

Adieu
Luke 14:25-35

This morning we will be in Luke 14 and looking at verses 25-35. So we are right in thick of the words in red now in our study as a church in the gospel of Luke. When I say words in red I mean Jesus teaching. And I don't know about you, well, I do know about some of you, but I feel so convicted and challenged in my life at the moment as a result of pondering these teachings of Jesus. The more time we spend in Luke, the more I'm reminded of our church motto: Rooted & Radical, because when we get rooted in Jesus teaching, we can expect to be radically transformed. But while getting saved is a free gift and happens immediately, being transformed is a process called discipleship and it will cost you everything. Jesus is going to remind us about this again this morning.

And so, let's get into this morning's passage: Luke 14:25-27:

²⁵ Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, 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. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

We'll just stop there for now. I don't know what you imagine, but for me Luke paints this picture of Jesus walking, maybe talking to his disciples and there's this big crowd following him. Amazingly, large crowds don't fascinate Jesus like they do me, or maybe you, rather they seem to concern him. He's aware of this big gathering behind him and so he turns round and says listen guys, 'if you want to follow me this is what it's going to take. This is what it's going to mean', and then he proceeds to lay down the cost of being one his followers, one of his disciples.

And so he starts by saying 'he who 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. Wow! Strong words! Not the greatest sales pitch. There's no ignoring the small print to focus only on the benefits with Jesus. He lays it out straight. He's brutally honest about what it will cost to be his disciple. But 'hate their own parents, siblings, spouse, even their own life,' is that really necessary? Is that not contradictory? What about the fifth commandment which tells us to honour our Father and Mother? What about 1 Timothy 5:8 that says "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever?" Well, before you young people think, 'yes, finally an excuse to disobey my parents-Jesus tells me to!' let's see what Jesus is actually saying.

Martin mentioned last week how Jesus sometimes uses hyperbole when he's speaking. Hyperbole is simply making an overstatement in order to make a point with maximum impact. It's not meant to be taken literally. We often see this in Jesus' teaching style. It's a good method of teaching because it causes us to remember a point; similar to a parable. So cutting off your hand that causes you to sin, a camel passing through the eye of a needle, turning the other cheek for someone to hit you again, a plank of wood in your eye, these are all examples of hyperbole that Jesus uses to make a point and let's be honest, these are the things that we remember aren't they? They're very effective.

So he uses this very strong word, hate. If you find it shocking that Jesus says you must hate your parents, your siblings, your spouse in order to become his disciple then it's had the desired effect. It's meant to sound shocking and provocative.

But to understand what Jesus is really saying, I particularly like the New Living Translation of this passage: "If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple."

Jesus isn't telling us to hate others or ourselves but rather he's saying, 'listen, no earthly tie, however close, can take precedence over me. I must be Number One in your life -- by far! Nobody and nothing else can take priority.' One bible commentator (Bock) says that when Jesus uses the word hate here, he means 'love less.' Let's just consider that for a moment. Ask yourself "which is more important to me? My Dad or Jesus? My wife/my husband or Jesus? My children or Jesus? My work or Jesus? My home or Jesus? My hobbies or Jesus Christ? Do I count my own life more dear to me than a life of following Jesus? Do I love my life or others more than I love Jesus? Because he's worthy of our full attention and devotion. We can't afford to value anyone or anything more than we value Him.

Jesus needs to be the first priority of our lives. Even when it's painful, difficult, and misunderstood. Our parent's, our spouses, our children's, our own wishes don't come first; Jesus' wishes do. Jesus is saying, 'unless you place me as the first priority, over every other priority in your life, you can't be my disciples.' It sounds tough I know! We wonder if we'll ever get there, but we can't afford to water this down, we can't dodge the call. I'll leave you to consider your own life this morning in light of this. Ask yourselves 'what is it or who is it that I would choose over Jesus this morning?' 'What is taking priority in my life?' I know what it is for me. I know where I'm weak and I know where my priorities are wrong, and I have to throw myself on God's grace and love. But ask yourselves this morning: 'Is he worth it? Is He worth forsaking everything for? How much do you want to follow him this morning?

