

Written Copy: “Are You Worthy? Luke 14:33
Proper 18, 13th Sunday @ Pentecost
Sunday September 8th, 2019

Text: Luke 14:33

³³ So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

³³ Therefore in like manner every one of you who is not renouncing all the things he continues to be in possession of does not have the power to be my disciple.

Exegetical Statement

Jesus continues His journey to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration where He will go to the cross as God’s chosen Lamb of Sacrifice. On the way He turns and observes the large crowd traveling with Him, many of whom may have considered themselves disciples who had chosen to follow Jesus because of His miracles and their desire He be their savior from the Romans. Jesus clarifies with them what it means to be His disciple: to love Him over and above all earthly relationships and possessions. It means loving Him more than loving one’s own earthly life; so much so that one is willing to pick up his own cross: the suffering that comes with following Jesus. Just as one who is about to build a tower, or a king that is about to go to war must sit and contemplate if they really have what it takes to complete what they are planning. The answer in both cases is no. Likewise is the same answer when we contemplate if we have what it takes to be Jesus disciple; that answer is no. Only those who have been called by Christ through faith can follow Him. And for those who are called Jesus warns that they must remain salty in a world of bland and tasteless spirituality. Otherwise they become worthless and will be thrown out into the eternal lake of fire. To remain salty is to remain connected to Jesus who makes us salty in this bland world of unbelief.

Focus Statement:

Jesus must choose us. And He has done so through the Gospel. In your Baptism He put the Father’s mark upon your forehead and has filled your heart with His love and His faith, by which we hold fast to Him in this life and are given the power to renounce our love of the world.

Function Statement:

Why it’s important to know:

One can choose Jesus when it means prosperity in our life now. That is why preachers of the Prosperity Gospel fill auditorium size churches. But when we examine what it really costs to follow Him in this life, we do not have what it takes. We cannot and would not choose to follow Him.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Jesus chose you to be His disciple so that through your cross bearing and continual repenting and renouncing allegiance to the world and what it offers you exhibit love for God above all else. In doing so you are salt in a tasteless spiritual world.

Subject Sentence: Jesus chose you and made you worthy

Did you notice that in our Gospel Lesson this morning we have another “hard saying” from Jesus? Last week we heard Jesus tell us that we should always take the seat of humility in this life, and make sure we extend a hand of service and help to those who cannot or will not extend their hand to us. The week before we heard Jesus tell us that in this life, as we walk toward the door to eternal life, we need to strive and struggle with our sin. Now today we hear Him address some harsh words to those who have been following Him. Hard words for them, as well as for us.

We know that Jesus desire is that all people might be drawn to Him. But are His words in our Gospel Lesson the best way to do that? One has to wonder if maybe Jesus could’ve used some help from the marketing gurus of today. One of retail’s most successful strategies to draw in the customers is the “Buy One-Get One Free” sales. And stores are most successful when they make it “Buy 5 and get the 6th one free.” That moves you the consumer to buy 4 more of whatever it is than you originally intended. I’m not sure how that would work in a spiritual sense; for every four families that put something into the offering plate the 5th family gets a pass? Wait a minute! Let’s not go there!

But perhaps Jesus would have benefited from proclaiming the message that seems to be filling auditorium size churches today. A message like the one Joel Olsten proclaims: “**Jesus came that we might have a more abundant life. He came to carry our weaknesses, our sickness, our pain, so that we can walk in total freedom, peace, power and purpose**”. Jesus should’ve turned and told them “**Follow me and I will make your life wonderful. I will satisfy all your dreams.**” Doesn’t that sound much better than **Luke 14:26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”**? I mean after all that’s a pretty exclusionary message. Isn’t Jesus all about loving and accepting all people and all lifestyles? Doesn’t He want what is best for us now? Why would He tell the people of His day as well as us here today (**Luke 14:33**) “**So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple**”? That’s pretty harsh. That’s pretty rough. Maybe Jesus is just having a bad day. Maybe it’s hot, and Jesus is tired of dealing with the Pharisees and of all these hangers on that following Him

around. Or maybe He is speaking a truth that, in Christian Churches today, is in danger of being lost. Maybe He is speaking God's truth; a truth that our sinful hearts don't want to hear. But one we desperately need to hear nonetheless.

First of all, let's look at who these followers are. They, like Jesus, are on the way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. But what they don't realize is Jesus is on His way not just to celebrate Passover, but to be the Passover Lamb, the Lamb of Sacrifice. Many are following Him because they've seen Him do some pretty miraculous stuff: Feeding Multitudes with 5 loaves and 2 fish, cast out a legion's worth of demons from one man, healing an unknown number of sick people, and even raising a young girl and a young man back to life. He's doing some pretty awesome stuff, things that would fit the idea that He came to bring them a more abundant life. That is definitely what they expect of Him. They are looking for Him to walk into Jerusalem, kick out the Romans, and rule over the newly revived Jewish nation in the land of promise so that they could "**walk in total freedom, peace, power and purpose**" A great future for them, but not so much for the Romans, or the Gentiles, or the rest of the world. But by Good Friday, they will be disheartened over His unwillingness to be the Messiah they desire Him to be. By Good Friday, they will be calling for His death.

