

Called to Sacrifice

Mark 1:16-20; Luke 14:25-33

SS Lesson for 03/10/2019

Devotional Scripture: Josh 24:19-24

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Key Verse: Luke 14:27

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

CALL FOR SACRIFICIAL FOLLOWING (MARK 1:16-20)

Following God's calling

God's calls are irrevocable (Rom 11:29)

God's calls are faithful (1 Thess 5:23-24)

God's calls are Holy (2 Tim 1:9)

God calls into His Kingdom and glory (1 Thess 2:11-12)

God's calls are powerful because He can call things that are not as though they were (Rom 4:17)

Following Jesus

If we don't follow Jesus, then we are not worthy of Him (Matt 10:38)

We follow Jesus because we know His voice (John 10:2-5)

To serve Jesus we must follow Him (John 12:26)

We have been called to follow Jesus' example (1 Peter 2:21)

Importance of obedience

Obedience to God proves our love of Him (John 14:21)

Even our thoughts must be obedient to Jesus (2 Cor 10:5)

Jesus was the perfect example of obedience (Heb 5:7-9)

We were chosen by God to be obedient (1 Peter 1:2)

Obedience brings blessings (James 1:25)

Obedience leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)

SACRIFICIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR DISCIPLESHIP (LUKE 14:25-27)

Requirement to follow

Following means recognizing and responding to God's call

The first key is to recognize when God is speaking to us (1 Sam 3:7-10)

Always test the spirit of the calling by the Spirit (Josh 5:13-14)

Our correct response must be 'What shall we do Lord' (Acts 22:6-11)

Requirement to not let relationships hinder

Beware of loved ones possibly betraying (Luke 21:16-19)

Beware of the hatred of the world (Matt 24:9-10)

Beware of those who belong to the world (John 15:19)

Requirement of taking up cross

If we don't take up the cross, we are not worthy of Jesus (Matt 10:38)

We must deny self (Matt 16:24)

We must not let treasures keep us from following Jesus (Mark 10:21-22)

Burdens are a part of entering the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22)

Burdens provide a way of strengthening our faith (2 Tim 1:12)

Taking up our Cross (from Barnes Notes)

SACRIFICIAL READINESS FOR DISCIPLESHIP (LUKE 14:28-32)

Always consider the preparedness

Be prepared to do good works (2 Tim 2:20-21)

Be prepared to give an answer for hope in God (1 Peter 3:15)

Be prepared because no one knows when Jesus will return (Matt 24:44)

Be prepared because the end time is nearer than we think (Rom 13:11-12)

Be prepared because the day of the Lord is coming (2 Peter 3:11-13)

Be prepared and know whom are we depending (2 Kings 18:20)

Be prepared by considering from whom we are getting advice (Prov 20:18)

What the Bible teaches about planning

We need to ensure we have godly counsel (Prov 15:22)

We must be careful to not make our plans in a worldly manner (2 Cor 1:17)
We must ensure that we are following God's will and in agreement with His word (John 8:16)
We should only do plans that are God's will (James 4:13-15)
God may have other plans for us (Acts 16:6-10)
The Bible teaches that the plans of the righteous are just (Prov 12:5)
We must realize that our plans are nothing unless they are guided and determined by God (Prov 16:9)
If we commit ourselves to God, we have been promised that our plans will succeed (Prov 16:3).

COST OF DISCIPLESHIP (LUKE 14:33)

We must consider the cost to ensure we understand what it takes to finish the call of Jesus

Living a life worthy of God's calling (Ephesians 4:1)
Pressing onward toward the goal that God has called us to do (Philippians 3:13-14)
Keep the faith and finish the race (2 Timothy 4:7)
Do the will of God and to finish the work He has assigned us (John 4:34)
Train our mind and body and become a slave to God (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)
We should throw off everything that hinders our walk with Jesus (Heb 12:1)
We must be willing to leave everything to follow Jesus (Mark 10:28)

We must consider the cost in relationships by ensuring our priority is loyalty and commitment to Jesus

