

The Cost of Discipleship

Sermon 2018-02-25 - Year B - Lent 2 - The Rev. Christopher M. Klukas

Genesis 22:1–14; Psalm 16:5–11; Romans 8:31–39; Mark 8:31–38

- Outrageous marketing claims of our consumer-focused culture
- You need this to be happy. You deserve this. Why wait, buy now and pay later.
- Salvation in a phone, a car, a beer, a house, a degree, you name it!
- This is a message of self-indulgence.

The Temptation of Glory

- This morning we listened in on Jesus as he told his disciples, for the first time, what was going to happen to him. Mark 8:31.
- Peter rebukes Jesus. Jesus was challenging Peter's notions of what was going to happen. Peter just declared his belief that Jesus is the Christ. Peter thinks he is on the winning team, and Jesus is saying that this movement is leading to his death.
- Jesus rebukes Peter. Get behind me Satan! Strong words! Mark 8:33
- Peter is tempting Jesus with the same things that Satan was tempting Jesus with during his 40 days in the wilderness. Peter is tempting Jesus to circumvent the cross.
- Jesus was born to die. He knew it had to be this way from the moment of the very first sin of Adam and Eve. Jesus came to rescue us, but the rescue comes with a price.
- "This is clear: He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering. Therefore he prefers, works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and, in general, good to evil. These are the people whom the apostle calls "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18), for they hate the cross and suffering and love works and the glory of works" (Luther, Heidelberg Disputation, 21).
 - Sound as if Luther was writing this as a critique of our culture today.
 - We can be tempted to think that following Jesus is an exchange. We pledge our faith in him, and in return he gives us blessings of comfort, wealth, and health.
 - "O Lord, won't you buy me a mercedes benz" (Janis Joplin).

The Cost of Discipleship

- The hard words of Jesus to those who would follow him. Mark 8:34-35
- These words aren't just for Peter, or the 12, or even the crowd. They are for us too.
- The goal of a disciple is to become as much like his teacher as possible. If we are to be like Jesus, we too must deny ourselves and take up our crosses.
- Was Jesus thinking of himself when he allowed himself to be crucified? Absolutely not! Jesus' crucifixion was the most selfless act in the history of the whole universe.
- We all begin our lives as inward and selfish people. Some of us never move too far from that starting place. But to be a follower of Jesus is to learn how to put our selfishness aside and put others before ourselves.
- "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself." The disciple must say to himself the same words Peter said of Christ when he denied him: "I know not this man" ...To

deny oneself is to be aware only of Christ and no more of self, to see only him who goes before and no more the road which is too hard for us. Once more, all that self denial can say is: "He leads the way, keep close to him." (Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship)

The Joy of Obedience

- So what gets in the way of you following the one who is leading you?
- Imagine how hard it must have been for Abraham to climb that mountain with Isaac. To bind him and lay him on the wood for the sacrifice. To raise the knife to kill him.
- Isaac was Abraham's only son from his wife Sarah. He had waited years for this child that God had promised him. Isaac was a miracle baby, born well past childbearing years.
- Did God really want Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? No! God wanted to see what was most important to Abraham. God or his son, his only son whom he loved.
- What is the Isaac in your life? What means more to you than anything else in this world? What makes you say, "Lord I will follow you wherever you want me to go, just don't make me leave XXXXX behind."
- This is the definition of an idol, something that we have made to be more important than God. God won't necessarily ask you to leave that thing behind, but he wants you to open up your hands and loosen your grip and let him be the most important person in your life.
- Mark 8:35 "For whoever would save his life will lose it..."
- Trapeze artist: you can't grab the next bar until you let go of the one you are holding.
- We must be willing to let go of everything in our lives to embrace the one thing that is truly important: God himself.
- Mark 8:36 "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?"
- Following Jesus is not a joyless life of drudgery, for in following Jesus we find joy.
- Peter and the other apostles all died the death of a martyr with the exceptions of Judas, who betrayed Jesus, and John, the beloved disciples, who was exiled to Patmos.
- Luther spent much of his life on the run and in fear for his life, but he continued to preach his message of salvation by grace alone through faith and to translate the Bible.
- Bonhoeffer started an underground church and an underground seminary to ensure that the message of the Gospel would continue to be proclaimed even in the midst of the lies of the Nazis. He died as a martyr and was executed in a concentration camp.
- None of these men would have changed a thing, for they were following Jesus.
- Not trying to guilt you into superhero Christianity. Inviting you to put God first.

Conclusion

- Does this sound hard? In many ways it is. Discipleship IS costly, and there is a lot of the old Adam in us that clings to selfishness and self-fulfillment.
- In another way, however, it is not. The ability to lay down our lives is a gift from God.
- "Fruit is always the miraculous, the created; it is never the result of willing, but always a growth. The fruit of the Spirit is a gift of God, and only He can produce it. They who bear it know as little about it as the tree knows of its fruit. They know only the power of Him on whom their life depends" (Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship)