ending of Mark’s original material and the beginning of the redactors’ material do not jibe. In the former material the women are scared and go hide saying, “nothing to anyone.” In the redactor’s version, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, and she tells the mourners. Which is the case; are there three women, or just one?

In support of this point, compare the dramatic announcement in Matthew to the more mundane report in Mark. The reaction of the women is quite different. I wonder how the moralists among us react to the information that the first woman Jesus reveals himself to is a former prostitute, but there it is.

Comparing the treatment given by Mark and Matthew to the reaction of the women at the tomb	
Mark 16:8	Matthew 28:8
Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.	So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

Appearances to others:

Mark 16:12-14, records two other appearances. Jesus appears next to those, “walking in the country.” There is some speculation that this is the

Emmaus appearance recorded in Luke 14:13-32. The third appearance is in the dining room where the eleven disciples gathered to eat. Jesus is upset with them because of their failure to embrace his resurrection.

The Great Commissioning to all of creation:

Mark 16:16, The commissioning of Mark records that its purpose is descriptive of the experience of those saved. The audience to whom their ministry is addressed is, "all of creation."⁶³ I like this stance because it is inclusive of more than just humans. Our ministry is not only to human beings to awaken them to our created purpose, but there is a wider audience of the animal kingdom and the environment. It is possible and permissible to preach to a tree, or a bird, or a rock. Gut Trip Analysis affirms they share with us a message when we are actively listening with a third ear. Comparing **Matthew 28:16-20** reveals the context for this version of the Great Commission is to be focused on our authority to speak the Good News and to baptize.

The influence of the Greek worldview:

Mark 16:19, The proof that this material is added on to Mark's gospel is the information about the ascension of Jesus, ". . . he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God." Clearly, this is Greek dualism in which God is absent in a supernatural kingdom of Perfection, while this world is mean and angst driven in our fear of death.

The first preaching missions:

Mark 16:20 recalls that the disciples went out to preach "everywhere." Their work is confirmed by the presence of "The Lord," who is with them and blesses their work and accomplishments.

Evidence of powerful emotions:

Contrary to the other Gospels, in Mark the women are afraid and bewildered while the men could not believe. In one instance, Jesus rebukes the disciples for being stubborn in their unbelief. Take a moment to list the emotional words used in this brief ending in Mark's gospel to discover: the word *afraid* is used two times, *not believe* is used two times, and terms *bewildered* and *trembling* each are used a single time. Not once do we catch the excitement recorded in **Matthew 28ff**, the intellectual ascent in **Luke 24:40ff**, or the tremendous affirmation of Jesus' presence among us for all time recorded in **John 20ff**.

Curious statements examined—Preach to all creation:

Mark 16:15, "Go to all the world and preach the good news to all creation." The Green Movement of the early 21st Century welcomes this

⁶³ The purpose of the nation of Israel is to take the Good News of God's love to all the world. It can be extrapolated that "all the world" is inclusive of all creation. At least the minimum is to take care of our common earth with respect.

context. Here is their authority to support the care of the environment in addition to women and orphans. Mark's material joins this good news to the importance of baptism; in this way, the purpose of Mark comes full circle from the baptism in chapter one, through the baptism of the cross, and now to take this good news everywhere. This matches God's purpose for those who live the awakened life to take this Word into all the world.

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved:

Mark 16:16A, The difficult word is "believes." Head Trip Analysis treats this word as the acceptance of an intellectual ascent. Gut Trip Analysis treats this word more seriously; to believe is to surrender our lives in total obedience, and to live the awakened life as humane and gracious people. In this regard, baptism is more than a ritual, it symbolizes the way in which we literally die to the influence of the world to define us. This is what it means to be *saved from* the influence of the world, and to be *saved to* a life of obedience to live as a daughter and son of God.

Whoever does not believe is condemned:

Mark 16:16B, The tough phrase here is, "will be condemned." Why would a loving God condemn us? Why would a loving community condemn anyone?