Never be ashamed of God (Mark 8:38)
Always acknowledge God as our Master (Luke 12:8-9)
Never deny God or Jesus (1 John 2:23)

We must consider the cost by being willing to die for Jesus

Consider our life worthless compared to being with God (Acts 20:24)
The only profit we should seek is doing all things for the sake of Christ (Philippians 3:7)
Don't let anything, including our body, hinder our obedience and service to God (Mark 9:43-47)
Nothing is more important than God owning our soul (Matthew 16:25-26)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

The Setting (14:25)
The Demands of Discipleship (14:26-28)
Discipleship as a Decision (14:28-32)
Christ's Conclusion (14:33-35)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE ECHOES COMMENTARY

Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Perhaps you have heard or read news stories about the percentage of people who are Christians in various parts of the world. Social scientists commonly survey populations to discover people's religious affiliation, noting trends over time. To be identified as a Christian in most such surveys usually requires only a claim to be Christian. Few surveys ask about behaviors and practices as evidence of Christian commitment; the foundations of prayer, Bible reading, and worship attendance are ignored. Thus many people are counted as Christians merely through their self-identification as such. A term often applied to such people is nominal Christians. They are Christians in name only. Before we form an opinion regarding the validity of that designation, we should consider what Jesus has to say about it in today's lesson.

The first of today's two texts comes from the beginning of Mark's Gospel. His storyline begins with John the Baptist's preaching that all must repent and be cleansed by God to prepare for the imminent arrival of God's king (Mark 1:2-8). Jesus then appears in the storyline for his baptism. At that time, he is identified by a voice from Heaven as God's kingly Son (1:9-11). After his triumph over the devil's tests (1:12, 13), Jesus repeats John's message of repentance, announcing that God's promised reign is very near (1:14, 15). The coming of God's promised reign, his "kingdom," is central to Jesus' teaching. God's kingdom is the reestablishment of his rule over all creation, especially over rebellious humanity. The well-known words of the Lord's Prayer express this idea: "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Jesus links his coming and ministry to the inauguration of God's kingdom. This is a movement that will one day extend the

rule of God to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), reaching complete fulfillment as Jesus returns as king (1:11). It is in this light that Jesus calls the first of his disciples.

Our second text, from Luke's Gospel, occurs in the period of Jesus' ministry when he was on his final trip to Jerusalem. He knew he was to die there, and he had warned his disciple of that fact (Luke 9:22, 44). But they failed to understand (9:45). The crowds that joined him had high expectations of his kingly triumph. He would indeed triumph as king, but not in a way anybody expected!

Key Verse: Luke 14:27

And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

14:25-27. The setting then changed: **large crowds were traveling with Jesus.** Jesus intended to impress on the people their need to examine their resolve to follow Him. He was on His way to die on the cross. Ultimately everyone did desert Him when He was alone in the garden and then arrested and put on trial. To emphasize that discipleship is difficult, Jesus said that one must **hate his** own family and **even his own life** in order to **be His disciple.** Literally hating one's family would have been a violation of the Law. Since Jesus on several occasions admonished others to fulfill the Law, He must not have meant here that one should literally hate his family. The stress here is on the priority of love (cf. Matt. 10:37). One's loyalty to Jesus must come before his loyalty to his family or even to life itself. Indeed, those who did follow Jesus against their families' desires were probably thought of as hating their families. The second difficult qualification Jesus stressed was that one must **carry his** (i.e., his own) **cross and follow** Jesus (Luke 14:27; cf. 9:23). When the Roman Empire crucified a criminal or captive, the victim was often forced to carry his cross part of the way to the crucifixion site. Carrying his cross through the heart of the city was supposed to be a tacit admission that the Roman Empire was correct in the sentence of death imposed on him, an admission that Rome was right and he was wrong. So when Jesus enjoined His followers to carry their crosses and follow Him, He was referring to a public display before others that Jesus was right and that the disciples were following Him even to their deaths. This is exactly what the religious leaders refused to do.