Jesus continues (verse 28), **For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, 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 begin to mock him, ³⁰ saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish.'**

I reckon we all know exactly what Jesus is talking about here don't we? There has to be others in here like me that have unfinished projects in various states of completion on the go! Honestly, the amount of times Nicola's come home to find wood scattered all over the floor, sawdust filling the air, tools everywhere and half the wall missing and I've gone out for a bike ride to escape the mess that I've made! You know what I'm talking about! You start out with these great intentions, but then other things came up or you lose interest, or it turns out to be more difficult or costly than you anticipated. And you bail out.

Jesus is saying before you commit to following him, weigh it up. Can you see it through? Have you got a plan? Have you done your homework? I must admit I'm not the most meticulous human being to ever walk the Earth, as some of you know, especially those of you who've sat in my car, but my Grandad is another story. It used to fascinate me how thorough and meticulous he was about any project he would attempt. Granted, it would take him a lot longer than it could but it would be faultless, whether he was building a bike rack for his campervan or a summerhouse in his garden, he would and still does draw up plans, then build a real fit-to-scale model of what he's going to do before he even begins, then he gathers all his materials before he gets to work and boy is it a masterpiece? And he always finishes. No job gets left undone.

Well, that's what Jesus is saying we have to be like before we accept the call to discipleship. It's not just a flash-in-the-pan decision. It's much more than praying a prayer: it's a lifelong decision. It's like a marriage: the wedding day is the easy part. The next 50 years are what count! Anyone can get married but not everyone can stay married. Jesus is saying, 'if you don't have the wherewithal or willingness to see it through, don't even attempt the journey.' Discipleship is a decision that demands the utmost seriousness and commitment. Be very, very sure you want to follow Jesus as his disciple. Be sure you've counted the cost. It's easy to get started but it's not so easy to see it through.

And just to reiterate his point, Jesus tells another parable. Verse 31: ³¹ **Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?** ³² **And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.** ³³ **So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.**

'Don't get involved in a battle that you're not convinced you can win' Jesus says. Figure out your resources and what you are willing to commit ahead of time. If you don't have it, don't commit. It's all or nothing when it comes to following Jesus guys. Jesus doesn't want a percentage. He wants all that you've got; all that you are; all that he gave you in the first place. It will take everything you have. Discipleship won't be a part of your life when you choose Christ, it will be your life. It will affect every future decision you make. His good and perfect will becomes your number one priority from now on. If you don't have the ability or willingness to give following Jesus all that you have, then don't begin.

Why? Because it's a battle. You will get attacked. It's no coincidence that Jesus uses a war analogy here, and notice that he says **'if he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?'** Jesus is saying 'you guys are the underdogs.' A whole host of wickedness will come against you: more than you can handle in your own strength. You are 10 000 strong and you will be facing 20 000. Anyone here ever feel like they're fighting in a spiritual battle? It's because you are. There is a real enemy. A real unseen war. Listen to Ephesians 6:12, 'For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.' A disciple goes to war. I have sensed this war this week. This has been one of the toughest weeks I've had for a long time. Believe me, I'm not one to find a demon under every dew drop, but there's times when I just feel like I'm getting hammered, and there's times when I experience great victory. And what give me strength is knowing that the ultimate victory has been won.

Christ has conquered sin and death forever and so we fight from victory rather than for victory. But nevertheless, we do fight and it can be tough and exhausting at times.

³³ So therefore, (Jesus says in verse 33), **any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.**

In case anyone is unsure, Jesus puts in absolutely no uncertain terms: **any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.** I want us just to focus on that word renounce for a moment. Some of your bible translations will say 'to bid farewell', some say 'to give up' The Greek word literally means 'to take leave of, bid farewell to, to renounce, to forsake.' What stuck with me though, when I was looking for a definition of this word was this one, and you French speakers will like this, as will the sound of Music fans amongst us, like my wife, one Lexicon said it means 'to say adieu'. So it could be read **any one of you who does not say adieu to all that he has cannot be my disciple.** I thought that was really cool.

