

**Luke 14:25-35 (Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost—Series C)**

**“The Cost”**

**Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT**

**September 4, 2022**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text is the Gospel Lesson recorded in Luke 14:

<sup>25</sup>Now large crowds accompanied Him, and He turned and said to them, <sup>26</sup>“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters and he himself as well, he cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup>Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, he cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup>For who of you, wishing to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, if he has enough for completion? <sup>29</sup>In order that, lest pacing a foundation and not being able to finish it, the onlooks begin to mock him, saying, <sup>30</sup> ‘This man began to build and was not able to complete it.’ <sup>31</sup>Or which king, going out to meet another king in battle, does not first sit down to take counsel whether he is able with 10,000 to go to meet the one coming against him with 20,000? <sup>32</sup>And if not, while he is still far away, sending a delegation, he asks for the things of peace. <sup>33</sup>In this way, then, every one of you who does not renounce all he has cannot be my disciple. <sup>34</sup>Therefore, salt is good. But if even the salt becomes tasteless, by what means shall it be seasoned? <sup>35</sup>It is suitable neither for the earth nor for the rubbish heap. They will throw it out. The one who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Our sister in Christ, Janet Bastone, whose soul is with the Lord awaiting the day of the resurrection of her body, often remarked to me, “Old age ain’t for sissies.” She meant that getting older was hard work. It’s not for the weak and faint of heart. As we look at Jesus’ words to the crowds that journeyed with Him toward Jerusalem, we might come to the conclusion that Christianity is hard work, not for the weak and faint of heart. Jesus warns the crowds that are full of potential disciples that to follow Him involves great sacrifice. His parables make the point that those who would be followers of Jesus must count the cost of Christianity. They must realize what it involves.

To begin with, Christianity is far more than joining an organization called the church the way you would join a club. Christianity is more than getting your name on a membership list. And it is more than being baptized, confirmed, married, and even buried under the care

of the church. Christianity is more than just a “system of belief” where one subscribes to a body of doctrine and teachings. Christianity is a life that is lived 100% under the power and grace of God. As we learn from Jesus, who is true God and true Man, God doesn’t want a part of us. He doesn’t want half. He wants all—all we have! “Every one of you who does not renounce all he has cannot be my disciple.”

And that sounds pretty difficult. Are you ready, willing, and able to say good-bye and to give up family and possessions, all that you have, in order that you might be 100% committed to following Christ and Christ alone while even carrying your own cross of burdens that being a follower of Christ places upon you? In a choice between Him and our family, we’re called upon to choose Him. This means that we are to love Jesus and His reign and rule more than family. That’s not easy. Do we dare let our desire for money or pleasure or “stuff” interfere with our relationship to the Lord Christ? We certainly have so many opportunities to face that decision, don’t we? And that’s not always easy. Our wants and desires, ever tainted by the sinful nature vies for our loyalty. Can’t we just have what we want and the relationships that we want and let the Lord have what’s left? No! Count the cost of discipleship! Realize what it involves. God demands our all.

And what about Jesus’ words, “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, he cannot be my disciple”? In common usage, a cross is any trouble that comes our way. But in the strict sense of the word a cross is the trouble that comes our way precisely because we are Jesus’ disciples, because we are Christians. Facing a choice between loving family more or loving Christ more is bearing a cross. Experiencing ridicule for Christian behavior is bearing a cross. Losing a job because of commitment to Christian principles is

bearing a cross. Being nagged by the sharpened conscience that the Christian faith develops within you is bearing a cross. These, and others, are the crosses we must bear if we are Jesus' disciples. And cross-bearing is not simple or easy.

Has our text destroyed a popular understanding about an "easy" Christianity that makes everything happy and rose-colored in this world? Has our text wiped out the idea that a Christian has a better life in this world, filled with less trouble and hardship than the non-Christian? You bet it has! Jesus wants us to have a firm grip on Christian reality. He wants us to truly count the cost and realize what being His disciple really involves. Being a disciple necessitates the readiness to give up anything if duty to God calls for it, whether that be a family member, a job, a friend, or a lifestyle that we enjoyed. Being a disciple demands that we bear the cross of trouble and suffering for the name of Jesus. That's reality. That's Christianity.

Sounds too difficult, doesn't it? Reality can be that way—much harder than what we imagine. After all, this world isn't too bad a place to live in. And with a little luck we could experience 70 or 80 years or more of it. Maybe we can enjoy this life to the full and heaven too! Then along comes Jesus and pricks the bubble of our imagination. Pop! Discouraged, we cry out, "Lord, I can't build that tower. I can't fight that enemy. They are too much for me. I'm helpless!" If that's our feeling, good! Of course, we can't build that tower and fight that enemy. That's exactly the feeling our Lord wants to arouse in us: "Lord, I'm helpless. You take over from here." God wants us to let Him take over through Jesus Christ. That is discipleship. That is what is meant by forsaking all that we have—giving up our self to God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Consider the demands that our salvation placed on Jesus Himself. He gave up all things for you and me. He gave up His very own perfect life into death so that in Baptism you and I could die to sin and rise with Jesus Christ into the new life of Christian discipleship. Jesus ascended into heaven so that He could give us the Holy Spirit to be with us and to conform our lives to Christ as we live as His disciples, loving Him above all things, being ready to give up all things for Jesus' sake, even as we take up the crosses that we must face. Baptized, we are crucified to the world and to the world to us (Gal. 6:14). Through the Holy Spirit, working through our Baptism and God's Word, we have all the resources necessary to remain faithful in our discipleship, bearing our crosses with patience and trust, until we are granted deliverance, peace, and health.

Being a Christian means being ready to give up everything if duty to God calls for it. It means bearing the cross and truly following Jesus in faith and in living the faith. We have been given the resources in Word and Sacrament, given the Holy Spirit, who enables us to count the cost of discipleship and then to go forth in the power of Christ living the life of discipleship. Dr. Dave Rueter, DCE, wrote, "Discipleship is simply our life as disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Discipleship is not some new application of the Law in the life of the believer. All believers are disciples and thus are all in a state of discipleship. Discipleship is not a special spiritual activity that we are responsible for. Rather, discipleship is the sanctifying work of God Himself in our lives. Discipleship is God calling us deeper and deeper into relationship with Him and with our fellow disciples. Discipleship is both the

successes empowered by the Holy Spirit and the failures caused by sinful natures.

Discipleship is our life in Christ. Discipleship is the Body of Christ in action.”<sup>1</sup>

And so, let us pray:

Lord Jesus, make possible for us by grace what is impossible to us by nature. You know how little we can bear, and how quickly we become discouraged by a little adversity. We pray You, make every trial lovely and desirable to us for Your Name’s sake, since suffering and affliction for Your sake is so profitable to the health of our soul.<sup>2</sup> Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youthesource.com/2013/11/14/a-lutheran-understanding-of-discipleship/>

<sup>2</sup> Thomas A Kempis. *The Imitation of Christ*. Penguin Classics, page 118.