14:28-33. Using two illustrations, Jesus then taught that discipleship must include planning and sacrifice. The first illustration concerned **a tower** (vv. 28-30). Before a person begins **to build**, he should be sure he will be able to pay the full **cost** of the project. Jesus' followers must also be sure they are willing to pay the full price of discipleship. The second illustration concerned **a king** who went out to battle. The king should be willing to sacrifice a desired victory if he senses he is unable to win. This principle of sacrifice is also important in the realm of discipleship: one must be willing to **give up everything** for Jesus. The people who were following Jesus throughout the countryside of Israel had done that. They had given up possessions and employment, knowing that the message Jesus was proclaiming was the most important thing on earth.

14:34-35. Jesus climaxed His teaching on discipleship by proclaiming that **salt is good** only as long as it contains the characteristics of saltiness. If **it loses its saltiness**, it has no value at all and **is thrown out.** The same is true of disciples. They must contain the characteristics of discipleship—planning and willing sacrifice—or they are of no value at all.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Call for Sacrificial Following (Mark 1:16-20)

16 And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

17 Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

18 They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

19 When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets.

20 And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.

Following God's calling

God's calls are irrevocable (Rom 11:29)

29 for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.

God's calls are faithful (1 Thess 5:23-24)

23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

God's calls are Holy (2 Tim 1:9)

9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,

God calls into His Kingdom and glory (1 Thess 2:11-12)

11 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, 12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

God's calls are powerful because He can call things that are not as though they were (Rom 4:17)

17 As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

Following Jesus

If we don't follow Jesus, then we are not worthy of Him (Matt 10:38)

38 "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

We follow Jesus because we know His voice (John 10:2-5)

2 "But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. 3 "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 "When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.

To serve Jesus we must follow Him (John 12:26)

26 "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

We have been called to follow Jesus' example (1 Peter 2:21)

21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

Importance of obedience

Obedience to God proves our love of Him (John 14:21)

21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

Even our thoughts must be obedient to Jesus (2 Cor 10:5)

5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Jesus was the perfect example of obedience (Heb 5:7-9)

7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

We were chosen by God to be obedient (1 Peter 1:2)

2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Obedience brings blessings (James 1:25)

25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

Obedience leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Sacrificial Requirements for Discipleship (Luke 14:25-27)

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.

Requirement to follow

Following means recognizing and responding to God's call

The first key is to recognize when God is speaking to us (1 Sam 3:7-10)

7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. 8The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. 9So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, `Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Always test the spirit of the calling by the Spirit (Josh 5:13-14)

13 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

14"Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"

Our correct response must be 'What shall we do Lord' (Acts 22:6-11)

6 "About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. 7 I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?' 8 "Who are you, Lord?' I asked. "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. 9 My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me. 10 "What shall I do, Lord?' I asked. "'Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.' 11 My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

Requirement to not let relationships hinder

Beware of loved ones possibly betraying (Luke 21:16-19)

16 You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. 17 All men will hate you because of me. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 By standing firm you will gain life.

Beware of the hatred of the world (Matt 24:9-10)

9 "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. 10 At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other,

Beware of those who belong to the world (John 15:19)

If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

Requirement of taking up cross

If we don't take up the cross, we are not worthy of Jesus (Matt 10:38)

38 and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

We must deny self (Matt 16:24)

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

We must not let treasures keep us from following Jesus (Mark 10:21-22)

21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Burdens are a part of entering the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22)

22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

Burdens provide a way of strengthening our faith (2 Tim 1:12)

12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

Taking up our Cross (from Barnes Notes)

Barnes comments that "to carry the cross" is a figurative expression, denoting that we must endure whatever is burdensome, or is trying, or is considered disgraceful, in following Christ. It consists simply in doing our duty, let the people of the world think of it or speak of it as they may. It does not consist in MAKING trouble for ourselves, or doing things merely "to be opposed;" it is doing just what is required of us in the Scriptures, let it produce whatever shame, disgrace, or pain it may

Sacrificial Readiness for Discipleship (Luke 14:28-32)

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.