For one thing, there is such a thing as judgment, it is called Tough Love; we are judged for not living as humane and gracious people. The axiom is applied here: "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself." We obey traffic rules, and the reward is no ticket.

What then is the condemnation? It is based on our failure to live the awakened life. The goal of preaching is to awaken people to the Good News that living the obedient life puts us back into a face-to-face relationship to God. It is this message that we can ignore, deny, or forget. In any case, to live away from the presence of God is like a cow deciding it wants to be a dog—it just does not work. We know when we are out of synch with our intended purpose because we begin to have unsolvable problems. The first sign we are in synch is that life is problems-less.

Mark 16:16B can be transliterated as, "Whoever is awakened and participates in the symbol of dying to the world's influence will live in synch with their intended creation. Those who chose to live otherwise will experience life as having unsolvable problems."

Curious statements examined—signs accompanying the believer:

Mark 16:17-18, For the most part, the commentaries ignore these two verses. Is this better than trying to appreciate the message? Wesley's "Notes," mention that the saved should not deliberately drink poison, but the implication is that if they are poisoned by others, then the poison will have no effect.

I find these verses hard to accept. For one thing various scholars note the influence is quite heavy on the other gospel writers. This indicates that the Early Church is struggling with this information. Is the redactor attempting to be all things to all interpreters? What is the underlying message associated with driving out demons, speaking in tongues, picking up snakes with their hands, and healing the sick? It would be interesting to apply Gut Trip Analysis to these things, but the message already is insincere and to try something would be in vain.

V. How to ground Mark’s material in a practical way?

This fourteenth lesson is head-trippy. It is tempting not to allow the material to stand on its own. The desired approach is to treat this is a photographic moment; the picture is clear in its depiction of the resurrection and the appearances. The question remains, how can we experience the resurrection?

Another, more meaningful way, is to experience this material in a sermon. My preacher, and SermonStarter mentor, is Pastor Barry Dundas who serves his appointment at the Trinity United Methodist Church in Salina, KS. Over the years, Barry shares his sermon notes with me as a way to enjoy the message because of my disabled hearing. Many of his sermons I keep on file because they are stimulating to my brooding process.

On April 12, 2009, Pastor Barry preached on **Mark 16:1-8**. The only change I’ve made to his notes is the addition of the nomenclature of the Lowery Loop, the method for preaching narrative sermons taught to Pastor Barry by Dr. Eugene Lowery when Barry attended St. Paul’s School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri.⁶⁴ The notes are presented in their original form.

The Itch:

What a strange way for Mark to end the story

I am not talking about the empty tomb

We expected that

It is Easter after all

That is why we are here today

The stone was rolled away

The tomb was empty

Christ has risen.

All of the gospels tell us that part of the story

No, what is strange is what happens next

NOTHING – the story just ends

⁶⁴ 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.

Aren't we missing something – an appearance by Jesus
Everything else is familiar about the story
Begins with women coming to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body
Their biggest concern is how to move the stone
No need to worry because the stone has been moved
And an angel gives them the news
Jesus is not here
You have brought your spices for nothing
Now go give Peter and the others this message
Jesus will meet them in Galilee
They know the place
And then the story ends

The Scratch:

Isn't that just like Mark?

This is the same guy who left out the birth story
No journey to Bethlehem – No stable or manger
No shepherds or wise men
Now he cuts off the ending of the story
The tomb is empty but where is Jesus
I don't think he realizes what he is doing
As Christians, we have two major holidays
Christmas and Easter
Mark leaves out big chunks of both stories
It is a good thing we have those other gospels

But here is the strangest part of all

The angel gives the women one simple instruction
Go tell Peter and the disciples
Tell them the tomb is empty and he will meet them in Galilee
But listen again to the last sentence.