Jesus turns and looks at them. He knows the desires they have for Him in their heart. He knows that they are not really following after Him. They are following after a lie they've concocted and perpetuated in their own sinful hearts. He loves them, just as He loves us. Just as He loves those who flock into the Prosperity Gospel Churches like Joel Olsten's. He loves them, and calls out to them, and to us, through the harsh words of today's Gospel reading. He says "Do you really want to follow me and be my disciple? This is what it takes: **Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."** To be my disciple means you have to have a love for Me that is so unique, so focused, so absolute, that all of your other loves of things in this world appear to be hate by comparison. You have to give me the sole first place in your life. And if you do that then you

will have proper love for those around you, for your neighbor, for your possessions, even for your enemies. But this is what it takes.

So, before you assume that you have what it takes to follow me. Before you think that you can choose to follow me, sit down and do some contemplating. Following me would be the biggest choice of your life. It would be bigger than building a tower (**Luke 14:28-30**). And even the man who would choose to build a tower wouldn't just jump in and pour the foundation. He would sit down and make sure he had all the necessary building materials. And if he didn't, he would need to make sure he had the money to purchase them. He would need to make sure that he had the necessary skills and knowledge to actually build that tower. And if he didn't, he would make sure he had the money to pay someone who did. Otherwise he would pour the foundation and then have to quit. The foundation would stand as a monument to his stupidity and lack of proper planning. (**Luke 14:31-32**) Even the king who finds out another king is marching toward him for war needs to do some contemplating. Before he heads out he would gather his advisors and find out how many weapons and how many soldiers he has at his disposal. Then he would need to contemplate if his army of 10,000 could win in battle against the opposing army that is twice the size of his. Would he choose to fight? Or would he choose to send a peace delegation instead?

In both these examples the answer to Jesus' questions are; NO! Neither have the ability to choose the path they are contemplating. In the same way none of those following Jesus that day in Palestine, as well as none of you here today are able to choose to follow Jesus and be His disciple. You don't have what it takes. Jesus is clear about what it takes (**Luke 14:33**) **"So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."** Our hearts love the things of this world too much to renounce them all in order to follow Jesus. The price is too high for us to pay. We can't choose this Jesus. We have to make Him into a Jesus that is easier to follow. A prosperity Gospel Jesus. A Jesus that lets us slide on the hard things. You can choose that Jesus. But that Jesus won't forgive your sins. That Jesus can't provide you with life everlasting. The only thing that Jesus can provide for you is an eternity in hell.

The real Jesus knows that we can't choose Him. That's why it was He who chose you. Before you were born, He had in mind how He would deliver you out of your fate of eternal damnation. God the Son chose to come to earth, chose to become human while still retaining His identity as God, so that He could do what you and I could not. He chose to obey the Father over and above the call to love the things of this world. He chose to go to Jerusalem, to suffer and die for sins that He had not committed. He chose to hang upon the cross until He could proclaim that His mission to be the Lamb of Sacrifice for the whole world had been accomplished; until He could in truth cry out at the end: "It is finished!" He chose to do that for you, and for me. He rose again from the dead so that you and I might know that our fate no longer has to be eternal death, but instead the Father chooses to give to you the gift His Son won for you: eternal life.

In your baptism you were marked as one chosen by God. Chosen to be His precious child. Chosen to receive the Holy Spirit. Chosen to receive the Spirit's gift of faith through the water and through the Word. You and I were called into the Body of Christ that is His Church where we are kept in faith throughout our time on this earth. Not because we chose to be; but because we were chosen by God. Chosen because of His great love for you and for me.

Jesus said in **John 15:16** **"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you."** And as those chosen by God what do we ask Him for? That He provide us with a more abundant life now? Or that he do all that is necessary to keep us in faith? We ask Him that He would make us to be salt in a tasteless world (**Luke 14:34-35**). That He would make us to stand out in a world ruled by love of self and love of stuff, a world where people look to Jesus for success and wealth in this life at the expense of their eternity. That we would give them pause to stop and consider, are they choosing life now, or hastening their path to eternal death. Have they chosen a Jesus who proclaims the same message found in Joel Olsten's book "Your Best Life Now" **"To experience [God's] immeasurable favor, you must rid yourself of that small-minded thinking and start expecting God's blessings, start anticipating promotion**

and supernatural increase. You must conceive it in your heart before you can receive it. In other words, you must make increase in your own thinking, then God will bring those things to pass” Are those really the words of the Jesus that chose to die on the cross for you? Jesus wants us to be the kind of salt that can renounce a love of the things of this world because we are filled His love (**Ephesians 3:17-19**) ¹⁷ **so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith---that you, being rooted and grounded in love,** ¹⁸ **may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,** ¹⁹ **and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”** That’s why Jesus chose you. That is what His Spirit is working within you today through your participation in the Word and Sacrament. And that’s what it means to follow Jesus.

It would be possible for you to choose to follow a Jesus who is accepting and welcoming of all lifestyles. One who looks the other way concerning those sayings that are too hard for us. One that wants only happiness, prosperity for us, who wants what’s best for you in this life. You could choose that Jesus. But you can’t choose the real Jesus. The real Jesus had to choose you. He died to forgive your poor choices in life. He rose again so that you might have life now, not an easy life, but a life that means picking up your cross and carrying it. A life that means you will suffer loss of those earthly things you’re tempted to love as much or more than Him. He died and rose again to give you a life of faith. A life where you are kept in faith because you were chosen to be God’s precious child. And as you walk through this world, His Spirit will keep you in faith toward the real Jesus, so that you can be salt in a tasteless world. So that you will have life with Him now, and life everlasting. Amen