Always consider the preparedness

Be prepared to do good works (2 Tim 2:20-21)

20 In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. 21 If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

Be prepared to give an answer for hope in God (1 Peter 3:15)

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

Be prepared because no one knows when Jesus will return (Matt 24:44)

44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Be prepared because the end time is nearer than we think (Rom 13:11-12)

11 And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Be prepared because the day of the Lord is coming (2 Peter 3:11-13)

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

Be prepared and know whom are we depending (2 Kings 18:20)

20 You say you have strategy and military strength-but you speak only empty words. On whom are you depending, that you rebel against me?

Be prepared by considering from whom we are getting advice (Prov 20:18)

18 Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance.

What the Bible teaches about planning

We need to ensure we have godly counsel (Prov 15:22)

22 Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

We must be careful to not make our plans in a worldly manner (2 Cor 1:17)

17 When I planned this, did I do it lightly? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say, "Yes, yes" and "No, no"?

We must ensure that we are following God's will and in agreement with His word (John 8:16)

16 But if I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me.

We should only do plans that are God's will (James 4:13-15)

13 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

God may have other plans for us (Acts 16:6-10)

6 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. 7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. 8 So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. 9 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

The Bible teaches that the plans of the righteous are just (Prov 12:5)

5 The plans of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful.

We must realize that our plans are nothing unless they are guided and determined by God (Prov 16:9)

9 In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.

If we commit ourselves to God, we have been promised that our plans will succeed (Prov 16:3).

3 Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

Cost of Discipleship (Luke 14:33)

33 "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

We must consider the cost to ensure we understand what it takes to finish the call of Jesus

Living a life worthy of God's calling (Ephesians 4:1)

1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Pressing onward toward the goal that God has called us to do (Philippians 3:13-14)

13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Keep the faith and finish the race (2 Timothy 4:7)

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Do the will of God and to finish the work He has assigned us (John 4:34)

34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

Train our mind and body and become a slave to God (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

We should throw off everything that hinders our walk with Jesus (Heb 12:1)

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

We must be willing to leave everything to follow Jesus (Mark 10:28)

28 Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!"

We must consider the cost in relationships by ensuring our priority is loyalty and commitment to Jesus

Never be ashamed of God (Mark 8:38)

38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

Always acknowledge God as our Master (Luke 12:8-9)

8 "I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. 9 But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God.

Never deny God or Jesus (1 John 2:23)

23 No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

We must consider the cost by being willing to die for Jesus

Consider our life worthless compared to being with God (Acts 20:24)

24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me — the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

The only profit we should seek is doing all things for the sake of Christ (Philippians 3:7)

7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

Don't let anything, including our body, hinder our obedience and service to God (Mark 9:43-47)

43 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell,

Nothing is more important than God owning our soul (Matthew 16:25-26)

25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The Setting (14:25)

We do not know exactly where Jesus was, but we assume that He was continuing to press on toward Jerusalem (cf. 9:51; 13:22). The Pharisees, who were in focus around the dinner table in the previous section (14:1-24), are now left behind, and the focus is on a large crowd of people, following our Lord as He traveled. Some think that these folks knew who Jesus was, but did not understand the rigors of discipleship. I am inclined to think of these people as merely curious, caught up by Jesus, His miracles, and His teaching. They hardly realized, in my opinion, that they were following Him.

I can envision Jesus walking along the way from one town to another, encircled by His closest followers, and then, trailing along for a great distance, an animist endless stream of curious people. Jesus literally turned around to address this great multitude. He stopped them in their tracks with His words. Few, I suspect, grasped what He meant by what He said. I am inclined to see the crowd as vaporizing after Jesus finished, perhaps discussing among themselves on their way back home what He meant.

The Demands of Discipleship (14:26-28)

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:25-28).

The words of Jesus are stunning. I can almost see the crowd reel in shock at the demands which Jesus placed on His disciples. The clear inference of Jesus’ words is that one can “go along with Jesus” without even being a true believer (cf. John 6:66). I think it is also implied that one can “come to Jesus” in saving faith, without becoming a disciple, a committed follower (cf. John 2:23-25). These people were, as yet, only followers, on-lookers.

