

Following is an interpretation of the scripture regarding the Kingdom of Heaven and its analogy to a 'pearl of great price.'

Scripture

- 1. Scripture:** *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.* ...Matthew 13:45,46
- 2. Question:** Does this mean that I have to give up all my worldly goods to experience the Kingdom of Heaven?
- 3. Context:** Jesus was teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven and how it could be realized on earth. This was one of several parables that were examples or illustrations of what he was trying to impart to those who were gathered around him.
- 4. Promise:** If I turn away from worldly things, seeking first the Kingdom of God, all else (the things of the world) will be added unto me.

Interpretation

- 1. Literal:** Jesus meant for the man to sell all his worldly possessions and actually purchase the rarest, most beautiful pearl he could find.
- 2. Symbolic:** The pearl is a feminine 'yin' symbol and because of its beauty and spherical form, it is also a symbol of perfection and immortality. It often represents the child growing in the womb of its mother because it is formed in the darkness of a shell. In Christianity, it is seen as the Christ being born in the flesh of Mary.
- 3. Key Words:**
 - Heaven:** an eternal state of communion with God; a condition or place of supreme happiness.
 - Merchant:** a person whose occupation is the buying and selling of goods for a profit.
 - Pearl:** a much valued gem that is created when calcium carbonate forms around a grain of sand within the shells of mollusks.
- 4. Metaphysical:** It is right for me to leave certain worldly things behind in order to seek a greater ideal, i.e., to leave a bad relationship in search of a better one; to leave a difficult job situation to pursue something deemed to be more rewarding; or to give up certain immediate desires and gratifications to save for some future good. Also, to heal some dysfunctional patterns in order to realize some expanded personal goals. In other words, to do something that will bring greater conditions of good into my life...to make my life healthier, easier, happier and more prosperous.

Interpretation (Cont'd)

5. Mystical: Jesus is asking me to leave behind all worldly attachments in order to receive the eternal gift of God realization through the great “Pearl” of Christ Consciousness.

Practice:

1. Application: This scripture asks me to examine myself and I find there are behaviors that I’m engaging in that keep me attached to the things of the world. There are people I continue to judge, as well as organizations or groups that I condemn. There are places in me where I still harbor feelings of unworthiness. In these areas of my life, I am like the man who walks away from the gift Jesus is waiting to give him.

2. Comfort: I’m comforted in knowing there is such a “pearl” of great price. Jesus teaches me that if I ask in his name (in and from the consciousness of Christ), this pearl, or Truth, is my reward. He promises it to me if I build my faith and follow in his footsteps.

3. Practices:

- Do a ‘Praising Prayer’ for each of the people I have been judging.
- Confess my ‘unworthiness’ with my worship circle and/or with my prayer partner.
- Make a list of where I feel my attachments to the things of the world are controlling me.

An Inspired Essay by Rev. Lloyd Strom

Where is Heaven?

heav'• en - 1. An exalted abode of blissful spiritual life after death
2. Intense exaltation of mind and feeling
3. An often imaginary place or situation of perfection and delight

I recently watched a television documentary on the *'nature of heaven.'* In the course of the program, a number of highly respected religious figures were asked to share their own personal concept of 'heaven.' Not surprisingly, there was a very wide variance of opinions. In fact, most of the concepts were not even remotely comparable. However, there was only one thing that I could find that all of these different ideas had in common, and that is 'there's nothing to complain about in heaven.'

In other words, *'heaven is a place where there's nothing to complain about.'* I am sure this is why the great mystical healer and teacher Emma Curtis Hopkins said that the key to the highest state of attainment is the simple admonition: **"DON'T COMPLAIN."** Instead, she insisted that the fastest way to get our healing power going was to 'praise' everybody and everything. This was the inspiration behind the creation of the *'Praising Prayer'*



When it comes right down to it, every accusation, criticism and complaint that we make is a *'lie from the beginning.'* And this is what keeps us out of heaven, our habit of *'telling lies.'* I am sure that if we were to get

'wired up' and record every single thing that we say in the course of a day, that most of us would be horrified at the number of little criticisms and complaints that we make. This is why the monks in the monasteries often take 'vows of silence.' They are attempting correct themselves of the habit of complaining.

