

Today’s lesson is read from Luke 14:25-33

Hear the words from Luke:

Read Luke 14:25-33

“The Word of God for the people of God.”

“Thanks be to God”

Let us pray:

Holy Shaper of hearts and minds, as Jeremiah came to know You in the work of the potter’s hands, teach us to follow You in the reading of Your disciple Luke. Lead us into a deeper understanding of Your ways, that we may know and do Your will. Amen.

Intro:

So apparently the church potluck is over, there are no free meals...and Jesus is ready to get down to business. As we just heard from Luke, Jesus turns to His large crowd of followers and says, “Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, even their life itself, cannot be my disciple.” This demand from Jesus comes just after Jesus’s teaching from last week when He was a dinner guest in the house of one of the leading Pharisees preaching to the guests at the banquet to not fight for a VIP seat near the host but to save them for other guests that the host may deem more worthy. Further, Jesus says that the host himself should consider inviting the poor and disabled to the feast instead of his work friends and wealthy neighbors.

In today’s reading, Jesus calls out a larger audience than was at the banquet before. Here Jesus calls the crowd to follow him into “dangerous discipleship,” teaching them that becoming a disciple (a follower of His way of life) is like building a tower that you don’t want to leave half-finished because you don’t have enough commitment or enough resources to finish it.

It's kind of like, when I was building my 10 x 8 shed last month I didn't just dig 4 feet holes in the ground, pour the cement, cut the wood, lay down my foundation and stop there because I didn't have enough time or not enough wood. No, I put pen to paper, sat down and prepared, estimated the cost of time and money to see whether I could complete the task. [Although, looking back, laying the foundation was the easiest part and I had wished I had stopped there because everything else after that was so much more frustrating and harder]. [I should write a review on the shed I bought from Lowe's warning anyone who buys it that you will need to have a ton of patience in screwing in 250 screws with washers.] But that is exactly Jesus's point. Discipleship, like building a tower is NOT easy. Discipleship is hard.

And because Jesus knows it's hard, he tells his listeners to stop and count the costs before they sign up to be his followers. A careful builder, he says, never breaks ground without taking a good, hard look at their budget. A wise general doesn't declare war unless he's sure his troops are equipped and battle-ready. The life of faith should be no different; discipleship is not a weekend hobby or a vacation destination. It's a full soul, full body, full mind endeavor that requires daily denial. And daily surrender. And a reordering of our identities, our priorities, and our possessions. It is a daily look in the mirror and seeing our very lives, our identity, transformed everyday into the identity and likeness of Christ. It requires “hating” what is too narrow, too exclusive, and too limited, and learning instead to love what is broad, inclusive, and boundless. In other words, it is hating the way we narrow-mindedly want to have a better, more higher seat at the table, and lovingly saying I give my seat up for someone else who needs to be closer to the host.

“Be sure to count the cost before you sign up for discipleship with Jesus because it’s costly. I don’t want you to sign up naively and be surprised later when the cost is very high.”

Every day we count the cost of something. I hear this verse this morning and immediately think of my student loans and the high cost of going to school. When I consider that cloud of debt I can’t help but ask was the cost worth it? Because God knows Methodist pastors don’t make a ton of money. And essentially this is what Jesus asks of us – to consider a practice in risk management before you dive into discipleship. We are either all in. or not at all.

The challenge in this text is real. Christian discipleship is not something that can be done only in one’s spare time after all the other commitments to our jobs and families have been met. Jesus isn’t asking for our leftovers. Jesus wants all of us, our very lives—our love, our time, our resources, our work, our commitment—in order to live out what we pray: “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” And that kind of discipleship may very well put us in conflict, if not with our family members, than certainly with the expectations of many of those around us.

But what does Jesus say after he calls us to such a high cost of being disciples? He says in ch. 14 verse 14, “You will be repaid at the resurrection.” In other words, “There is no cost that you can pay in following me that won’t be made up to you a thousandfold in the resurrection.” And we need to remember Matthew 13:44, which says, “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” A man sees and sells everything he has — everything he has! — to get that treasure. In other

words, all the so-called costs and all the so-called losses — everything — are nothing compared to the gains of having Jesus, the greatest treasure.

But make no mistake, we don't take the risk of discipleship only because we will then receive the reward of eternal life, or because becoming a disciple will make our lives easier. We become disciples knowing full well the risk, that we will be made and called to be instruments who are all-in in transforming the world; making others disciples, sharing the rewarding Good News in a world that ridicules us for sharing and is apparently not all in! [share about Bible Study- making disciples through bible study and the cost of hardships made in knowing Christ's way]

So yes, we must count the cost in order to be a disciple. The cost is hard, but In the end, having Jesus means gain, like Paul says: “I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Philippians 3:8).

Let us pray:

Holy Shaper of life and grace,
you have shown us the cost of being your people.
We give you thanks, for the crosses
that are ours to bear,
and for the strength to carry them.
Help us follow the path of Jesus,
who shows us the way. Amen.