

DISCIPLES GO ALL IN AND ALL THE WAY LUKE 14:25-35
16th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST SEPT 4, '16

²⁵ Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰ saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' ³¹ Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³ So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. ³⁴ "Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? ³⁵ It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Ironically, I must confess, after planning to preach on this gospel,
 and after beginning to prepare sermon,
 I considered whether I wanted to finish it or change mind
 when I thought about preaching on hating family
 on the one Sunday wife, mother, sister & son are listening.
These are not words we expect to hear Jesus saying
 if we think of him as nice guy who is everyone's friend.
He uses some strong, offensive language.
 First he says to hate your family.
 and uses a word that really does mean hate.
 Then he talks about manure & says if we don't do things his way
 our lives are worth less than s.h.i.t.
Worst of all, he talks about the cross,
 which we, as Christians, have gotten used to
 but in that day was not mentioned in polite company.
 because everyone knew it was an awful, disgusting thing
 that made you want to throw up when you saw it,
 and was so horrible that it was used only
 to make an example of the worst of criminals
Why does Jesus use such strong, offensive language?
 for some reason people use strong language today.
Well, not because he is ignorant and doesn't know
 how to communicate any better,
 but to grab our attention and emphasize something important.

FOLLOWING JESUS HAS GREAT COST
THE ALTERNATE WAY LEADS TO GREAT LOSS
JESUS LEADS THE WAY TO THE CROSS

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What would make you gag and spit out your favorite food?

What about being too full to eat one more bite?

What would make you tell your dear child not to talk to you?

What about needing to hear an emergency announcement?

What would make you thrown down something precious & delicate?

What about if it was on fire or you tripped & had to catch self?

What would make you decide to hate your own family?

only something that was even much more important.

Jesus didn't just say these things out of the blue.

2 chapters before he warned the true faith is divisive.

and could lead to rejection even by family.

For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother in law. (Luke 12:52)

This tension is not created by Jesus but by human sinfulness

which makes us allergic to a holy God

and causes a reflex that strikes out against anyone

or anything that touches our sore spots of guilt.

What can lead us to reject other is realizing

they are as disgusting and repulsive as we are

when our sins make us run and hide from God.

Earlier in this chapter Jesus told parable of great banquet, but said,

But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him,

'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen,

and I go to examine them. Please have be excused.' And another said,

'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' (Luke 14:18)

In other words, these are the kinds of things that are going to keep

people from accepting God's invitation to heaven.

If visiting family on weekend can keep us from going to church,
and getting married can lead one to change religions,
when living together and having children in name of love,
and when what some call marriage in our culture today
is diametrically opposed to God's design for family
is it a surprise that family connections could get in the way
of relationship with God all together?

First verse of text says great crowds were following him,
possibly because they wanted to see another miracle
or just wanted more free bread,
but Jesus knows where this is leading because in verses
just before this chapter he says he is going to Jerusalem
which kills prophets.

Will this crowd stay with Jesus?

You may have heard living as a Christian
leads to a good marriage and family.
and following Biblical principals in business
leads to success and prosperity
and generous givers will receive more than they give.

Even if these things were guarantees, which they are not,
are they good enough reasons to trust and follow Jesus?

Jesus is just being honest with this crowd and us. They are not.

Verse right after text says,

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.

And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying,

“This man receives sinners and eats with them.” (Luke 15:1)

Only ones who keep following Jesus are those who realize
they are losers with nothing more to lose but life itself.

Jesus calls believers to be willing to give up everything to follow him,
even life itself, to be all in 100%, because

THE ALTERNATE WAY LEADS TO GREAT LOSS

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who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰ saying, 'This man began to build and
was not able to finish.' ³¹ Or what king, going out to encounter another
king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able
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a delegation and asks for terms of peace.

³⁴ "Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness
be restored? ³⁵ It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile.
It is thrown away.

Either salt is salty or it is not.

In that day, salt was one of most valuable things there was,
but if it is not salty, it is totally worthless.

