

Luke 14:25-33

²⁵Now large crowds were traveling with him; and he turned and said to them, ²⁶"Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'

³¹Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. ³³So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

Luke 14:25-33, 2016

This makes me sad and guilty.

I know I am not capable of this kind of commitment and sacrifice.

Picture it:

Jesus is walking down the road on his way to Jerusalem for that last time.

He knows he isn't going to survive this visit to the holy city where the temple stands,

where the faithful go to express their devotion to God by bringing their sacrifices.

He knows he will suffer and die alone, without the support of even his closest disciples,

The 12 he has chosen to have with him and to carry on his work after he is gone from this earth will desert him.

As he walks along from behind him he can hear the voices of the crowd who is following him.

He hears their excitement.

They have seen his miracles, his healing power. They have been inspired by his great sermons and teaching.

His charisma has created their desire to be close to him and drawn them in.

But, Jesus knows this is going to be short lived.

When they get to Jerusalem they will abandon him, even turn on him, if for no other reason than they are afraid to die.

Jesus wants disciples, needs disciples.

But he knows that being his disciple is going to cost, and cost a lot.

“...hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself... carry the cross and follow... give up all your possessions.”

He stops in the middle of the road and says to these people, this is what it costs to follow me.

I wonder how many followers he lost that day.

That hate word is a strong word and we cannot ignore it.

Raising our kids we never allowed them to even use that word.

By the way, there is no other way to translate the Greek word in the original text here.

Is this what Jesus really meant?

I believe understanding this setting helps us understand why Jesus would speak of commitment in these dramatic terms.

Well, there is one possibility that we can chalk this language up to Jesus' use of hyperbole,

an extravagant exaggeration used to make a point,
and he does make his point.

Following him will be costly.

But, we cannot cop out to hyperbole here.

For we do so only at the risk of sacrificing Jesus' calling, or taking the power out of the point Jesus is making,
and we can't afford to do that here.

So, we hold the two in tension with one another—this word hate and the idea of hyperbole.

This passage is reminiscent of another passage we find in Matthew, Chapter 18.

It comes from the story of a rich ruler who comes to Jesus asking what he has to do to inherit eternal life.

Jesus tells him he must keep the commandments; the ruler says he has kept them all, and Jesus responds,

“...if you wish to be perfect go sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”

Jesus at the end of the conversation says to the ruler that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

Jesus is trying to let the ruler know what it will take for him to have eternal life by his own merit, and how impossible that is.

Jesus said, “If you want to be perfect...” which is the only merit by which eternal life is inherited,

and of which the ruler knows he is not capable.

When he heard it he went away sad, for he was very rich.

Jesus is describing perfection and himself.

The only option for the ruler is to rely on the perfect one—Jesus himself.

But he doesn't understand that. He is too self-reliant.

Jesus offers the one thing that will really sustain him, that will not fade, but see him through this temporal life into eternal life—

He offers that which will walk him through this life and into death to the inheritance of eternal life he so desperately seeks.

Now, the 12 disciples chosen by Jesus have heard this conversation and they grew very concerned.

Peter, of course, speaks up for the 12 saying,

“Hey, we have given up everything. What then will we have?”

Jesus promises the twelve will sit on thrones when the Son of Man sits on his throne of glory.

They also must rely on the perfect one, Jesus.

Jesus preached a radical message of commitment to be one of his disciples.

It costs you everything. You have to sacrifice it all.

What are you willing to bet your life on?

Jesus wants the ruler and the people who are so excitedly following him to decide,

what are they willing to bet their life on before they follow him down the road to Jerusalem?

So what does this mean for discipleship today and the sacrifice you are being called to make in this life?

What about sacrifice? Is it a bad thing to sacrifice?

Is it a hurtful or painful thing—a diminishing thing,

Does it make you less than you are or want to be?

You know it isn't always easy or fun, but is it bad?

Our culture would lean toward a message that sacrifice is not a good thing particularly when it is for the sake of the needs of others,

and made at the expense of achieving your own ends and having everything you want.

If that is how you understand sacrifice, this message gets hard to hear.

But we all make sacrifices, don't we.

Parents make sacrifices for the sake of giving their children a better life than they had growing up. You all have at least heard that said before.

Others take in other people's children to raise them and give them a chance at a better life.

Many make sacrifices to complete their education, sacrifice the wants in life to save enough to buy a home.

Some commit to others, to church and other charitable causes,

You are bombarded with opportunities to make sacrifices for various causes.

The ASPCA is always running ads for donations, \$18 dollars a month;

the Wounded Warrior Project, which come to think of it I haven't heard too much from lately;

and there are many others.

We at the church pray that you participate in the life of the church through the giving of your time, and capabilities and money.

That sacrifice I pray is always life giving; and leads to a greater sense of purpose, life and fulfillment,

as we work at making a difference in people's lives
here in our community.

And I pray all these sacrifices are made with a sense of joy and
satisfaction, and have meaning beyond the mere act of giving.

I still can't help but feel sad and guilty hearing this passage and
realizing my limitations,

that I haven't and won't live up to Jesus' measure of
discipleship..

What saves me is knowing that Jesus, while still calling, still
expecting, still demanding, knows my imperfections even better
than I do,

and knowing that he still loves me enough to forgive me,

to include me among those for whom he gave all he
had so that I can call myself a Jesus follower,

for he makes me worthy of following by his own
sacrifice.

This is what saves you as well.