

## 2007 Sept 9 **Luke 14:25-33** Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Once upon a time in a land far far away there was a wonderful loving congregation that welcomed their new young, (you know in his 50's) handsome pastor. Now that was the beginning of a joke I was going to start out with today. I thought it would be nice to start out today and my first sermon with a little joke.

However my wife Sandy won't let me use it. She didn't think the joke was appropriate. Don't tell her but it would probably be better if I would listen to her more often.

So instead of starting off with a joke I'll start with some things Jesus said, some of Jesus' teachings. One of my favorite writers Anthony DeMello talks about different ways we use Jesus' teachings. He says and I am paraphrasing, we use Jesus' teachings in at least 2 ways. One is for ourselves to help us realize God's love and forgiveness and to see how we can better follow him.

Another way is to use Jesus' teachings is for our neighbor, to find out what is wrong with our neighbors, family and friends. What does our neighbor need to do to straighten out their life. *Oh, I wish Ole would have been here to hear that that's what he really needs.* When we do this we abuse the teaching and do great harm to ourselves and our neighbor.

With this in mind let's look to see what the gospel reading for this week has to say to us. Word has gotten out about Jesus. He amazes the priests and scribes at the temple while he is a young boy. He's baptize then amazes them as he teaches in his hometown although that didn't go too well. They start hearing about him healing people, casting out demons, working miracles, they hear about the great catches of fish and lots of other things. Crowds starting following him.

**But there is following Jesus and there is following Jesus.**

Jesus says: **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.**

Perhaps a better way to help us understand this teaching would be to translate the verse this way:

*Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, **is not able** to be my disciple.*

Instead of *can not be*, translate it **is not able**.

So:

- *Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, is not able to be my disciple*
- *27Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me is not able to be my disciple.*
- *none of you are able to become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.*

Another note that helps us understand the teaching is where it says: **Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, is not able**

"hate" "hate" is a Semitic expression meaning "to turn away from, to detach oneself from,"

It similar to what happens in a marriage. As Jesus says in Matthew: (Matthew 19:5) and said, **'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and clings to his wife,**

In a good marriage it is not that the couple has to disown their family. Its that their relationship with them is now different. No longer is Mother and Father sister and brother the primary relationship. Now the relationship between the husband and wife is primary. Many marriages run into trouble when one spouse or the other or both fail to make that transition. They don't have to completely separate themselves from their family, but its now different.

After the sermon we are going to sing "I have decided to follow Jesus". **"I have decided to follow Jesus"**. Let's think about that for a minute. We know why a man leaves his father and mother and is joint to his wife. And we know why the woman clings to her husband. But who would want to decide for Jesus? Who would want to do that?

**You might be asking that's a strange question to ask in a church. But I think it is the point Jesus wanted to make to that crowd that was following him.**

- Who wants to put Jesus before every important relationship in their life?
- Who wants to give up all their possessions?
- Who wants to put Jesus before life itself for that matter?
- Not only put Jesus 1st but be willing to suffer for following Jesus?

This doesn't sound like much of a sales pitch.

Ok he's the deal.

- following me means putting me before all of your other important relationships,
- before life it's self.
- You get to get rid of all your possessions: house, boat, cabin, ipod, computer, cell phone and the list goes on.
- As a special promotion we're running this week, you'll suffer for doing it.

Who would want to buy that? Who would be able?

For humans it is impossible but with Christ all things are possible.

We are here today because the Holy Spirit has led us to Christ. And we dare to call ourselves Christians and follow Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

However I think the question needs to be asked. What is it in our lives that is stopping us from being able to follow Jesus?

**I mean there is following Jesus and there is following Jesus.**

As Lutherans we say we are Saints and sinners at the same time. Paul says in Romans 7 (**Romans 7:21-25**) **So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, 23 but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.**

There is a part of us that follows Jesus that wants to follow Jesus thanks to the Holy Spirit. But there are other spirits at work. Part of us does not want to follow Jesus. We need to discover what those things are.

We probably need to discover that as a congregation. As I see it Urland is being led by God's spirit. There are many wonderful things happening through us and among us. I include myself in the us. (Which is nice).

While there is faithful following going on, God is not finished with us. I would like to think he has just begun.

What is getting in the way? Is it that we are underestimating our abilities and our possibilities? Are we holding on to things we need to let go? Have we gotten away from things we need to get back to? Or are there things that's time has come?

- What is stopping us from following Jesus on a personal level,
- What is stopping us as a congregation?

Let us think about these things, let us pray about these things.

God has brought us together and blessed us. He is blessing us to be blessing to the world.

May God bless you, bless Urland, may God continue to make us a blessing more and more. And all God's people said, Amen.