Our lives are valuable, but if we don't have what life is about,
which is not just enjoying ourselves, or having friends,
or making a difference in this world,
but having an eternal relationship with God,
they are totally worthless.

Like building a tower or fighting a way,
a relationship with God is not a halfway thing.

If you aren't going to go all the way, don't start.

The cost of being a disciple is great. It takes our whole life.
But the alternative, trying to be just good enough for now,
will also cost you everything even if it looks less expensive,
It will nickel and dime you to death,
and in the end you will have nothing.

Like working on a cruise ship or a space station,
being a disciple is not something you can do as part time job.

It is easy to think we can just go to church on Sundays
and do our own thing the rest of the week,

do our best to keep some commandments,
like don't take God's name in vain,
but take it easy on others, like don't covet.

believe some parts of the Bible, like Jesus' birth to Mary,
but not others, like creation or O.T. miracles.

trust Jesus for some things, but not everything.

Jesus says, that is just wasting your time, don't even bother
because it will do you no good in the end.

The reason is, no matter how good our lives look to us,
we need nothing less than total salvation.

Suppose you see a spot on your shirt,
rather than take the shirt off and put it in the wash,
what if you just put some detergent & water
on that spot. How do you think you will look?

What if you notice a wrinkle in your pants,
rather than take them off to iron them,
what if you just try to iron them while you wear them,
What do you think will happen?

Our lives need to be cleaned up and straightened out,
not just a little bit but totally.
this includes our relationships with family, jobs, the works.
It doesn't work to ask Jesus to tweak them a bit,
He says we must give them up, turn them over to him,
let him take care of it and give them back again.

When we love Jesus completely we love others all the more.

When we let go of everything else we depend on in life,
we have the security of all we need all the more.

When we die with Christ, we live fully all the more.

How does Jesus do this for us?

JESUS LEADS THE WAY TO THE CROSS

²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

Looking back, we know what Jesus meant by
following him to the cross.

But I have to wonder what people would have thought at the time.

Those who carried a cross were those who had already been judged,
and condemned enemies of the whole world,
worthless scum too disgusting to even look at.

Those who chose to be rebels against the current empire
carried cross by knowing they were sure to die in terrible way.

Every step they took brought them closer to death.

Jesus knew all along this is where he was headed.

He had chosen to single handedly take on
the kingdom of the devil which controlled the world.

He knew it would take his suffering and death to free us from it
and that his astonishing choices would
alienate him from his family and disgust his friends.

But he counted the cost and knew it was worth it.

He was outnumbered but his life and death was worth enough
to win the victory against Satan and pay for all our sins.

He and only he had what it took to build a tower
that lifts us all the way to heaven and gives us a home there.

And he would go all the way and finish the job.

We must admit that none of us has what it takes to be a disciple.
but Jesus himself gives us what we need by his grace.

We continually fall short and lose the battle.
but Jesus forgives us because of his completed victory.

We may sometimes hate our own family
only because of the sin we inherited from our parents
but Jesus adopts us as part of his holy family
and is giving us a new identity.

In text Jesus uses strong language that grabs attention.

He continues to use strong language that takes hold of us,
words like, forgiven and made holy.

This strong language has the power to do what it says.

Following Jesus means walking behind him,
letting him do everything for us.

This building project of Jesus, this ongoing battle, is not yet finished.
until we leave this life and are in heaven.

This is why Jesus disciples must go all the way & not stop short.
But already now we are among those who are already judged.
and yet have been declared innocent.

Every step takes us closer to death
and we are already as good as dead
but that means already as good as raised to new life.

This is why it is worth it for disciples to be all in.

FOLLOWING JESUS HAS GREAT COST

including every other loyalty and thing that we value.

THE ALTERNATE WAY LEADS TO GREAT LOSS

not following Jesus also costs everything in the end
but leaves us with nothing.

JESUS LEADS THE WAY TO THE CROSS

where Jesus has won the victory and paid the price
to give us 100% of what we need

for a good relationship with God and others as well
and for life with lasting worth now and forever.