If there is any one term that is crucial to our understanding of Jesus’ words here it is the term “hate.” What does Jesus mean when He says that one cannot be His disciple without hating? Fortunately, the Bible gives us a very clear definition of this term, beginning in the Old Testament.

In Genesis chapter 29 we find the story of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah. We know that Leah was Jacob’s first wife, not due to his decision, but to Laban’s deception. Jacob really loved Rachel. In verse 30 we are told that Jacob “loved Rachel more than Leah.” In verse 31, “the Lord saw that Leah was unloved.” In verse 33, Leah named her second son Simeon, because, she said, “the Lord has heard that I am unloved.” This last term, “unloved” literally is “hated,” as the marginal note in the NASB indicates. Rachel was **loved more** than Leah; Leah was **unloved**; Leah was **hated**. To be hated, here is to be loved less than another.

In Exodus the same sense of “hate” is found. In chapter 20, God is giving Israel the Law. He begins by commanding Israel to have “not other gods” before Him (Exodus 20:3). In verse 5, however, God said,

“You shall not worship them or serve them [other gods]; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me.”

To have other gods, is to love them above God. To have other gods is to hate God.

In Romans 9:13, we read Paul’s citation of Malachi 1:2: “**JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.**”

We know that God chose Jacob above Esau, that He gave Jacob the preeminence and blessings that normally came to the oldest son. But God did not hate Esau in the way we think of hate. We see God’s compassion on Esau and on his descendants. God hated Esau in the sense that He loved Jacob more.

If we are not yet convinced, then let us listen to the Lord’s words in the parallel gospel account:

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A MAN’S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it” (Matthew 10:34-39, NASB).

Here, Matthew’s wording does not speak of “hating” father and mother and other loved ones, but of loving them more than our Lord. Thus, to “hate” in our text means “to love less than.” Jesus is saying that in order to be His disciple men and women must love Christ more than their parents, more than their mate, more than their children, more than their sisters and brothers.

We now know what Jesus meant by the word “hate.” But whom does He command His disciples to hate?

- They are all people.
- They are all people whom we would normally, naturally, love.
- They are all relatives—family.

There does seem to be a deliberate, descending order. Parents are listed first, mate and children second, with siblings last. Initially, I was inclined to think that this was the order of our sense of obligation or duty. I now look at this differently, based upon Jesus’ words in verse 33:

“In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”

Jesus is coming to the conclusion of His instruction here. I believe that this verse sums up, in slightly different words, the demands of discipleship detailed in verses 26-28. In verse 27 Jesus was talking about one's family, but in verse 33 (a supposed parallel) He speaks of one's possessions. Do these two sayings really speak of the same thing? I believe they do. I believe that Jesus is here speaking of one's family as a part of one's possessions which he or she must “give up.”

Allow me to explain. Family is often thought of in terms of duty. Family can make many demands on a person, demands that can distract (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:29-35), demands that can interfere with discipleship. I believe that Jesus dealt with the matter of duty to family in chapter 9 (vv. 57-62). Here, I think that Jesus is speaking of one's family in terms of his dependence, not his duty.

When I speak of our duty to our family, we speak of the demands which our family makes on us, so that we meet its needs. When I speak of dependence, I refer to the needs which we have, which our family provides for us. Family is thus a two-way street: it demands certain things from us and promises to provide us with certain things we feel we need. Few people would persist at meeting the demands of his family without the promise of having certain of his needs being met in the process.

When Jesus speaks of one's family as a possession, it, like all other possessions, does something for us. What is it that family is believed to provide, about which Jesus warns? Think for a moment about all those things which a Jewish family provided for a Jew.

(1) The Jewish family provided status. To be a child of Abraham was to be a cut above all others—at least a cut, but probably more. Being a Jew made one vastly superior to a Gentile. Thus, family gave the Jews status.