However, it doesn't really count if you only *'curb your tongue.'* So long as you still feel like complaining, the effects of the complaints will still manifest in your life. Even Jesus said that, *"Out of the treasure of a good heart, good things will come; And out of the treasure of an evil heart, evil things will come."* - Luke 6:45 This is because the world obeys our heart, not our head, or our hands or even our mouth. Therefore, so long as there is a complaint in our heart, we will bring it's effects to pass, either in our bodies in the form of disease, or the *'body of our affairs'* as

Therefore, the only way out of the 'world we complain about,' and into the *'Kingdom of Heaven at Hand'* is through love, in the form of forgiveness. Whenever we are offended in any way, we have this choice before us, we can either praise or we can complain. We can either forgive our neighbors, or we can prolong our suffering by accusing them of ignorance and wrongdoing. The choice is ours to make. We can either take the *'high road to heaven,'* or we can to travel on the *'hard road to hell'* through the world of criticism and complaints.2006



2006

An Inspired Essay by Rev. Lloyd Strom



Where is Heaven? - Part 2

In my previously shared insight, I put forth the revelation that *'Heaven is a place where there is nothing to complain about,'* and that we can create the experience of heaven wherever we are when we cease to complain, criticize and accuse our neighbors of ignorance or wrongdoing. This prompted me to recall the experience of the Jews wandering in the wilderness, as recorded in the Old Testament of the

It is written that in the wilderness the Jews met with many misfortunes and were kept out of the *'Promised Land'* because they constantly murmured against the Lord. This tendency to murmur is an insidious habit that is easy to fall into. The dictionary defines the word *murmur* to mean: *"To utter complaints in a low, half-articulated voice; to feel or express dissatisfaction or discontent; to grumble; - often with, at or against."* Notice that this definition concludes with the term *'often with...'* *'To murmur with others is what is known as gossip.*

Additionally, the Bible gives us a warning about the dangers of murmuring as the Lord spoke to Moses and said: *"How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmurs against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say to them, As truly as I live, says the LORD, as you have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you."* -Numbers 14:27-28

This world, and everybody in it, is a manifestation of the One God who is All Life. Consequently, when we murmur against our neighbors and the world, we are murmuring against the Lord our God. What this means is that whatever we say against the world and our neighbors, the Lord will do to us. **Uh-Oh!!!**

The good news is that Jesus came to tell us that when we are praying for our good, that we can *"...forgive, if we have anything against anyone, so that our Father, which is in heaven, may forgive us our failings. But if we do not forgive, neither will our Father, which is in heaven, forgive us for our mistakes."* -Mark



Another Old Testament insight into the power of our words comes from the experience of Moses. After many, many years of devoted service to God and his people, he was kept out of the *Promised Land (Heaven)* for disobeying the Lord about one simple thing. He was told to use his words to bring forth water from a rock. Instead, he used his old reliable *'magic staff'* to strike the stone and cause the waters to flow. (Numbers 20:7-12)

What this story tells us, is that trying to use physical means to conform the world to our desires will keep us out of heaven. Instead, we must enter heaven with our words. This is what Joshua did when he took over from Moses. He obeyed the Lord, and brought down the walls of Jericho, which was the last barrier to the *Promised Land*, by orchestrating a *'great shout'* from the people. (Joshua

This Old Testament wisdom about the 'power of our words' was ultimately revealed to humanity in a practical form by Jesus when he taught us that "*the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,*" -Matt. 10:7 and that we reveal the Kingdom with our words. "*For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.*"

-Matt: 12:37 This reaffirms the Old Testament wisdom that "*Death and Life are in the power of the tongue.*" ...Proverbs 18:21 Perhaps this is why the words murmur and murder sound so much

Putting Wisdom into Practice

The modern New Thought teacher, Eric Butterworth, advocates the simple practice of 'turning problems into projects.' Consequently, when I began to see the self-defeating nature of my own murmurings, I resolved to end them through what I called 'My God Talk Project.' This project was inspired by the words of St. Paul, who said "*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*" - Ephesians 4:29

To edify means 'to enlighten or instruct so as to encourage moral or spiritual improvement.' Enlightenment is the activity of Love in the soul. Whereas, grace is the activity of Love in the flesh. Consequently, the purpose of this Project is obviously 'Love.'

My Vision and Intentions are contained in the attached Sacred Covenant that I have created for this *GodTalk Project*. Perhaps you would like to join me. I left a blank on the sheet for you to add your own personal intention.

A very powerful practice to embody the GodTalk Sacred Covenant is to use the Glorified GodSong. Considering that we define who we are by what we say about ourselves AND others, the suggested lyric that you might want to use would be: "*God is the words I am*" or perhaps, "*Loving are the words I am.*" These lyrics can also be incorporated into the "*Glorified GodSong Rosary Practice*" by using the 'Holy Mother Hymn' as follows: "*I am the Mary soul that hears no evil, sees no evil, speaks no evil, ever. I am the Mary soul through which I bless, my words with perfect Love,*" An outline of this practice is in the Syllabus.

