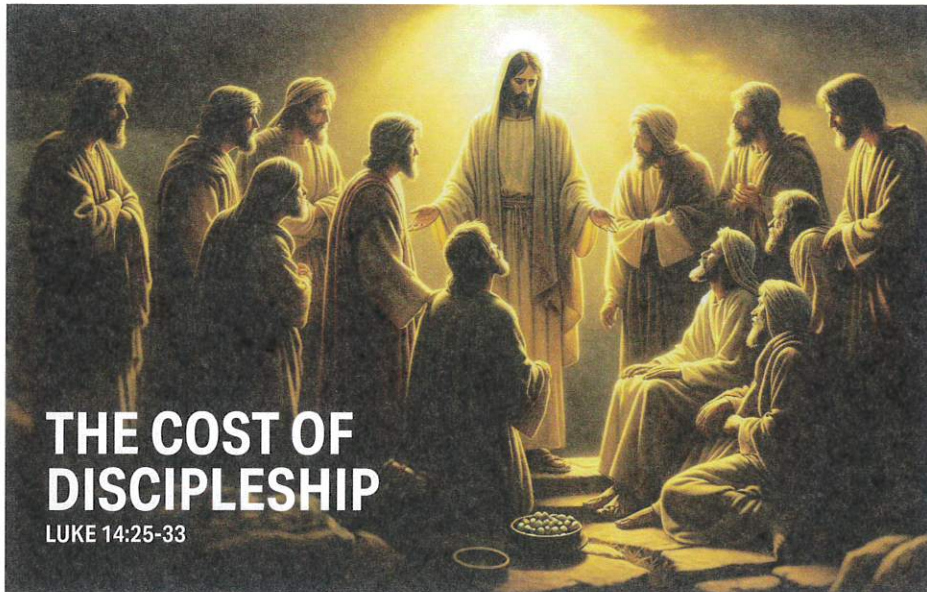


Sunday Message

23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year C • 7 September 2025 • Psalter Week 3



THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

LUKE 14:25-33

In today's Gospel, Jesus points out the tremendous cost of becoming a disciple. It will involve 'hating' your nearest and dearest, hating even your own life. It is akin to taking up the cross and following Jesus.

The best way to understand the word 'hate' here is to take it as another way of stating a preference. Disciples are to prefer Jesus above all else, including their family and even their own life. For most who've grown up in Christian households, this will seldom be an issue. But Jesus is thinking of those who may be on the verge of deciding to follow him but find it difficult due to family opposition. If you were from a Jewish family, becoming a follower of Jesus meant breaking with ways and values that had been hard won by your ancestors. If you were a prospective pagan convert reading Luke's Gospel to decide whether to follow this 'new way,' the choice could seem just as demanding.

Christians were regarded as a very strange, foreign group whose way of life ran against the grain of Greek and Roman society. Their fellowship included people on the margins – poor workers, even slaves. Some new Christians might have been tempted to cover up their membership of the Church by a kind of public conformity to their family's older ways. If this were the case, they would be constantly looking over their shoulders and could never be free enough to be wholehearted Christians. They will only be able to find that freedom through a definitive break with their families that might appear to their parents as though their children 'hated' them.

For those deeply attached to their families, that kind of break can seem like a painful death. This is why Jesus compares it to the most painful death known, death on a cross. Genuine disciples must take up the cross as Jesus did. In doing so, they will discover it is the way that leads to the new life of resurrection.

The two parable-like stories about the need to count the cost should be seen in the light of these stark sayings. By putting the parable of the tower builder and the king going to war immediately after the saying about taking up one's cross, Luke is clearly warning would-be converts to calculate carefully the cost involved in following Jesus. It will demand total freedom from everything we hold dear. ■

PRAY

It is not easy to be a Christian in our secular society. Pray for the members of your family and your parish, and for the Church throughout the world, that we will be steadfast in the faith and effective witnesses to it.