(2) The Jewish family was also mistakenly supposed to give one salvation. To the Jew, being a “descendant of Abraham” assured him of having a place in the kingdom of God. This is one of the false conceptions about which John the Baptist warned the Israelites (Luke 3:8). Paul, too, strongly insisted that not all physical descendants of Israel were true Israelites (Romans 9:6). If one's family could get one to heaven, one would surely have a great sense of dependence upon his family. When an Israelite repented, he was also baptized, indicating a decisive break with all of this mistaken dependence upon his identity as a Jew. Paul, too, shows how his salvation turned his “gold-plated” family pride to “dung.” There were certain elements of Judaism which Paul retained, but there was no dependence upon Judaism for his standing with God, his salvation (cf. Philippians 3:1-11).

(3) The Jewish family also offered one security. An Israelite of Jesus' day did not measure his future security in terms of his insurance policies, or his Social Security, or even his bank account; he measured it in terms of his family (cf. Psalm 127:3-5).

I believe that when our Lord demands that His disciples must “hate” their family He means that they must give up their dependence upon family, and must depend totally upon Him. To be His disciple is not only to love Him more than anyone or anything else, it is to depend upon Him. Independence of God is at the core of sin, and dependence on Him is at the core of discipleship.

There is another element demand of discipleship, which is found in verses 26 and 27: hating one's own life and taking up his own cross. I think that these two expressions speak of one reality. When one decides to follow Christ as His disciple, one must surrender any other source of “life” than Him, and one must relinquish all self-seeking. Becoming a disciple of our Lord means to give up our goals and to pursue His goals. Just as in marriage the woman should find joy in giving up her goals and becoming a helper to her husband in reaching his goal (a not-so-popular idea today), so the disciple sets aside all his aspirations for those of the Master. And just as the Master takes up His own cross, so we, too, must take up that cross which God has ordained for us.

Please note that “hating one's life” is not the same as “hating one's self.” Self-love is surely suspect, in spite of pop psychology, but so is self-hate. The logical outcome of self-hate is suicide; the logical outcome of hating one's life is taking up the cross which Christ has for us.

Discipleship as a Decision (14:28-32)

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to

oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.”

Unlike many preachers of our day, Jesus did not desire a large following. He would rather have men count the cost of discipleship and opt to stay out than to merely go along with Him ignorantly. Jesus’ words here state that discipleship comes at a very high cost, but also imply that the price of discipleship often is collected later. Jesus informs these followers of what that cost will be, lest they commit themselves to a course they will not complete.

Our Lord cites two illustrations of those who commenced a project without counting the cost and determining if they had the needed resources. The first is that of a man who purposes to build a tower, but did not calculate the total cost, and so the tower was never finished. This “unfinished tower” became a monument to this man’s folly. What the man thought would bring him fame, brought him shame.

The second illustration is that of a king, who goes to war against another king, but without calculating whether or not he had the manpower to win. Because he was outnumbered two-to-one, he had to humble himself and surrender to his enemy, entirely at his mercy. Again, he was put to shame because he commenced without counting the cost.

In thinking about both of these illustrations, I believe that what they have in common is the key to understanding what our Lord meant to teach us by using them:

(1) Both the builder and the king committed themselves to a course of action without having counted the cost.

(2) Both the builder and the king discovered, after they committed themselves to a course of action, that they did not have the resources to complete what they had started.

(3) Both the builder and the king failed to finish, and ended in humiliation and shame.

(4) In both instances, the builder and the king should have sat down and reflected, rather than acting quickly.

Noting these common characteristics, let us now consider what Jesus meant for His listeners to learn. What was Jesus trying to say, especially to these crowds, who were following along after Him?

First, I believe that Jesus wanted all men to know, in advance, that the price of discipleship was high.

Yes, they were all enthusiastic and eager now, but Jerusalem was coming, as was the cross. Jesus did not want men and women following Him without knowing that there was a “cross” for them as well. Jesus wanted men to calculate the cost of following Him as His disciple.