"So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."⁶⁵

The Aha:

There is great irony in Mark's gospel

All the way through the story when anyone discovers who Jesus is
He immediately says, "Don't tell anyone."
Demons say – we know who you are Jesus
He commands them not to tell
Jesus heals a person then says don't tell
The disciples witness the transfigured Christ

⁶⁵ Mark 16:8, RSV.

And his instructions – Don't tell
Jesus says don't tell anyone so many times that scholars have a name:
The Messianic secret
Now at the end of the story someone finally says
Go and tell – and they don't
Why in the world does the gospel end this way?
Some scholars think it doesn't
Mark wrote more and it got lost
Wrote on scrolls and the end broke off
Later manuscripts added endings – long and short
Pretty obvious not original to gospel
Someone did feel the ending was inadequate
Here is what I believe
Mark ended his gospel this way on purpose
Because it is meant to be an invitation to us
Every year we gather on Easter to hear the Good News
We come to stand at the empty tomb
And wait for the announcement
He is not here – He has been raised
But the real question is not do we know the story
What are we going to do about it?

The Good News:

The Good News is that we know the story did not end at the empty tomb
The women did not stay silent
They couldn't hold it in
We know because we have Mark's gospel
They must have shared with someone
And 2000 years later we are still telling the story
And that is why the question still confronts us
We have heard the story
Now what are we going to do about it?

The cover story in the latest *Newsweek* was this
The Decline and Fall of Christian America
Most of the article wasn't anything new
That we are moving into an era called post-Christian
Where Christianity has less influence than before
But here is the statistic that caught my eye
Number of Americans who claim no religious affiliation
Has nearly doubled in the last 20 years.

Match this with a study I read a few years ago
Asking people why they stay at a church – may surprise

Not friendly people
Not adequate parking
Not quality of music
Not dynamic preaching

Congregation acts like it really believes Jesus is alive.

The Whee:

Folks it is time to share the story through our lives
By living as if we really believe Jesus is alive
The message of Easter is simple
Jesus is alive
We don't have to stand by the empty tomb any longer
Afraid to say anything
Christ is not there
He has been raised
We can go forth to live
To meet the Christ in our world
Easter People, it is time to raise your voices!

The key insight in Lesson 14

The revolutionary role of women.

In a society where the place of women is that of a servant, to read the four gospels is to find that Jesus, the disciples, and the early church assigned women to a revolutionary role. Women were in the entourage of Jesus and the disciples, the backbone of the financial support of Jesus' ministry, and took leadership roles in the early church. Perhaps, we get a glimpse of the traditional understanding of women's place in society by observing the contemporary conservative Moslem movements.

Mark's literary method changed:

In this last chapter of Mark there is specific information that his literary method is purposefully altered. Mark adopts the creative format of using Jesus to carry the message, "Wait until you experience the end of the story, and the healings, the meeting of the Big Three, the feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000, calming the storm, and Jesus' death on the cross will make sense. Mark does not detail the end of the story, providing us with the opportunity to experience our own resolution to this gospel.

However, a redactor—a scribe who adds or deletes written material—provides the needed ending. Perhaps, this is done to meet the requirements of those organizing the original canon; in order for it to qualify as a gospel it needs to include both a baptism and a resurrection.

And now, for the rest of the story. Amen.

A Lexicon of Gut-Trip Words

TWO THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

The Gut-Trip Test—

Is this a valid method? Each person needs to answer this question by asking, "Is this process in synch with what I experience."

A contextual statement: One Reality

There is only one reality. But there is any number of perspectives to use to make sense of reality. One of the tested lenses uses Christian metaphors. What makes it interesting is that as we learn more about reality we get sudden breakthroughs that are called paradigm shifts to reveal new aspects of reality.

The first century Jewish/Christian paradigm lasted 1500 years until the 15th to the 17th centuries. This is known as the Scientific Revolution to establish the Modern Worldview. The result is the Scientific Method, the Renaissance, Reformation, Industrialization, and Urbanization. This worldview lasted until the early 20th Century.