In remembrance of the master teacher Emma Curtis Hopkins, I would also suggest that you 'take an afternoon' to engage in the spiritual practices that will fully establish your intentions in your heart. Jesus taught us that "*Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh,*" - Matt. 12:34 However, it is also true that out of the abundance of our speaking, our heart changes. This was confirmed by St. Paul when he said, "*Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*" - Romans 10:17



2006

My God Talk Project

"Death and Life are in the power of the tongue." ...Proverbs 18:21

*"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth,
but that which is good to the use of edifying,* that it may
minister grace unto the hearers." ...Ephesians 4:29*

"Don't Complain." ...Emma Curtis Hopkins

Purpose:

Love

(An Awareness of Oneness)

Vision:

Duplicating the Nature of Spirit with My Words

My Intentions Are:

1. To always speak Life into my life, and into the lives of others.
2. To always speak in a way that both edifies* and ministers Grace to others.
3. To refuse to accuse the world, or any other living soul, of ignorance or wrongdoing.
4. To remember to praise, if ever I'm tempted to criticize.
5. To remember to make a request, if ever I'm tempted to make a complaint.
6. To never make a request of another person until I have first made my request known to God and forgiven the other person.
7. To fully reveal my healing power by praising everyone and everything in the name of Jesus Christ.

8. _____

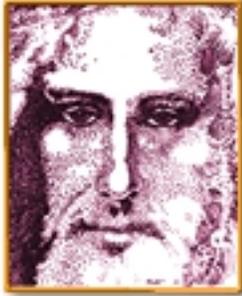
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Date

* **Edify:** To enlighten or instruct so as to encourage moral or spiritual improvement. ...Websters Dictionary

On Seeing the 'Passion of the Christ' a 4.1

An Inspired Essay by Rev. Marcia Sutton



On Seeing the 'Passion of the Christ'

I just returned from my third trip to the movie theater to see Mel Gibson's acclaimed movie, 'The Passion of the Christ.' When I first saw it on Ash Wednesday's opening day, I had no intention of seeing it twice let alone three times. Here's the gift that this movie has given me.

On first viewing, I was taken through the visual torture and suffering of Jesus. It brought the Easter story of my childhood right up to the present moment of my life. It made it real. There were a couple of places where it was almost too much to bear. Upon reflection, I saw how crazy this was to me for I *knew* it was just an actor pretending to be scourged, shamed and finally crucified. Yet, deep within me there was an interior response that was connected to the real suffering, or passion, of Jesus' passage through the invisible veil of Life. It was this ultimate initiation, and his willingness to surrender into it, that has eternally delivered us from the curse of the belief in death.

What came as a surprise blessing from this first viewing was the Light. To behold the immensity of such Light was also almost too much to bear. The Light broke through in the various, although short, flashbacks

of Jesus teachings and life with his beloved disciples. I was carried up by the Light and delivered to the astounding moment of the rising of Christ in his ascension into a state of being beyond what had ever been realized within humanity. It's promise and hope is what I took with me as I walked out of the theater that day which marked the beginning of Lent. If Lent is the preparation period for us to enter the Easter moment, then Mel's movie provided a 'jump start' for my own voyage into the cave of preparation.



A couple of weeks later I was guided to go back and see the movie again. This time I went with the intention of using the movie and its anointing of Light to assist me in healing something I was working on in my own spiritual practice. This viewing was much more quiet. The scenes of brutality now receded to the background as I entered more fully into the experience of the gospel message of redemption through Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Whereas the first viewing was experienced mostly at the emotional level, this viewing entered my flesh. It became a concrete experience within me.

In this second viewing, I experienced the reality of Jesus' sacrifice. I opened myself to truly accept that it was meant for me. His great sacrifice had been given so that I could know the Light in my life today. It also showed me all the times I had been the consciousness of each of the characters. Yes, I had been a Judas, a Pharisee, a friend, a condemner, a mourner, an accuser, a blasphemer and a scapegoat. This viewing allowed me to stand witness to the

On Seeing the 'Passion of the Christ' a 4.2

sin, error and unconsciousness of humanity but, most importantly, to my own. I left the theater in a state of great humility.



Then, it was on Palm Sunday that I realized I was to see this movie yet again. It really didn't make sense but I knew there was more to be given. This time, I was taken into a seeing of the Love. Yes, there is a Love that fills this movie. It moves through the women around Jesus, especially his Blessed Mother and Mary of Magdala. It even shows up in Pilot's wife, Claudia. There are even slight moments when Love breaks through the Chief Priest and his attendants as well as a couple of the Roman soldiers. It shows up in the man who resisted carrying Jesus's cross and in the regret of Peter's denials. In other words, no one's previous behaviors, positions, fears, and accusations could build a wall strong enough to keep Love's penetrating elixir from entering and bringing forth its sweet redemption.