Second, Jesus wanted men to choose to be His disciple purposefully, rather than to unthinkingly follow after Him. If Jesus was not after a large following of uncommitted followers, neither was He pressing them for a quick decision. The very difficulty of His words caused the people to have to go away and ponder what He meant. Furthermore, in His two illustrations, Jesus said that each man should have **sat down** and considered what he purposed to do. Sitting down implied that some time and much thought should have been devoted to this matter of discipleship. Quick decisions are only for those who want unthinking commitment; slow, deliberate decisions are for those who want long-term commitments.

Third, Jesus not looking for those who had the resources to follow Him, but for those who, after thinking about it, knew they did not. For me, this is one of the most important conclusions I have reached from my study of this text. At first, I thought that Jesus was, like the Marines, “looking for a few good men,” those few who would count the cost, and who found in themselves sufficient commitment and resources to follow-through in their commitment to the end.

But then I realized that none of the disciples of our Lord followed through. When the “going got tough,” so to speak, the disciples “got lost.” They all forsook Jesus, even Peter, who assured Jesus that he was committed, that he would never forsake Him (cf. Luke 22:31-34). If Peter, James, and John, the three closest followers of Christ, could not follow through, why would we dare to think that we would?

It also occurred to me that in both of the illustrations which our Lord used, both of the men failed to follow through. Neither had the means to finish what they had started. Do we think that we have the means to be His

disciples? Do we think that our level of commitment is sufficient to sustain us when family and friends forsake us, as the Bible says they will?

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A MAN’S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it” (Matthew 10:34-39, NASB).

I maintain that no one has the resources in and of himself to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, any more than he or she has the resources to earn God’s favor and eternal life. This is precisely why Jesus began by teaching that in order to be His disciple one would have to “hate” his family, to renounce his dependence upon family, so as to depend fully upon Christ alone. Our Lord is not trying to get these followers to muster up enough commitment to become His disciples, but to reckon with the reality that no one has the resources to follow Him, apart from His enablement. Discipleship, then, is not following Christ with sufficient means to do what He commands, but with utter dependence upon Him to enable us to do His will. Both the willing and the doing come from Him, and not from us. The whole concept of the “company of the committed” collapses, simply because no one is that capable or that committed. The key element of discipleship is not obedience, for we are incapable of that in and of ourselves, but dependence, for without Him, we can do nothing.

Christ’s Conclusion (14:33-35)

“In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Verse 33 really makes sense, when approached in the light of this view of discipleship, which we have just outlined. Discipleship is not a matter of how much we have to offer, but of renouncing all that we think we have to offer. The cults all seek disciples, but they usually do not encourage their “disciples” to “give up” all their possessions, but to “give them away,” namely, to give their possessions to the leader. In this way, the disciples of a cult sustain their leader. The cult leader does not sustain them. Jesus wants it the other way. To be His disciple you do not bring anything to Him, to prove your commitment and worthiness, you leave all behind, trusting only on Him and on His faithful provision of all that we need to do what He calls us to do. This is true discipleship. Discipleship, like salvation, begins by recognizing the high price required, and that we are unable to meet it, and thus coming to Christ empty-handed, looking to Him to do what we cannot.

Verses 34 and 35 conclude this passage. They explain for us why Jesus discouraged a large following. The key to the impact of His disciples is not their large number, but their distinctiveness. Very little salt is required to season a large quantity of food because salt has a very distinct flavor. When salt loses its distinctness, it loses its value. Great quantities of salt do not make up for its loss of saltiness.

So, too, great numbers of disciples do not guarantee great impact. It is not the sheer number of disciples that matters, but it is their distinctness, their utter differentness from the world. The world will take little note of a large group of people who think, feel, and act like them. The world will take note of a very few “disciples” who are Christ-like, whose lives are distinctive.