In 1911, physics took a quantum leap into the Post-Modern Worldview when Einstein wrote down the formula $E=MC^2$. This new paradigm helps to explain new information about the one reality in which we live.

The importance of Gut Trip Analysis is that it is a post-modern tool used to observe our one reality.

Is this the only method?

Absolutely not. The methods are as numerous as there are religions attempting to view this one reality through the uniqueness of their particular lens. Is the Christian perspective valid? Absolutely, because the Christian code words continue to bring people into harmony with this perceived purpose.

From a Gut Trip Analysis point of view, this purpose is to live in At-One-Ment with neighbor, self and finally with God. God is experienced as Perfect At-One-Ment. In this way we fulfill the Great Commandment to, "Love God, neighbor and self." (**Matthew 22:36-37**) Our intended creation is to live the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.

The Gut Trip method--

The rule of Gut Trip Analysis is simple. Whenever we encounter one of the Christian Code Words of God, Christ, Jesus, The Holy Spirit, heaven, hell, sin, blood of Jesus, cross, etc., stop and ask, "How do I experience this term?" For instance, if God is experienced as love, then when was the last time we are loved? "Well, it is when my wife forgives me for being a fool." Now, we are on common ground because everyone knows what a fool is, and what it means to be forgiven.

The experience of being loved and of being forgiven is the experience of the presence of God. This is not to say that God is our experience, but that when we experience these things, then we are standing in the presence of God. This same process is true for every Christian code word.

For a more elaborate treatment on Gut Trip Analysis, please order my book, *Decoding our Christian Code Words: head trip analysis vs. gut trip analysis*.⁶⁶

The Theological Lens thru which we view:	THE TRANSCENDENT Modern since 15th C	THE TRANSPARENT Post-Modern since 1917
Reality	The Real	The Really Real Deep satisfaction, fulfillment and Blessed Assurance.
Faith	Added on to life	Surrendering to what already is there; the leap of faith; i.e., to be out of control and in God's control.
Philosophy	Greek Dualism – Gnosticism (to know); Objective— tested; Cognitive— understood; Rational— makes sense	Jewish in approach Experiential— compared to experience; Existential—Free to decide and change; Relational—Fulfills human existence
Goal	Appropriate to what we know to make sense out of our human experience.	To bring our lives in tune with reality; to live in synch with At-One-Ment.
Human Situation	Immoral sinners; lost, fallen	The Way Life Is (TWLI)— a-moral

⁶⁶ Order at www.resurgencepublishers.com or at Amazon and/or Kindle. \$12.50 plus P&H.

Evil	A presence or power that victimizes.	The illusion of impossibility: The Big Lie
The Good	Exists in God's (supernatural) kingdom. The truth	A quality experienced here and now. Not a moral quality. Reality is the Good.
God	Absent in God's realm in a supernatural heaven beyond space	Imminent and intimate. The Guarantor, Perfect At-One-Ment; the Big Picture.
Christ	The <i>Logos</i> -the Meaning (gnosis), Savior, Messiah, Anointed	The Christ Bearer (Christ-Offer or Christopher) The sacrificial spirit
Jesus	Fully man and fully God	The Little Picture of the Big Picture
Sin	A moral category of Bad vs. Good	Anti-At-One-Ment that results in separation
Holy Spirit	Supernatural Comforter	FREEDOM to choose to live as victors over against enslavement as victims
Church	The Gathered to worship God	Those who do God's will to live and promote At-One-Ment living the humane and gracious life while working for justice and mercy.

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 author of, *Decoding Our Christian Words*, and, *The Making of a Teacher: Bible Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*. Eight more books are in the works covering the entire New Testament *sans* the Book of Revelation. This material one day will form *The Trinity New Testament Bible Commentary*. Salmon is married to his editor Beverly Trapp, his college sweetheart for 56 years. They live in Salina, KS with their 14 year old Shih Tzu, Princess.