The great message of the movie is that such Love is with us today. It reminds me of something I spoke from the pulpit many years ago and feel more sure of it than ever before. *'The Love of God is for all people and the Light of God is for all eternity.'* Today, I know that God's infinite Light and Love came to earth through Jesus Christ in a way that was remarkably different from previous holy ones. Jesus' gift was his willingness to go the whole way in front of those who loved him as well as those who had condemned him. Such willingness opened the heart of humanity for all time.

In the Light and Love of this understanding, I proclaim my willingness to go the whole way by the power of the whole name. Yes, the whole name of Jesus Christ is a principle that brings heaven to earth and a presence that continually guides my way, brings comfort to my soul and peace within my heart. May we all be blessed with the dawning of Loves newness in our lives at this Easter morning of our being.



2004

An excerpt from "An Esoteric Cosmology" by Rudolph Steiner

Before the Coming of Christ, humanity embodied the principle of Law and that of individuality. We were divided between *obedience* to the Law and the *revolt* of the principle of individuality. But the principle of Christ came to establish equilibrium between the two. Christ taught us how to find the Law which was originally laid down from outside, within the centre of our individual being. This is what St. Paul meant when he said that *freedom* and *love* are the highest principles of Christianity. The ancient world was ruled by Law; Love is the governing principle of the "new order of things." Christ Jesus is not only a Universal Principle; Christ is a Being who appeared once, and once only, at a definite moment in history. In human form, He revealed by His words and His life, a state of perfection which it is possible for every human being ultimately to acquire by their own free-will. Christ came to the Earth at a critical moment, when the descending arc of human evolution was about to reach its lowest point of materialisation. In order that the Christ-Principle might awaken within humanity, the life of Christ Himself on earth was necessary in a completely human body.



Karma is the "law of cause and effect" in the spiritual world; it represents the spiral process of evolution. The Christ Impulse intervenes in this karmic process and becomes its central pivot. Since He came to Earth the Christ has lived in the depths of every human soul.

When karma is conceived as a necessity imposed upon humanity in order that

their wrong doings may be redressed and their errors redeemed by an implacable justice working over from one incarnation to another, the objection is sometimes raised that karma must do away with the role of Christ as the Redeemer. In reality, karma is a redemption of each individual *by themselves*, by dint of their own efforts as they gradually ascend to freedom through the series of incarnations. It is through karma that a human being is able to draw near to Christ.

The Christ-Impulse transforms implacable Law into Freedom, and the source of this Impulse is the person and example of Christ Jesus. Karma is not to be conceived as fatalism but as an instrument essential to the attainment of that supreme freedom which is life in Christ—a freedom attained not by defying the "world order" but by fulfilling it.



Another objection is one that may be made from the point of view of oriental philosophy. It is said that the idea of a Redeemer of men does away with the logical concatenations of karma and substitutes for it an act of a miraculous Providence which intervenes in the universal laws of evolution. This same attitude further suggests that it is right and just that those who have committed sins should bear the weight of them. *This is an error of thought!* Karma is the "law of cause and effect"

in the spiritual world, just as *mechanical action* is the "law of cause and effect" in the material world. At every moment of life, karma represents something like a

balance-sheet, an exact statement of debit and credit. By every action, bad or good, we augment our debits or credits. Those who will not admit the possibility of an act of freedom are like a businessman who will not venture to embark upon a new transaction because he does not wish to run any risk; he prefers always to keep the same balancesheet.

A purely logical conception of karma would prohibit one from helping someone in adversity. But there, too, such fatalism would be false. The help we give freely to another person opens up a new era in their destiny. Our destinies are woven of these impulses, of these acts of Grace. If we accept the idea of individual help, may we not also conceive that a far mightier Being could help, not only one person alone, but all people as well. That such a Being could give a new impulse to all humanity? Such, indeed, was the act of a God who became a man, not in order to defy the laws of karma but to fulfil them. Karma and Christ are respectively the means of salvation and the Saviour. Through karma, the Act of Christ becomes Cosmic Law, and through the Christ-Principle karma achieves its aim—the liberation of conscious souls

and their identification with God. Karma is gradual redemption, Christ is the Redeemer.



If human beings would steep themselves in these ideas, they would realise that they belong to one another; they would understand the Law recognised in all true occult brotherhoods—namely *that each individual suffers and lives for others*. There will come a time in the future when the outer redemption in each person will coincide with the interior act of the Redeemer. It is not *revelation* but Truth which makes us free: “*You shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free.*”

The path of evolution leads to Freedom. When an individual has awakened within themselves all those qualities which were prophetically manifest in the Christ, they will be truly free. For if *necessity* is the law of the material world, *Freedom* is the Law of the spiritual world. Freedom is only acquired step by step, and it will not be fully manifest in us until the end of our evolution, when our nature has been truly spiritualised in Christ.

