

## **The Cost of Discipleship**

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*Jeremiah 20:7-13*

*Psalms 69: 8-11; 18-20*

*Romans 6:1b-11*

*Matthew 10:24-39*

When I first went to look at the lessons for this morning, I picked up one of my bibles that give snappy headings to each scripture passage. It's great, it makes thumbing through and finding particular texts pretty easy. When I got to Matthew 10:24 I saw the words jump right off the page: "The Cost of Discipleship." It's the first Sunday of summer and up to bat are the light topics: losing one's life and a sword in lieu of peace, great.

As I sat and prayed with this passage I continued to be drawn back to those words, "cost of discipleship." And true to that heading in this text, Jesus is preparing the disciples for the hardships they will face as His followers, for the cost that they must be willing to make. He explains that disciples are not above their teachers but are to be like their teachers and like their teacher, Jesus, they will experience that same alienation by the people just as He has and will at His death. Jesus takes up His cross and the disciples must be willing to do the same. And as Jesus loses His life, the disciples too are being called to be willing to lose theirs. All of the twelve disciples go on to martyred deaths with the exception of John, so they did indeed live this out. Jesus was asking no small thing of His followers. Truth be told, He was asking for everything. After all of the miracles, all of the lessons, everything, the parables, the teachings, the learnings, He was asking those at His feet to give themselves completely to this work and this way of life. There's no halfway in this message, it's an all or nothing charge. And this text puts us in the very heart of what it means to follow God, to follow that way and to be disciples in our own life each day.

There were three things that bubbled up out of this text for me. The first one was trusting in God. Jesus calls and challenges and affirms we must trust in God, we must believe in all of our heart in God. He says, are two sparrows sold for a penny, yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father and even the hairs on your head are all counted, so do not be afraid, you are of more value than many sparrows. There's nothing easy about this message but we are offered the constant good news of God's saving grace and love for each of us. God so cares for us that even the smallest bird holds God's love. And each of us are held right down to the very last hair on our head. So whatever challenges Jesus puts before the disciples and before us, He prefaces it by saying that we need not fear because we live all of this out in the midst of God's love and God's care for us. The key and the trick are to somehow trust that in our own lives. It's often a challenge for us, and we see over and over again, it was a real challenge for the disciples. Trusting

takes work and it seems like we are pretty programmed early on in our life to be suspicious and untrusting of anything and everyone, we should always pause and ask.

I think about that issue of trust and needing to fall back and to trust God, to be in God's arms. I kept thinking back to my camp days and when I was a camp counselor and we all gathered to the ropes course as part of our training. Some of you may be familiar with ropes courses or group building exercises where you did something known as the trust fall. If you've done it, you know what I'm talking about. It definitely requires trust, whether you are standing on a chair or a table and in the case of my camp a big tree stump that was almost as tall as me. You would stand on this log and eight people would be behind you, four and four facing one another with their arms crossing, reaching out ready to catch you as you stood with your back to them ready to fall. You would say "falling," and you'd cross your arms and you would fall back and they would catch you. Well, I managed to avoid this exercise for a number of years until finally a group said why does Paige always something else to do when we're gathering for the ropes course? And so I got taken over, and I'm up on the log and I'm terrified. You know, intellectually I get it, they were going to catch me, there were plenty of bodies there to catch me. But there was this emotional and psychological pull that I couldn't make my body fall. So the first couple of times I did it I actually sat instead of falling straight back. What happened when I did partially was you can kind of fall through the four people there because you hit so much weight at one place. You have to do it fully, you have to trust yourself and let go and fall fully back, you can't do it halfway. Which I think helps in pointing out this message of today that God is calling for the whole, the entirety of our life, not the halfway. We have to give of our self a bit and trust and to fall back in that. Now when they would catch you the people would gently sway you down, holding you and put you on the ground. As they put me down on the ground I think that was the first time I would breathe, but there was something so gentle and loving about being cradled and carried down and I offer that as an image as well. When we lean back and when we are able to trust, God cradles and holds us in a way that isn't possible when we can't do it fully.

