

Sermon September 4, 2022 Luke 14:25-35

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

In this teaching of Jesus, he speaks more about the high commitment required to follow him.

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:26-27

Many people get tripped up by sayings such as these from Jesus. This is as true today as ever, when so many are decrying all the hatred they see in others and pointing fingers in judgement. The problem lies in the significant differences between Jesus’ culture and today. When Jesus says we should “hate” our family, he does not mean we should wish evil upon them. He means we should consider following Jesus as our primary goal in life. If family should at times become an obstacle to practicing our faith, then we choose Jesus over family. That is what hatred means here.

Jesus explains more of what he means in a parable.

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? 29 For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, 30 saying, “This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.” Luke 14:28-30

It is very undesirable to not be able to finish what we have started. Jesus talks about this truth in terms of a building project. Before wise people start a major project, they get estimates. We just put on a new roof here at Christ Lutheran. We got estimates both to see the cost difference between the contractors but also to know how much money we needed. Jesus says to do this when we become disciples. Realize everything that it will take, cost, and require. The way Jesus talks, following him will require everything we have!

We have all started things we did not finish. From cleaning and reorganizing the garage or attic, to a career choice, remodeling project, a marriage. Even though we may have well counted the cost of discipleship at our confirmation or some other important spiritual crossroad, we often find ourselves unable to pay the high cost of discipleship.

Jesus knows this. He is the only one who truly knows what must be sacrificed for us to become his disciples. What was required is that Jesus had to sacrifice himself. He alone understood the full cost of our discipleship and he alone was able to pay it on the cross. He wanted to be our tower, our fortress, as he spoke of in the parable. He “hated” his position of glory, honor, and command of all the angels in heaven. He came down from his lofty throne. He took on our human flesh. He paid the price for our sin. It is now finished, and now our hope is in him. Jesus has become the tower of our salvation. We give up everything we can to find our place in him. We build on him who has promised he will provide us with everything we need for this life and the next.

And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:27

We have been taught to the point of nausea what it means to take up and carry our cross. Since it does not come naturally, let it be said again. To carry our cross means to sacrifice all comforts and gain that we may desire and endure all necessary unpleasant treatment, difficulties, and losses as we remain true to our vow to follow Jesus.

Jesus gives another parable to illustrate this point.

Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. 33 In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples. Luke 14:31-33

It has been said that in this world there are only winners and losers. That is true in many ways. Jesus draws on that comparison in this parable. If a king is facing

battle with an opponent who will surely defeat him, he will seek terms of peace. This will cost the losing king handsomely: subjection to the other king's rule; taxes; crops; animals; land; perhaps even his daughter. The losing king must be willing to pay the price of peace.

In our spiritual battles we come upon fierce enemies in the "unholy three" – our sinful flesh, the world, and Satan. We are vastly outnumbered. Yet we have nothing to bargain with for peace in that realm – no such territory, wealth, or anything. We are undone and quickly defeated.

Jesus knew we were trapped and without hope. He went to war on our behalf and as our champion. He counted the cost. He knew he would have to give up everything he had. He knew it would require his life. But in the end, he would be victorious. He renounced his claim on his limitless riches. He fought the battle. He died. In his resurrection he won victory over the unholy. Jesus is our victorious champion. Now he helps us endure and win battles against evil by the power of his Word and Spirit. How obvious that because he gave his life for us and won the victory that we would give all we have for him!

Let's consider one final word from Jesus on the critical nature of discipleship.

Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? 35 It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." Luke 14:34-35

Like Jesus' words about "hate," we are quite removed from the world of salt in which Jesus lived. It is a great benefit to be able to store perishable food for a long time. In a time when there was no canning, refrigeration, freeze drying, or other such means of preserving food, salt was priceless. Salt could preserve food so that it could be stored over winter or transported over long distances. Salt can also make food taste good. The word "salad" comes from ancient times when salt was added to greens for flavor. People got salt from the sea. They either evaporated water from the sea or salt springs near the ocean or mined salt from dried seabeds. This salt was mixed with other minerals to make it easier to store, ship, and use. The desirable part of this salt (sodium chloride) could leach out of the mixture. If that happened, the remaining minerals were useless as a food additive, soil conditioner, or even a booster for compost piles. What was left was

unusable for anything. It was thrown out. Jesus says if we lose our saltiness – that is our faith in Christ as Savior – we will be thrown out of the kingdom on the last day. Jesus said the same to the Pharisees he joined for the Sabbath Seder that we heard about two weeks ago.

“There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out.” Luke 13:28

Jesus isn't just talking to unrepentant Pharisees; Jesus is talking to us. If, like with bad salt, our faith leaks out of us thru lack of hatred of the world, insincere commitment, or selfish desires, we will not be good for anything in the Kingdom and we will be thrown out into darkness. None of us want that. Its vital for us to hear Jesus' warning and place nothing above the Lord. It's crucial to faithfully and willingly carry the cross of personal hardship as we follow Jesus. The way of discipleship means to turn everything we are and have over to the lordship of Jesus Christ and live as the salt of the earth. He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!

The peace of God guard your hearts and minds as you believe and trust in him. Amen.

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