

The Cost of Discipleship

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost) is Luke 14:25-35. Although Jesus may not be popular with the Pharisees and lawyers, he still draws large crowds. This crowd is journeying with him to Jerusalem. Luke's travel narrative takes another turn with Jesus teaching in parables that are unique to Luke's gospel.

To hate a family member is Hebrew idiom for hate. To love one thing and to hate another gives preference to the former. God does not expect us to be cruel to the family He has given, but rather to love Him first. (TLSB)

Discipleship is an either/or situation. Either we love and hate everything that might possibly come between us and him, or else we cannot be his disciples. This phrase does not apply to Christian homes.

To bear the cross refers to Christ's own death and His disciples' willingness to follow in His sacrifice. It implies an ongoing situation.

Now Jesus interrupts the flow of his narrative with two parables, one that uses a building metaphor, and the other a metaphor about war. The theme of both is the same, namely that one is to *count the cost* before embarking on anything as serious as a huge building project or a full-scale war

The listeners are not rush off into Christ's war thinking that he can win it himself. The enemy is fierce and they are outnumbered, and so the only way to win is to carry the cross Jesus carried and follow him, for he is the one who knows the terms for peace. The same expression will be used by Jesus as he weeps over Jerusalem and asks, "If only you—even you—had known in this day the things that have to do with peace. (CC)

Jesus next compares discipleship to salt. Ancient salt was made of several chemicals dried from seawater. Sodium chloride, true salt, could leach out, leaving other worthless minerals. So the Christian whose faith has eroded is no longer a Christian. (TLSB)

Jesus ends with "he who has ears to hear, let him hear. The follower of Jesus needs to listen to everything he (Jesus) has to say, not only what one wants to hear. Jesus gives us his Word to teach us and help us to have the motivation and power to be his disciples. Because Jesus did not fail to complete his work on the cross we can draw strength for our lives as his disciples.

Prayer: Spare us, O Christ, from a weak and insipid faith, that the world may taste and see that You are good. Amen. (TLSB)