The second thing I want to offer up that I lifted from this passage was professing this belief and this trust in God. We have to profess it in our lives. God says, Jesus says, what I say to you in the dark, tell in the light and what you hear whispered proclaim from the housetops. Our life and our words are being called out of us. We must at some point be willing to speak about our faith. Someone told me that they were getting coffee one morning and they got cornered by someone who said, you go to Trinity right? She said yes, want to come? Then they said wait a minute, you welcome all people in your church there don't you? No matter what their gender preference is? She stopped for a minute and realized where they were going and said well yes. Then the person said, well you know the bible says that's not right. She was really caught off guard and didn't know how to respond. The first thought was, you know what, I'm embarrassed, I'm in an office setting, this isn't the place where I normally talk about my faith and I don't want other co-workers in the midst of all this so I'm going to let this go. So she let it go. It was this missed moment to say yes, I believe in a God that loves everyone and that holds all of us. I believe in that God. I don't judge this person because let me tell you, I miss those moments every day, I think we all do. It's very easy to say it's somebody else's job to

profess, but it's ours. Our faith cannot live on and Christ's love cannot live on in this world if we are not willing to put words to our faith, to talk about it. It'll die with our generation in this time if we don't bring our children and our friends and the people we touch in our lives in to this community. Invite them and share the story of God's love, we have to share it. That's part of our call and He's clear, we must go and shout it from the housetops.

The third message that pops for me in this is that we are being called to reorder and prioritize in our life, to follow God first and foremost with everything. He says do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother... and on it goes. So is Jesus preaching to his disciples against family? What is the meaning of this piece of text? I think it's important to point that time and era. In Jesus day, the family was the central body of power and authority in one's life. The eldest man of the home was head of the house and a governing voice. And the family defined what was truth, what the rules were and what the family ultimately valued. The family unit was where you gained your identity in the community, your status, your power and your place. Loyalty was always to the family first and foremost. So Jesus is pushing back at that. Jesus is telling the disciples that first you have to have loyalty to God, first and foremost. We have to reorder our priorities and understand our connection with God first in our life. That we are baptized in our life to a new family and a new way of being that goes beyond blood relatives, it's bigger, it's all of us and our families. During that time in the preaching and teaching of Jesus there were a lot of divisions in many families as some family members were seeking to follow Jesus and others were remaining tied to that old model of family above all else. So Jesus is clear that there isn't peace in this and that the struggle to make God first is real and hard. And that the things we love the very most in our lives, our families, we have to move beyond those to this larger family first. It isn't easy and it asks for our utmost loyalty to God. In our baptism we become part of a larger family and God becomes the head of that house for us. We put all things before God and as head of our family, as head of the sister and brotherhood of all believers, we are giving new values, new power, new rules and new ways to understand ourselves in the world and in society. Have you ever noticed, or been here for baptisms at Trinity and we will say the person, adult or child, we will say the person's first and middle name but we don't say their family name, their last name. We are baptized into Christian community and we take the name Christian first and that's what we hold up at that baptism. Over being Fishers or Johnsons or Smiths or O'Briens, the family of the faithful is what we hold up above all else, a new family that holds everything.

So when we think about the three challenges of this text, of trusting God and being held by God, of professing that truth and being willing to talk about our faith and reordering our life in a way that puts God first, we are being asked to live a new way of life. Death to old priorities, old agendas, old attachments, being faithful isn't going to fit into our lives as a sidebar. It isn't something we can pull out just when we need it and then keep it locked away until it's convenient. It isn't part-time, it isn't a partial commitment, it is all in, in its entirety of our life. It will impact everything when we understand it that way.

I want to look to read the final words of this blessing in light of baptism. Those who find their life will lose it and those who lose their life for my sake will find it, is how Jesus ends this lesson. In baptism we are drowned, drowned in the water of baptism. Buried and brought into new life in Christ. And in our faith we give up and we lose old ways, they die to us. And new life comes in Jesus, in our baptism we are born into this, a life that can't ever be taken away from us. A life that changes our hearts on the inside and that ultimately when it changes our hearts it reaches out and changes others and potentially we change the world.

Many of us, all of us, none of us understand a faith that has to be martyred, so we may ask what does this mean day to day in our own lives. What does it mean in our going on here and there and I think the truth is its really different for all of us. The ways we connect and go deeper in our faith is different from person to person. The hope is that we can take moments to think about what those ways might be in our life and reach for them. I think more often than not we go deeper with God when we reach out to one another in relationship. And so the offering in this text is for us to think about ways in our own life where we might be able to go deeper and to give more of ourselves, because like that trust fall that I never got great at, but it did get better, the more we reach and the more we put trust in God, and the more we move towards that, the easier it does get and the better we are able to live towards this perfection. Each new day the charge and challenges of Jesus' words are set right before us and they serve as the goals that God has given us. We're going to spend the rest of our lives striving to reach these goals. But we all come together here week in and week out and we live them out together and we work on them together and we hold each other up when we are struggling. It's rewarding and worth the work of being a people of faith but there is a cost and that is what is offered up to us in this text today. So as we go forth back into the world and back into our lives, can we be filled with that belief in God and that trust in God, and a willingness to profess it in the world and in our homes and families, even at the coffeemaker, and the strength and courage to put God before all else in our lives. Amen.