

Pentecost 16 9/4/16  
Luke 14:25-35 18C

IF ANYONE COMES TO ME AND DOES NOT HATE HIS OWN FATHER AND MOTHER AND WIFE AND CHILDREN AND BROTHERS AND SISTERS, YES, EVEN HIS OWN LIFE, HE CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE.

Well, get ready, moms, grandmas, great-grandmas, I know Mother's Day seems like a long way off, but I want to prepare you because there will be no flowers, no cards, no phone calls, no special dinner for you. And when you take it upon yourself to call the fruit of your womb, they will say to you, "I hate you, Mom." In utter astonishment, you ask why, why would they say such a thing, their reply is, "I'm a Christian and Jesus says, 'Hate your mother'."

Oh, I could add dittos for you, Dear Old Dad and World's Greatest Grandpa. And for those of you expecting to inherit the mule and the north 40, you might want to wait for the reading of the will before you count your chickens.

It's probably a good idea to back up a minute here, so before you cancel the flower order, and before you rush out to change your will, let's ask the question: is that really what Jesus is saying? Is that what Jesus really means when He says, "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"?

We hear those words from our Savior's lips and they are troubling. We know the Scriptures. "Honor your father and your mother." "Love your neighbor as yourself." The book of Ephesians instructs husbands to love their wives, "as Christ loved the church." We even have the example of Jesus Himself, dying on the cross, entrusting the care of His mother Mary

to John, and the Bible says, “And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home”. If that is not love, I don’t know what is. And furthermore, we know the Bible says, “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know what no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 Jn 3:15).

So, what is all this about hating your father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even your own life, if you want to be a disciple of Jesus?

To “hate” someone in the context of Jesus’ words in our Gospel reading is to choose to show love to another instead of them. For example, in Genesis 29, Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. So Leah hated Jacob. It was not that Jacob harmed Leah or felt loathing toward her. But his hate consisted of this – by favoring Rachel over Leah, he did give Leah the love that was due her.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment teaches us that we are to “fear, love, and trust in God above all things.” If we allow our love for family or friends or anything at all in any way to interfere with our love for God – and remember Jesus is “very God of very God” – then we are “hating” God. This is what Jesus is warning us against in our lesson. We must always love Jesus more than anyone or anything else. He must always have the first place and first priority with us. If love of neighbor gets in the way of loving God, then love of neighbor is supposed to yield to the love of God. Perhaps, the Matthew’s words in his Gospel help us understand the meaning of Jesus’ words, “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Mt 10:36-37).

Jesus says, “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” The Twelve struggled with those words. They

were all ready to go to Jerusalem and die with Jesus, that is, until the guys with the swords and clubs came to arrest Jesus. And those words trouble us. We struggle with them as much as the Twelve because, like them, we are sinners and our sin is ever before us.

I mean, it's pretty easy to be a disciple of Jesus on a Sunday morning. But then Monday comes, and you are running late for work, and your child doesn't even have their shoes on or the backpack packed, and ... where is the love? Where is the patience Jesus shows with you? What happens when your 3<sup>rd</sup>-cousin-once-removed inherits great-grandma's doily, the one you coveted for yourself? You get ticked off, you are seething-inside in your angry and jealousy. What happens when someone tells an off-color joke? You, who vocally oppose same-sex union, laugh hysterically, as though that were not a sin against the 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment. And what happens when your co-workers begin to bad mouth the supervisor at work? Do your words or your silence defame and discredit your neighbor? Remember the day of your confirmation? You have to admit following Jesus was pretty easy the day of your confirmation. You looked so nice in your white gown and flower, you said you would follow Jesus even unto death, and grandma was proud. But, let Satan accuse you or the world try to squeeze you into its mold, and you can't quote Peter fast enough, "I do not know the man."

And so, Jesus says to us, "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple...So therefore, anyone of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple". Our Gospel lesson this morning is a rather difficult section of Scripture to understand. We must understand that these words of Jesus are LAW. They are a mirror bright to show us the selfishness and self-centeredness of our

hearts. Jesus uses these words of Law to warn us against trusting in ourselves, our resources, our reason, to save ourselves. We cannot follow Jesus when it is convenient for us, and we cannot follow Him on our terms.

Jesus sets before us demands that we poor sinners cannot even begin to meet. Jesus wants us to look at ourselves to see that we have no ability to be His disciple. Jesus wants us to see that we cannot do what it takes to be a disciple of Jesus; the demands are just too great for poor sinners. Jesus wants us to look to Him in faith.

For you see, Jesus loves you more than He loved His very life. "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends," He says (Jn 15:13). That's why He was born. That's why He set His face to go to Jerusalem. That's why He picked up His cross and carried it all the way to Golgotha. That's why He allowed Himself to be nailed to that cross. He did that for all the times you loved yourself, your family, your friends, the things of the world more than Him.

And because He did all that, you are forgiven for those times. You are forgiven because Christ has died and Christ has risen. And He delivers that forgiveness He won for you on the cross to you in water, bread and wine, and words, making it your forgiveness for your sins.

God does His work in you, so that you can truly fear, love and trust in Him above all things; so that you can take up your cross and follow Jesus.

Not just on Sunday mornings, but forgiving your neighbor who has sinned against you, offended you, hurt you, just as God has forgiven you in Christ. Hating no one, and seeking to live at peace with all your neighbors. Showing kindness and courtesy, respect for your neighbor and their property. Loving your spouse. Giving you kids and grandkids a big hug and telling them that you love them. And, remembering your mom on

Mother's Day and getting one of the "World's Greatest Grandpa" hats for Dad on Father's Day. And, even sending your brother/sister a card on their birthday and telling him what a wonderful sibling they are in Christ.

Following Jesus and with Him dwelling in us, we live as the salt of the earth we are in Him.