

Based Gospel Reading: Luke 14:25-33 Pentecost 13; Proper 18

Now large crowds were traveling with Jesus; and he turned and said to them, "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. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. 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? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' 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? If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions."

Luke 14:25-33

I have to believe that many in the crowd who were following Jesus, when they heard this must have shaken their heads; decided Jesus was nuts and left to return home. You must hate your mother and father?? You must give up all your possessions?? What reasonable person would aspire to *that*?

Now Jesus loved to use exaggeration and hyperbole, but this teaching still seems so difficult to accept, even allowing for that. And yet, it does confront us with *the* salient question, 'what in my life is more important than God?'

Is family more important, is my stuff? What about my career? What about patriotism? Make no mistake that while the way of Christ frees us, it also binds us. To follow Jesus is to commit to a way of life that often upends the "usual" way of doing things and asks us to make *everything else* secondary; which is, honestly, a lot to ask.

Jesus offered up this stark choice to that crowd and to us so that we would understand the level of commitment he was asking. And while Jesus knows that we will never truly achieve this, He wanted to be clear that it was the goal to which we should be reaching.

We also know from many of Jesus's other teachings that this seemingly extreme commitment was meant to be lived out in a spirit of generous love. He also knows that there are many temptations, rooted in our fear of not being accepted by those around us, that would hold us back from the kind of radical and courageously bold loving actions He desires of



us. At the core of all of His teaching is this one idea – do not let anything stand between you and your loving response to the people and situations around you. If tradition tells you to look the other way, ignore it. If the Law tells you to not do it, defy the law. If your family, your friends, or your religion holds you back, break free. Jesus showed us that the path to abundant and eternal life may take us through some rough places, where we may experience great threats. But He has also promised that we will not walk alone, not ever, but that He will be by our side through it, even to the end of the ages.