

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

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Gospel according to Saint Luke the fourteenth chapter beginning at the twenty-fifth verse, and we read in Jesus' name:

***Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, <sup>26</sup> "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. <sup>27</sup> "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. <sup>28</sup> "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it-- <sup>29</sup> "lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, <sup>30</sup> "saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish?' <sup>31</sup> "Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who***

***comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> "Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. <sup>33</sup> "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.***

And now may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing and acceptable to you, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

A young man approached Jesus and asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Now while there are many problems with that question, Jesus tells him that he should follow the Ten Commandments. When the man says that he has kept them all, Jesus then tells the man to sell everything he has and "follow Me." The young man was heart broken because, well, he was not willing to give up everything to follow Jesus. So the young man went away sad and dejected.

I think that this is an account of Jesus' ministry that all of us know very well. In this account Jesus tries to teach the young man, but that man is not willing to listen to Jesus. The young man is not willing to give up everything to be Christ's Disciple. And I wonder how many of us would be willing to do that. Would we be willing to give up everything to follow Jesus Christ? Dear friends in Christ, I pray that as we journey through this life we will always *be Christ's disciples*.

This seems like a theme we have run into a couple times already in my time here at Messiah and yet it is a theme that could be preached on every week and still we would find things to talk about. The proposition that Jesus offers today is how one is to be His disciple, and it is a proposition that we fail at all the time.

As Jesus is walking towards Jerusalem for the Passover, Jesus has a crowd surrounding Him. Presumably this crowd is made up of people who are heading up to Jerusalem for the Passover and they want to be around Jesus to

see if He will do any miracles or anything special on His way up to Jerusalem. And Jesus turns to them and says, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." WOW! This is a pretty blunt statement for those around Christ and even for us today. If we want to be disciples of Jesus we must hate our father and mother, our whole family, our friends, and even ourself. This is a very tall order and I don't know if any of us lives up to it often, if at all.

And, just so there is no confusion, the word that is used in the Greek is HATE. It is not to be mitigated to make us feel better.

It is not just that we love Jesus more and ourself or others less, we are to love Jesus above and beyond all things, even to the point of hating those who would hold us back from loving Him. This is the same type of HATE that God the Father has for the unrighteous people of the world. It is a true hate in the natural sense. However, we also know that we have the command to love and honor our parents, and

we should do this... but not at the expense of Jesus Christ. If we love, as Matthew records, our parents or siblings or anyone more than Jesus, we are not worthy of Him. Well, now Jesus throws down the gauntlet that if we are not willing to hate our parents and siblings and friends and family, then we cannot be His disciples. If we are not willing to put Jesus first and foremost in all things... we are not worthy. As Johann Gerhard states, “Here it is clearly and concisely stated that whoever does not follow after Christ in life and conduct cannot be His disciple.”

And not only are we to put Jesus first and fore, we are to go through this life carrying our cross. The cross that we carry in this life is large and bulky. The cross we carry in this life is all the persecution that we receive for our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. As Lenski notes, “Since there is no escape from some suffering for Christ’s and the gospel’s sake, it is impossible for anyone to be a true disciple without carrying this cross, whatever it be that is allotted to him.”

In my short time in the ministry I have heard of people who have been rejected by family because of their faith. I know of people who, once becoming active in the church, have been questioned almost accusatively about their faith. I know people who once they began to follow Christ lost their family and friends and, quite literally, everything they had except their life. And I have to ask... are you willing to go through that? Are you willing to lose everything for Jesus Christ? Are you willing to give up your family, friends, possessions, your life for the sake of your Savior Jesus Christ? As Ylvisaker says, “Jesus would have the undivided heart, sentimentalism is not sufficient.” So I have to ask, Is your heart undivided?

Do you ever put parents before Jesus? Do you ever put children before Jesus? Do you ever put siblings before Jesus? Do you ever put your stuff before Jesus? Do you ever put yourself before Jesus? If you’ve answered yes to any of these, if you’ve even wavered at one of these, then I think we need to really ask ourselves if we are being true disciples of Christ. As

Gerhard notes, “Whoever wishes to come to Christ and the heavenly banquet must hate all of these; that is, give them lower rank. He must treat these things as if they were not his own and must be prepared, if God wills, to lose them all.”

And just to head off the notion, no association is not good enough. But pastor, I come to church... that’s great. But pastor I give to the church... fantastic. But pastor... No. Association is not good enough. If we are like those who are traveling with Christ to Jerusalem, just to see if He will do anything cool for us, we are not His disciples. As Ylvisaker says, “The outward association is of no value without the attachment of the heart through faith.” And I think we can all agree, this is a pretty damning notion and thought. If we are not wholly committed, we are not truly His disciples.

And yet, as I have repeated often, Thank God that it does not depend on us. As Ylvisaker noted, outward association is of no value... without faith. If faith is present, then we can

know that we are Christ’s disciples. Faith in what?

Faith that Jesus Christ lived a perfect and holy life. Never sinning. Never doing wrong. Never wavering in His commitment to God the Father and to all of us. Faith that Jesus Christ then died an innocent death. As Peter states, we “are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, who having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls.” Peter continues, “knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

Because of Jesus perfect life and innocent death, which was done for you, you are redeemed. You have heaven waiting for you. Through faith in all that Jesus Christ has done, we know that we will be in heaven when this life is over for having been a faithful disciple of Christ. Not because of the flawed discipleship that we have offered in our life, but solely because of the perfect life that Christ led and that we receive.

And as disciples of Christ, we too have a role to play. It is not to win or gain salvation, that is done. Rather our role is to be faithful to Christ. As Christ explained to the people, being a disciple is not an easy task. He likens it to someone going to build a tower and making sure they have enough supplies, or a king going to war and making sure that he has the proper armaments. Because, let's be honest, being a disciple of Christ is not the easiest thing to do. As Lenski says, "Not with a hasty but with a deliberative and thoroughly considered decision resolve to become a disciple."

Yes, we have faith... but we need resolve to be true disciples of Christ. We need to have a faith that trusts only in Him, and we need that faith strengthened. And God does strengthen that faith through His Means of Grace: Baptism, the Word, and the Lord's Supper.

And while God has done everything, there is one thing that we can continue to work on during our lives... As Christ noted, we are to hate... we are to hate anything that gets in the way of true discipleship of Jesus. We are to hate all the things of this world that get in the way, and we are to hate ourselves when our sinful nature holds us back. As Lenski says, "When they come to Jesus absolutely empty of anything in and of themselves, then they can truly be his disciples; then he can fill them with his possessions, and with them the tower can and will be built, the battle can and will be won."

And it is in this emptiness that our faith, like an open hand, can reach out and grab hold of those Means of Grace that God has prepared for us,

to receive the strengthening of our faith that only He can provide.

Dear friends in Christ, being a true disciple of Jesus is not easy, nor is it popular. Think of the crowd that surrounded Jesus, and then think about how many people had faith at His death. As the adage goes, “what is right, is not always popular and what is popular is not always right.” And this is especially true of discipleship of Jesus. As Ylvisaker states, “Jesus’ objective was not the assembling of numbers; for then He would have made the effort as easy for them as possible, but He labored to obtain disciples in truth, even though they were very few.”

Thank God that He chose us. Thank God that He has given us faith in all that His Son Jesus Christ did for our salvation. Thank God that He is our God, and loved us. Thank God that we are counted worthy to be disciples of Christ.

Thanks be to God. Amen.