



The Cost of Discipleship

First in the Fall sermon series "Taking Jesus Seriously"

Luke 14:25-33

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost ~ Sunday, September 8th, 2019

First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois

The Rev. Dr. Forrest Krummel

As we prepare to hear today's gospel lesson I want us to understand exactly what Jesus said. There is a phrase that will probably send you after a "bright shiny object." In the lesson Jesus makes reference to hating one's mother and father, wife and children, brothers and sisters and even our own life.

The verse sounds anti-family. It isn't. Jesus used a Semitic hyperbole or exaggeration in order to get the hearer's attention. He is saying that our commitment to him and to God's Kingdom must be above all other commitments.

Now, that being said, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his listeners to "Seek first the Kingdom of God and God's righteousness" and everything else in life will fall into place. In other words, if we seek to do God's will we will get our priorities in order. We will have a balanced life. We will not chase after other lesser gods.

There are various chapters in life. By seeking God's will in each chapter of life we are able to balance our various responsibilities whether they be family, work, or leisure.

Listen now for what God has to say to us as we reflect upon our gospel lesson.

²⁵ Now 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. ²⁷ Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For 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? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' ³¹ Or 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? ³² If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. ³³ So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

Text: "Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. (v. 27)

I am going to share two stories with you this morning.

The first story took place earlier this fall in Wichita, Kansas.

On the first day of school 8 year old Christian saw another boy about his age crying. Christian walked over to the boy, whose name is Connor, and held his hand. Holding Connor's hand, Christian stood with Connor and waited for the bell to ring. The boys had never met before but thanks to Christian's compassion, a new friendship was formed.

Christian had no clue that his new friend, Connor, is autistic. As you may know, autistic children are often overwhelmed by stimuli. Too many things happening around them. Too much noise and chaos. They shut down, become agitated, overwhelmed.

Christian's mom saw what had happened and used her cell phone to post a picture of the two boys on Facebook. She soon received a message from Connor's mother, April. she told Christian's mom that every day she fears that someone is going to laugh at Connor because he doesn't speak correctly or doesn't sit still, or because he jumps up and down and flaps his hands.

Not that it really makes a difference but in the current times in which we live, maybe it does. You see, Connor's mom is white. Christian's mom is black.

A local television station interviewed the two mothers as they sat side by side on a couch. In the interview Connor's mom said,

"It doesn't matter color, it doesn't matter gender, it doesn't matter disability, it doesn't matter anything, just be kind. Open your heart. That's what we need in this world."

Christian's mom added, "It can change the world, that's all it takes."

I believe that the world would be a whole lot better if more Christians followed the example of a little 8 year old boy named Christian.

Sometimes picking up the cross of Jesus is nothing more noticing those who are left out or who are suffering. Sometimes it means just being present or reaching out to hold a hand. At its most basic level it's about being kind.

As you leave worship this morning, you can have a Kind bar to help you to remember to be kind.

The second story takes place in Texas. A seventh grade girl was a member of a junior high track team. Because of weather, a track meet had to be postponed to the following Saturday. This created a bit of a dilemma for the girl. She had to make a decision. She had already made a commitment to go on a church mission trip Saturday. She couldn't be two places at once. She went to her track coach and told him about the scheduling conflict. Can you guess what his response was? "You're letting your teammates down. Either show up for the track meet or turn in your uniform." That is a hard choice for any athlete to make, especially one so young.

After a sleepless night and many tears she went to her coach, turned in her uniform, and walked away. Now you may or may not agree with her decision. You may even have decided differently. But as she later told her parents, “This is about God. God is more important than a rescheduled track meet.”

Her decision illustrates the cost of discipleship. Sometimes taking Jesus seriously means that we can't do something else. In today's lesson we are reminded that following Jesus is neither easy nor cheap. In some places of this world following Jesus can cost you your life!

This fall we will explore what it means for disciples to take Jesus seriously. Over the coming weeks, I hope that we will be challenged and being challenged confronted with our true values. I hope that when all is said and done, we will decide to be “all in” in following Jesus.

To God be the glory. Amen.