The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost (C), September 8, 2019

Luke 14:25-35 (esp. v. 27)

Rev. Micah Bauer

In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. The Word of God which engages us this morning is based on Luke 14.

## Be my disciple

Jesus tells you to hate people. The God who is love 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” (v. 26). We can talk about what “hate” means in this context, but we cannot soften the blow to the extent that it no longer hurts, especially if your child is an unbeliever. Whatever it means to be Jesus’ disciple, it requires your devotion more than your family does. For as much as we love the doctrine of vocation, being in the family of God trumps every single one of your vocations.

Jesus tells you that, if you would be his disciple, it will cost you everything. “So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (v. 33). “No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Lk. 16:13). For Jesus’ disciples, everything we are and everything we have is devoted to him.

Jesus tells you that, if you would be his disciple, you will lose your life. “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (v. 27); he “is not worthy of me” (Mt. 10:38). “Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it” (Lk. 9:24).

This is black and white. There is no grey area, no wiggle room. Jesus does not lie or deceive. Whatever it means to be Jesus’ disciple, it is the most significant thing in your life, and it will cost you everything.

## Count the cost

So what does it mean to be Jesus’ disciple? It means you follow him, learn from him, and are disciplined by him. You live by his Word: what he says is true, and you *find life* in his Word. Jesus says, “I forgive you of all your sins,” and you are thereby forgiven. Jesus says, “I drown your Old Adam in baptism,” and, accordingly, a new man emerges from the saving flood. Jesus’ words are life to you.

Jesus says, “Bear your own cross and come after me,” and these are words for you to live by. Jesus says, “Renounce all that you have,” and you therefore see the vanity of the things of this world. Jesus says, “Count the cost,” and he enables you to see and accept that you must lose your life in order to save it. You must not live in this life in such a way that you turn your back on eternal life.

Your coach doesn’t go easy on you, because he knows there’s something way more important than how you feel about running laps. Your dad disciplines you for your good. Your Savior doesn’t go easy on you, because he knows that the devil is prowling around, just waiting for a chance to devour you. Jesus tells you how it is: black and white, death and life.

So Christians, and especially confirmands, know what you’re getting yourself into; count the cost. Church is not a little club where you go to feel good about yourself. No, you will actually come to hate things about yourself and the world around you. You will become dissatisfied with this life. You will die, and you will know that you cannot avoid it. People will hate you and reject you, just as they hate and reject Jesus. Count the cost. Do it now before it’s even more difficult. Be ready. Know what it means. Being a Christian is not gonna make your life fun. Crucifixion is not fun.

To be Jesus’ disciple is to hear what he says and receive life in his words of promise and direction. It is to follow him alone. It is to trust in God for all good things, *especially* when he seems to give you only bad things.

## Life beyond death

Why would anyone be a Christian? Seriously. Why would you follow this Debbie Downer on his path to ridicule, shame, and death? Why would you drag your tombstone around with you all your life long? The mockery alone would be too much for most of us. Why would you lose the world in order to gain only a cross while in the world? Surely the cost is too high. Do you really want the same destiny as Jesus?

Only if Jesus didn’t stay dead. We can only dare to follow Jesus if he actually got up and walked out of his tomb. Because if death could not destroy Jesus, then it will not destroy us. If Jesus has triumphed over all earthly powers and now reigns in heaven, then we, too, dare to forsake earthly treasures for heavenly ones. We can only bear to be united to Christ in his shame and death because we are thereby united to him in his eternal life. We are only willing to give up everything because we know we will receive everything God has promised. This is the life of faith: clinging to God’s actual promises through our cross to our empty tomb.

On the Day of Resurrection, those who mocked “This man said that he is the Christ, but now he’s dead”—these same people will then confess, “Oh, no! He’s not dead anymore. I’m done for!” On the Day of Resurrection, those who loved the things of this world more than the kingdom of heaven will receive their just condemnation. On the Day of Resurrection we who bore Christ’s cross in this life will walk out of our now-empty tombs into life eternal.

## Conclusion

Dear friends in Christ, what did you expect life to be like when you were a kid? How was your invincible self make going to make your permanent park on the world? What part of the whole world were you going to gain for yourself?

It’s time to snap out of your fantasy. When you try to do what’s right in a world that, by default, hates God and his Word, you’re gonna be opposed by the people closest to you—even your own family and friends. Eventually, you’re gonna get yourself killed. The lion will prowl until he catches his prey. Just look at what happened to Jesus: he did everything right, and because of this he got himself killed. But then he rose again. This is our destiny, too, thanks be to God. The road to heaven leads through Mount Calvary. Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.