

## **Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost-September 4, 2022**

### **Luke 14:25-33**

*25Now large crowds were traveling with him; and he turned and said to them, 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. 27Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. 28For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? 29Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, 30saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ 31Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. 33So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.*

### **SERMON**

Whoah! no way does Jesus say hate is a pre-requisite for following him. There’s already enough actual hate in the poisoning the world—and sadly, religious communities. We can translate Jesus’ use of the word ‘hate’ without walking back what he means when he speaks blunt and bracing caveats to would-be followers.

Some parents do not allow their children to use the word “hate”—which in our world hate takes the form of exclusion, oppression and even lethal violence.

Jesus is calling for the total antithesis of that! The word Jesus uses connotes displacing as ultimate things we value in favour discovering things of even greater value. It's also important to note that among Semitic people hyperbole (which literally means purposely over throwing, like you would a ball) is designed to shock us into paying attention. So let's lose the hate thing and move on....

Remember Jesus' story where someone learns of a treasure buried in a field? They sell everything they have to buy the field and the treasure buried there. Let's use that parable as our starting point.

One commentator I heard this week encourages us to look at what Jesus offers even as he warns us to tally up its potential cost. How often have we given up something because there is something we want more? A few examples might help.

Earlier this week someone told a story about saying no for the sake of saying yes to bigger things. She gives permission to share it here:

A single mom wanted to buy shoes her daughter had her heart set on. So the mom put the shoes on lay-away and denied herself things she wanted needed for herself. She worked extra hours, saved every bit of money she could so her daughter could have new shoes.

Many a parent listening to this service has worked overtime and extra shifts to help their kids pay for university. Parents forego vacations and luxury items so their kids can play hockey. It's what they do...because there's something they treasure that's worth giving up some things for. Economists would call these decisions 'tradeoffs'.

Our congregations know all about trade offs: St. Matthew's and First Lutheran have given up a full time pastor to share one. First Lutheran sold a parsonage and gave up some flexibility of schedule and convenience by sharing worship space with another church. Austere as these measures are, it may well be that folk have a sense that we're called to vital ministry and new ways of thriving and being a blessing in our home towns.

So a question to be lived for us: What is the "treasure" we seek—and for which we're willing to roll the dice to gain? Put another way, what particular ways is Jesus calling us to follow and what are we willing to do to make that happen?

Let's return to the Jesus' words and some background as we begin fussing with these questions.

Jesus uses startling language when he calls would be-followers to do a gut check. From last week to this we've skipped by a parable Jesus tells about a great banquet. People send regrets because vital things like family and livelihood keep us from the party. Take a sneak peak into next week's reading from Luke's Gospel and you overhear the parties thrown when the lost is found and the estranged find their way back home.

We're called to make difficult choices sometimes.

Saying yes leads to some very limiting no's.

Saying 'no' sometimes leads to some very important yesses.

The temptations Jesus confronts in the wilderness appear beneficial at first glance...never needing to worry about food again, earthly power, and even personal invincibility could bring stability and security. Jesus says no to all of this and opts for a life of trust and dependence on God. Jesus says 'no' to

temporal power and its trappings so he can say 'yes' to a life's work of healing, forgiveness and wholeness for humanity and for all of creation.

Jesus pays close attention to people's well-being in this life. Look at how he feeds, heals, forgives, and reintegrates people into their communities.

So the church is in for a gut check-what are we willing to do so that the next generation has a healthy liveable planet....that people have nutritious food and clean drinking water? What are we able and willing to do so people have a safe place to live? What can we give for the sake of the common good...for shalom?

These questions are not the quickly dispatched and time for lunch sort. Jesus calls us and calls the church to live these questions...to prayerfully examine our hearts and lives remembering where our treasure is, there is where our hearts are too.

God give us courage to find our way to the YES Jesus lives for, gives his life for and that His resurrection from the dead sets into motion. Amen.