Resurgence Publishing Corporation

Resurgence Publishing Corporation is pleased to present **One Mission – Two Objectives: *Bible Studies in the Gospel of Mark*** by Dr. William E. Salmon (Pastor Bill). If you are a Minister of the Gospel who faces the reality of dwindling participation in your congregation life and study, what Pastor Bill is doing is a way to re-engage those who are serious about the meaning of the Gospel, church and theological thinking in the real world today with real life grounding in their own experience.

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You will also like his **Making of a Teacher: *Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*** which challenges those who engage in teaching the meaning of the Christian Faith to think about what this means for a life of service in a greatly conflicted social order that constitutes the world we live in.

For the Publishers
M. George Walters
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Passion Sunday									The Passion Story		
The Signs of Wasteful Generosity Mark 14:1 - 15:47											
The First and Second Signs of Wasteful Generosity and the Demonstration of the Barriers and Obstructions									The Third Sign Of Wasteful Generosity		
The First and Second Signs Of Wasteful Generosity				The Barriers Exercised To Prevent Reformation					The Fulfilling Of Jesus Purpose And Promise		
The First Sign:	The Second Sign:	Judas: Among those who miss the point	Gethse- mane: a demonstra- tion of our spiritual struggle to stay awakened	The <u>religious</u> barrier to the process of freedom	The <u>religious</u> barrier to the process of freedom	The <u>personal</u> barrier to the process of freedom	The <u>political</u> barrier to the process of freedom	The scourging Performed	The Third Sign: The final nail	The death of Jesus	The burial of Jesus: Out of sight, out of mind?
The anoint- ment by an outcast in the house of an outcast	The Lord's Supper— <u>Broken</u> for our nourishment: <u>Expended</u> for our refreshment			The arrest by the High Priest, teachers of the Law and the Elders	The Sanhedrin looks for a reason to kill Jesus	Peter boasted loyalty, and then disowns Jesus.	Pilate interrogation				
14:1-11	14:12-26	14:27-31	14:32-42	14:43-52	14:53-65	14:66-72	15:1-15	15:16-20	15:21-32	15:33-41	15:52-47
The women's anointment of Jesus at the home of Simon the leper is the first sign of 'wasteful generosity.' This is a foreshadowing of death. The second sign is the Lord's Supper representing the Passover in Egypt and subsequent freedom, as well as the act of Jesus baptism by John the Baptizer.				Life's barriers are demonstrated. These are the blocks to transformation and reformation: they are the political, religious, personal and the associated emotional response.				The symbolic denouement that the old Covenant of The Law is dead.			
The anointment of oil is the <u>First Sign</u> of Wasteful Generosity. The initial response is a moralistic condemnation. Jesus' challenge raises the issue into the spiritual dimension. Then Jesus moves to the <u>Second Sign</u> in the preparation and participation in the Passover Meal—this meal is foreshadowed by Jesus' baptism in Chapter 1. The political and religious barriers attempt to prevent Jesus' demonstration on how to die to the old covenant ways to define our obedience to God.									The <u>Third Sign</u> : The anointment of the cross illuminates the gift of Jesus' death. With his death the old covenant dies.		
There are three acts to this drama: the preparation, the barriers attempting to prevent the significance of the crucifixion, and the subsequent resurrection. Ironically, it is the attempt by the religious and political institutions to prevent the demise of the old definitions on how to serve God through burnt offerings and sacrifices that guaranteed the demonstration of Jesus. The lesson to be learned is that death no longer defines us as victims. Next, it is the Jesus Lesson in which we immerse ourselves.											