But then it took on a whole new meaning for me when my more French literate wife reminded me that 'adieu' actually means 'to God.' I really want you to see this this morning. I truly believe this is the key to the passage and the only way we can come to terms with what Jesus is asking of us. All week I have been wrestling with this thought: 'what does Jesus mean when he says we have to give up everything? Are we supposed to sell all our possessions, give any money we have away, throw our televisions, sofas, and dining tables off the balcony and shout 'adieu' as they fall? No! Well maybe, but that's not what Jesus is saying. Rather, Jesus is saying '**any one of you who does not give to God all that he has cannot be my disciple.**' He's saying 'say adieu to all that you have: give to God all that you have.' Give him control of your finances, your relationships, your houses, your potential, your hobbies, your abilities, your intellects, everything. Say Adieu: give it all to God. That's what it means to be his disciple, to relinquish control over these things and give them to Him to do whatever he wants with. Give them over to Kingdom purposes! God may give you them back, he may not. Whatever he does, it will be 'exceedingly, abundantly above all that you could ever ask or think' according to Ephesians (3:20). He's worth it. He's worth it. He's worth it!

Jesus concludes, verse 34, ³⁴ "**Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? ³⁵ It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear let him hear.**"

So why does Jesus conclude with a discussion on salt? Well, it absolutely makes sense but we need a little bit of history, a bit of geography and a bit of science to understand what Jesus is saying here. In that day salt was considered an essential of life. It was used for both flavouring and preservation. They didn't have electric fridge-freezers like we do. So, while we're used to buying nice refined salt off the shelf in Migros, in Jesus' day salt was obtained by evaporation from the Dead Sea, but it was far from pure. It was often mixed with other salts. I'm no scientist and so I'm really out of my depth here especially when I consider who I'm talking to right now, but I understand that it's possible for all the sodium chloride to be leached out of a mixture of salts so all that is left is stale and useless.

So Jesus is saying that if salt hasn't got the basic elements that make it salt, then it's useless. So, even though it looks like salt, it's not salt! The essence is lost. So what's it good for? Absolutely nothing. Not even manure. Jesus says it would actually ruin poo! Not many things ruin poo. But flavourless salt does!

Jesus is saying 'you can look like salt but not have its flavour. You can have the appearance of a follower of Jesus but not be genuine: this was definitely the case with the big crowd following Jesus. What do you do with a pile of salt that's lost its flavour? You throw it away. Jesus is serious. He says '**He who has ears to hear let him hear**' in other words: 'listen, don't ignore this.' This could be you. There's a lot of fakes out there who haven't counted the cost, who aren't willing to take up their cross to follow Christ. So many who claim to be Christian have conformed their ways so much to the world that they aren't salty at all. What a tragedy! Don't let that be you. We ought to be preserving righteousness and flavouring this world with the aroma of Christ but how can we if haven't said adieu to our relationships, our possessions, our own lives? We can't be disciples if the saltiness has gone.

I'm aware that this is a tough passage we're dealing with. I saw one Pastor put it in his 'tough texts Tuesdays' and another had it in his 'hard sayings of Jesus series.' Believe me it's as challenging for me as it is for anyone else. It causes me to question the genuineness of my faith. It makes me ask if I've really said 'adieu' to all that I have been given. It causes me to sit down and see how I'm doing and recalculate the cost of following Jesus once again. These words in red disturb our comfort zones don't they? But, you know our goal isn't to be undisturbed but to understand the truth and to obey Jesus.

I'm reminded of the parable in Matthew 13:44. One of Jesus' shortest and yet most powerful parables. Let's read it together, "**The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.**" This is the appropriate response to the gospel. We've found a treasure that is beyond all compare. This guy joyfully said 'adieu' to all that he had so that he could obtain the only thing that mattered. His response is entirely appropriate! He'd be crazy to do anything else. He's stumbled upon the kingdom of heaven- something more valuable than anything! I encourage you to consider this same treasure this morning, the call to be a disciple of Jesus, and I think a response like that is unavoidable!

I mean do we really compare our stuff with the treasure of knowing and following Christ? Could it really be worth more to us than Jesus Christ? A preacher once said 'So many give so little for the one who gave so much' (Mark Driscoll) And sadly, it's true. Sure it's a battle, and it is hard, and there are times you want to quit, but just think about what you gain. Yeah, you might lose a house, some investments, a relationship, maybe I wont ride the Tour de France, or play at Wimbledon but what do I gain? Consider this: Paul said in Phil 3:8, Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ. Count the cost this morning. Consider the treasure that's yours in Jesus and then pursue him with all your might. Give it all for the one who gave so much.