This is, I believe, our Lord’s view of discipleship, but I fear that it is not the thinking of many Christians, or even of Christian leaders. I fear that the reason is due to the fact that we view discipleship through the “political model,” rather than the “prophetic model.” The political model holds that given enough votes, anyone can be elected and any law can be passed. The political model finds its power at the polls, and thus numbers are the major consideration. In the prophetic model, it matters not that only one prophet speaks. What matters is that this one prophet is right, and that he speaks for God. The Joseph’s, the Daniel’s, the Nathan’s were not effective because they were great in number (Prophets were a lonely bunch —no wonder Elijah thought he alone was left!), but because God empowered them and spoke through them.

When we recognize that power and impact does not come through the number of disciples, but through their dependence upon God and their distinctive lifestyles, then we understand why Jesus did not seek a large following.

The final verse, “Let him who has ears, . . .” is one that is found several times in the gospels. It always is used in a context where our Lord’s words are not going to be understood by the majority, and where Jesus encouraged His listeners to ponder His words carefully to learn their meaning. Let these last words have their full impact on us as well, then, for not all will grasp what Jesus is saying, especially apart from serious meditation on this text.

(Adapted from URL: <https://bible.org/seriespage/how-hate-your-wife-luke-1425-35>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

In our study of today’s two lesson texts, we have seen how two seemingly incompatible ideas belong together. Jesus indeed brings God’s promised rule, but he warns us that God’s victory is achieved in weakness, lowliness, and suffering. We cannot expect to receive a calling from the Lord as dramatic as the one that Peter, Andrew, James, and John received. None of us are called to be eyewitnesses of Jesus’ ministry on earth as those four were. Yet like them, we share in his mission of advancing the promised reign of God. Jesus calls us to be his instruments so that God’s will can be done on earth as it is in Heaven. That calling makes us more than people who give lip service to a vaguely Christian identity. Rather, Jesus’ call demands of us our all. That call challenges our fundamental relationships, even as it compels us to love our family and friends more than we ever have before. The call demands that all our possessions and time be put at God’s disposal as we invest earthly resources for eternal return: the harvest of souls. The call means leaving many treasures behind but receiving countless more in return (Luke 18:29, 30). Some think of the word Christian to be a term for those who confess Christ, while the word disciple is reserved for those seriously committed to following him. The New Testament knows no such distinction. To confess Christ as Lord demands a counting of the cost of that confession. The cost is everything, but the payoff (if that’s the best term) is participation in the eternal, victorious rule of God Almighty.

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

The Call - Jesus called four fishermen—Andrew, Simon (Peter), James, and John—to put aside their livelihood and follow Him. These four, as well as the other disciples, responded to an uncommon call. The Father, according to His plan, had already appointed these men to become fishers of men, drawing people into God’s kingdom.

True Disciples - Jesus’ small group of disciples accompanied Him as He ministered to the multitudes. He appealed to the crowd to look beyond immediate needs and become true disciples. He knew within each audience stood people who saw Him as more than a miracle worker. A few desired to become a student or learner, wholeheartedly committed to Him. A genuine Christ follower understands the need to place their relationship with Him as their first and main priority. The alliance to other family members and friends has to become secondary or in a place of a low priority in comparison to their relationship with the Lord.

The Cross - Jesus’ disciples must willingly lay down their lives, reputations, and careers for the cause of furthering God’s kingdom. Jesus called this “taking up your cross.” People in His day knew all about Roman executions. No one willingly died on a cross.

Dying for Christ opens the door to disappointments, ridicule, pain, and loss as you put aside the highly valued things of this world. Enlisting in Christ’s army requires a total surrender of earthly, self-seeking pleasures and positions. Those who cling to the things of this world cannot be His disciples.

Count the Cost - Jesus illustrated the cost of following Him with parables about construction of a tower and a king headed to war. In these stories, a wise builder and a military leader made plans and anticipated the cost. In the same way, Jesus challenged His disciples to seriously sit down and think through their commitment. Those committed to Jesus need to understand the proper place of all other relationships in comparison to Him. Believers in other countries understand when they say “yes” to Christ it may mean losing their lives or the lives of their loved ones. Yet, they count the cost, pledge allegiance to Christ, and remain steadfast. Their witness should cause all Christians to consider how committed they are to Christ themselves.