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

The First Mission Is To Heal A Broken World And Recruit Practitioners							The Second Mission Is To Prepare People/World For The Demonstration Of Their Rebirth						
The Mission to Heal a Broken World		The Tools of Power and Teaching Others To Use Them			The New Mission: Awakening The World		The Kairotic Moment			The Event of Christ as New Birth			
Really in the world	To make whole a broken people and to call awakened followers	Teaching the Kingdom of God	Demon- strating Jesus' power	The struggles of the faithful and the unfaithful	Demon- strating his author- ity	The New Marching Orders !	Awaken- ing the Spirit- ually Blind	The Ripe- ness of time	The Offering is ready!	Falling through the hole in time	The sacrifice and blood offering	Be- wilder- ment	Early Manu- scripts and women
1:1-13	1:14-3:19	3:20-4:34	4:36-5:43	6:1-7:30	7:31-8:30	8:31-9:13	9:14-10:52	11:1-1:33	12:1-44	13:1-37	14:1-15:32	15:33-47	16:1-8 Plus 9-20
Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6	Lesson 7	Lesson 8	Lesson 9	Lesson 10	Lesson 11	Lesson 12	Lesson 13	Lesson 14

SOME OBSERVATIONS—

As the IHOP Bible Study began its study of Mark's Gospel, I struggled to understand what Mark was conveying to his readers. The material in the first 10 chapters is disjointed, it has no obvious structure, and nothing seems to "glue" it together. After I did the chart, the two missions became obvious.

It is traditional to understand Mark does one thing in chapters 1 – 8. Then, in chapter 9—at the Mount of Transfiguration—Jesus gets new marching orders to leave Galilee and to set his face toward Jerusalem. Chapter 10 through 16 takes Jesus to the cross and the grave. The ending, of course, is a surprise. This is something Mark promised us all along.

Religion

I am a retired international Chemist and Business man. Since retirement I am a columnist for a small newspaper. . . Bill has a depth of understanding of religion which sometimes astounds me. He wrote a brief editorial for, "The Prairie Connection," that is one of the finest pieces of modern religious thought. Since college I have called myself an atheist, but the article Bill wrote at my request made me realize I could probably become a believer in Christianity again. *C. E. "Bud" Brann, Editor: The Prairie Connection*

From following the "Gut Trip Analysis" discussions, I have gained much insight into my own connection with God and come to a deeper understanding of what the written words of the bible intend to convey. The exchange of ideas in the "Gut Trip Analysis" venue is extremely stimulating and enjoyable. As one discussion concludes, I look forward to the start of the next. *Patricia Smith, Executive Administrator, Director's Office, Los Alamos National Laboratory*

Bill's view and demeanor about life are on the true course to what living is all about. Use his filters of the way life is, change your paradigm and awaken to a more satisfying life. He makes the path clear for those who want to follow his lead. I am grateful for his persistence, love, and friendship. *Nedra Eibl, Salina, KS School Board*

There is a possibility I may have to preach this week and I am grasping at straws for inspiration. I found the site very intriguing and signed up. I look forward to learning more about the word. *Gale A. Fulte, Chaplain, Mesilla Fire Department, Alaska*

Prior to starting the Trinity Bible Study, I had always tried to analyze the material using my head. After I understood that Pastor Bill wanted us to feel it in our gut, I was able to understand it much better. *Rex S. Romeiser, M.D. (retired)*

The gut analysis method has definitely been a blessing to those who desire to hear a message of hope, faith and love. The gut analysis method is a fantastic way to get to the heart of the scripture text and not get bogged down in unimportant matters from the essence of the teachings of Yeshua. *Jorge Arvelo, a Bible Study subscriber*

Working through this series of lessons really helped me to look at my faith and scripture with new eyes. I began to find meaning in new places and was guided to a better understanding of how to apply it to my life. I highly recommend this study! *Kylee Rudkin, Public School Art Teacher in Hugoton, KS*

As a seminary student I have found Pastor Bill's insights to be excellent resources when comparing other voices on a given text. His insights are succinct and quite interesting which make exegesis and sermon preparation fun and refreshing. *Jonathan Boynton, Lutheran Seminary Student, Columbia, SC*



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