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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
September 29, 2019
16th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Proverbs 9:8-12, Philemon 10-21
Hymns: 231; 409; 408; 413:5,6

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

Sermon Text: Luke 14:25-33

²⁵ Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ²⁶ "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. ²⁷ And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. ²⁸ 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— ²⁹ lest, after he has laid the 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'? ³¹ 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? ³² Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. ³³ So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Are you ready to make a commitment? --

We make many commitments in our lives; some are far more serious than others. We take a new job. We agree to work and fulfill certain responsibilities. For many that means a 40 hour workweek. That is a commitment. If one fails to live up to that commitment one may well lose the job. That one is pretty serious. What about getting married? Now that is a real commitment. It is one that many people look forward to entering, and it brings many blessings with it, but it also requires a great deal of those entering into it. When one fails to live up to this commitment it may end in divorce, which can in turn be not a liberation, but a scourge that continues to beat one down.

So there are commitments from which we may not easily walk away.

Then again there are commitments we may make in life that are easily ended. One may join a bowling league. There is a commitment to the rest of the team to show up, do your part, but then if one grows tired of that commitment one may decide to walk away. Someone might get angry, or another might be disappointed, but no one's really hurt.

Where do you put your church membership on that sliding scale of commitments? In Catechism class as students are preparing for confirmation the pastor will endeavor to impress upon his students that this isn't joining a social club or simply another earthly organization. This is about discipleship. This is about following Jesus, *faithfully* following Jesus, adhering to His gospel, living to His glory. Church membership is a part of that greater commitment to Jesus of being one of His disciples. We are not simply promising something to other people so much as we are promising complete and total allegiance to Jesus! He is our Redeemer, the Son of God who came down to earth

and suffered hell on the cross, literally suffered the pangs of **hell** to take away our sins and save **us** from hell. We are promising **Him** who loved us that much, who knows us by name, who cares for each of us individually, and is absolutely faithful in all His ways in caring for us. We could never match the depth of His commitment for our salvation, but consider your response, the type of commitment this calls for from us if we are indeed to be His disciples.

In our text Jesus leads us to a better understanding of --

THEME: The Total Commitment Required of Jesus' Disciples.

As we read and prayerfully consider Jesus' words we will almost certainly be left with the conclusion: -

I. Seriously - I Don't Think I Can Do This!

Luke 14:25-27 "Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ²⁶ "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. ²⁷ And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

Note that great multitudes were following Jesus. Jesus knows the hearts of all people. Yes, they were probably in a festive spirit, for they were following Jesus as they made their way to Jerusalem for the Passover observance. They liked to think of themselves as Jesus' followers, or Jesus' disciples. But were they really? Were they actually committed to following the Lord Jesus, or was this a half-hearted commitment, a half-hearted discipleship?

That remains the question for us yet today. Are we whole heartedly committed to the Lord Jesus, to walk in His ways, even if it means that we have a falling out with close relatives because we believe Jesus comes first, **FIRST** in

our lives! That is true discipleship. *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”* (Matthew 6:33) Jesus laid His life on the line for us. He sacrificed His body and soul for our salvation. Are we ready to take up our cross the way that Jesus bore His cross out to Calvary? So we may have to face some discomfort for the Lord. We may have to endure difficulty in our relationship with some of the people we know, even close family members when they turn away from true discipleship and then expect us to join them, or at least give tacit approval of choices that dismiss Jesus’ sacrifice for us as something trivial.

Now here’s the thing; this is all easier said than done. Much easier said than done. We say the right words. We swear before God and the congregation that we will be faithful even unto death, and then we get lazy in our Christianity, and don’t live up to the commitment we made to the Lord in response to His saving us. Easier said than done, to bear one’s cross, be it a cross of ridicule, or anger, or other sacrifice. Many early Christians lost their property, and ultimately some lost their lives. Yeah, but that is all ancient history! Is it? Many Christians suffer for Jesus’ sake yet today. I know people who, when given the choice of accepting the Muslim faith or having their homes burned to the ground remained faithful to Jesus, and watched as their entire town was burned to the ground, and they were transported out of the country. But even some of them, after coming to America have been infected with the spiritual complacency of our society and discipleship is slipping away. Spiritual complacency is not what Jesus is looking for in His disciples!

Could I do this? Could I endure shame, even physical abuse for Jesus’ sake? Seriously, I don’t think I can do this!

Jesus directs us to the total commitment expected of Jesus’ disciples. There is no choice. **There is only grace!**

II. I Can and I Shall Through Christ!

Luke 14:28-33 “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— ²⁹lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see *it* begin to mock him, ³⁰saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish’? ³¹Or 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? ³²Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. ³³So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”

We need to consider the cost of discipleship. If one is going to take on a major building project one does not begin until he is sure that he has the resources to see it through to the end. If a king or a president is going to engage a mighty enemy in combat, he will not even begin the battle unless and until he is sure that he can secure the victory. Jesus’ point is important. Coming to the conclusion: “I don’t think I can do this” is important because then we are led to find the necessary resources where they are being held for us. Recognizing that we don’t have the strength necessary to defeat the devil is important for us, for then we will recognize the need for reinforcements found with the army of God and the weapons of His Word!

We need to make careful assessments of our own preparations for discipleship. All too often we make the wrong assumptions. “Oh yeah, I can see this through to the end all on my own.” “I know I can defeat the devil’s temptations.” “I won’t fall into the sins of this world.” “I can make it on my own.” And then half way through one is routed by the devil, who “*walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour,*” (1 Peter 5:8) or one’s faith runs out. When we are “hit or miss” in church attendance, “hit or miss” about our personal Bible study we are failing

ourselves, failing to take hold of the resources the Lord has placed before us to assure us the final victory.

Paul encourages us, "*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*" (1 Timothy 6:12) That does not happen with a half-hearted discipleship. Failure is not an option. Failure is a disaster, an eternal disaster. It is certainly an unnecessary disaster. The Lord brings us together in congregations that we might assemble together around His Word and encourage one another in the faith. The writer to the Hebrews says we need to do this "*so much the more as we see the Day approaching.*" (Hebrews 10:25) He says, **so much the more, not less.** Indeed, with all the wickedness in this world, we see the Day of Christ's return approaching. As the evil in this world gets worse and worse the world actually becomes more enticing to lure disciples away from the Lord. We need to be dedicated to our faith, committed in our discipleship, not only for our own sakes, and that of our children, but also for our fellow church members.

Every Sunday you are present in church sitting in your pew you are not only receiving the strengthening of the gospel for yourselves, but you are also a blessing, an encouragement to your fellow believer. Every Sunday you miss is a negative not only for yourselves, but also for your fellow Christian. That is true each and every Sunday. Their faith misses that encouragement that your presence brings. Skipping church should not be taken lightly as if it has no consequence.

The Apostle Paul knew the challenges that comes with discipleship better than most. He knew the challenges that come when life was easy, and he knew the challenges to discipleship when life was difficult. He knew how to have much and how to have little. He was faithful in discipleship not because he was Paul the mighty apostle. Paul wrote, "*I can do all things through Christ who*

strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13) That is true for you and me as well. And it is especially true concerning our discipleship. Are you ready to deny the world, deny yourself, follow Jesus all your days, and take up your cross and follow Him? You can only do this through Christ who strengthens you. If that was true for the Apostle Paul it is certainly true for me and you as well. The Holy Spirit who called you to faith, who strengthens you through the gospel, this Holy Spirit leads you to confess boldly, "Yes, I will be His disciple, even unto death!"

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.