SAY

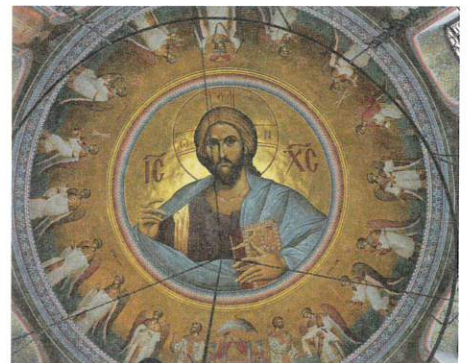
"Lord, help me to put you first at all times. Allow nothing to hold me back from being faithful to you. Amen."

REFLECT

Today's Gospel is really about freedom. To be truly free, you sometimes have to let go of dearly held plans or attachments that hold you back from being your best self or following your true calling. The founder of the Redemptorists, St Alphonsus Liguori, often wrote about this kind of freedom. He imagines how a skylark that has spent most of its life in a cage might long to escape. One day, the owner leaves the cage open. The bird flies out eagerly, but after a short flight, discovers it can go no further because it is shackled by a silken thread so fine it has never noticed it. Alphonsus suggests that our ambitions to do great things are often hampered by invisible threads that we find too difficult to snap. As you read today's Gospel, consider if there is any silken thread preventing you from responding wholeheartedly to the good news. ■

DO

Think about what it means to follow Jesus. Is there anything you need to change in order to be a more committed disciple?



LEARN

The true disciple puts Jesus Christ and his teaching above everything else.

The true disciple knows that discipleship costs.

To follow Jesus faithfully is the wisest calculation any person can make.

Religion isn't a hobby, a private concern – like golf or yoga or football. Everything we do must be at the service of God's kingdom.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*You are just, O Lord, and your judgement is right;
treat your servant in accord with your merciful love.*

COLLECT

O God, by whom we are redeemed and receive adoption,
look graciously upon your beloved sons and daughters,
that those who believe in Christ
may receive true freedom
and an everlasting inheritance.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

FIRST READING Wisdom 9:13-18b

A reading from the Book of Wisdom.

What human being can learn the counsel of God?
Or who can discern what the Lord wills?
For the reasoning of mortals is worthless,
and our designs are likely to fail,
for a perishable body weighs down the soul,
and this earthly tent burdens the mind full of thoughts.
We can hardly guess at what is on earth,
and what is at hand we find with labour;
but who has traced out what is in the heavens?
Who has learned your counsel,
unless you have given wisdom
and sent your holy spirit from on high?
And thus the paths of those on earth were set right,
and people were taught what pleases you,
and were saved by wisdom.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 90(89):3-4. 5-6. 12-13. 14, 17. R. 1

*R: O Lord, you have been our refuge,
from generation to generation.*

1. You turn man back to dust,
and say, 'Return, O children of Adam.'
To your eyes a thousand years
are like yesterday, come and gone,
or like a watch in the night. **R.**
2. You sweep them away like a dream,
like grass which is fresh in the morning.
In the morning it sprouts and is fresh;
by evening it withers and fades. **R.**
3. Then teach us to number our days,
that we may gain wisdom of heart.
Turn back, O LORD! How long?
Show pity to your servants. **R.**
4. At dawn, fill us with your merciful love;
we shall exult and rejoice all our days.
Let the favour of the LORD our God be upon us;
give success to the work of our hands.
O give success to the work of our hands. **R.**

SECOND READING Philemon 9b-10. 12-17

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to Philemon.

Beloved: I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus – I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. I would have been glad to keep him

with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back for ever, no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother – especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL Psalm 119(118):135

R: Alleluia, alleluia.

Let your face shine on your servant,
and teach me your decrees.

R: Alleluia.

GOSPEL Luke 14:25-33

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

At that time: Great crowds accompanied Jesus, and he turned and said to them, '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. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O God, who give us the gift of true prayer and of peace,
graciously grant that, through this offering,
we may do fitting homage to your divine majesty
and, by partaking of the sacred mystery,
we may be faithfully united in mind and heart.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*Like the deer that yearns for running streams,
so my soul is yearning for you, my God;
my soul is thirsting for God, the living God.*

Or

*I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
whoever follows me will not walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant that your faithful, O Lord,
whom you nourish and endow with life
through the food of your Word and heavenly Sacrament,
may so benefit from your beloved Son's great gifts
that we may merit an eternal share in his life.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.