

The Cost

Luke 14:25-35

The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, September 4, 2016

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

When our Lord institutes Holy Baptism He does so in a command regarding the discipling of the nations. He commands, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep everything that I have commanded." When the Lord commands this He reveals how a disciple is made. A disciple is made by baptizing someone in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and instructing them in what Jesus has commanded. Do both of these things to someone and that someone is a disciple. He is a disciple just as surely as the men to whom Jesus approached and said, "Follow Me," are disciples.

That means that all of you are disciples. You have all been baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. You are currently being instructed in everything that your Lord has commanded. Since Jesus has promised that is how a disciple is made, you are therefore disciples of Jesus. You are disciples of Jesus as much as the men to whom Jesus approached and said, "Follow Me."

There is a cost to discipleship. Here I am not referring to the price that Jesus paid to make you a disciple. He paid dearly to make you a disciple. He does not give the command to make disciples until after He has paid the price. But I am not talking about that. I am talking about the price that you will pay because you are disciples of the One who rose from the dead.

Now when I speak of cost, I am not talking about the price that you pay to become a disciple of Jesus. The fact that you are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and instructed in what Jesus has commanded for you has already made you a disciple. I am talking about the price that you pay because you are a disciple of Jesus. There will be a price.

And the price is this, Jesus comes before everything. He comes before father and mother. He comes before wife and children. He comes before brother or sister. He comes before your own life. This is the cost of discipleship.

There was a young woman freshly divorced and looking for direction in her life. She had two small children that she had to raise basically on her own. She found direction for her life in a local Lutheran Church. She took the catechesis and joined the congregation and enrolled her children in the congregation's school. This woman's mother was an unbeliever.

Her mother did not believe in Jesus. What she thought about Jesus she kept to herself. What she would say is that everyone is going to make it no matter what. You don't have to believe in Jesus to be saved. Her mother insisted that Jesus could not forgive sins. Her mother insisted that the church could not forgive sins on Jesus' behalf. Her mother insisted that Jesus had not risen from the dead. Her mother questioned her without mercy regarding her belief that only those who believe in Jesus would be saved. Her mother accused her of bigotry and narrow mindedness. Her mother accused her of arrogance and self-righteousness. Her mother wanted to know who she thought she was that she believed that only those who believe in Jesus would be saved.

Her mother read books on universalism. She was convinced that it was right and that her daughter's faith was incorrect. She and her daughter would argue on the phone and argue in person. She condemned her daughter not only on this point, but on other failings of her daughter.

Now the daughter must make up her mind. Do I stick with my new found faith or do I give in to my mother? The God that I worship commands me to honor my father and my mother. Is it honoring her that we argue so much? Wouldn't it be better if I just gave up on the whole Jesus thing and believed in universalism like my mother? Or wouldn't it be better if I kept going to Divine Service with my children and simply never talk to my mother about religion? That is the greatest temptation. The greatest temptation is to engage in hypocrisy: to go to Divine Service, but then never refute your mother when she touts falsehood.

This particular young woman stuck to her faith. There were times when she argued with her mother about Jesus. There were some times when her mother's accusations of her sins were right. She stuck with Jesus all of the way. And unlike so many rosy stories that you may see on the internet, this particular woman's mother died in unbelief. She never did come around to faith in Jesus in spite of the witness of her daughter. Her daughter remains faithful to Jesus even now.

This was the price that she paid for her discipleship. She did not ask to pay it. She did not want to pay it, but pay it she did. She did not seek to pay it. She loved Jesus more than father and mother.

Jesus through His apostles forbids fornication. He forbids divorce and remarriage under certain circumstances. He forbids adultery.

There once as a mother and a father who raised their children in godliness. They had had the talk with them about God's expectations regarding their sexuality. As long as their children were living at home everything seemed to be going well. But when their oldest son moved to college and began dating a young woman, they began to suspect that he was committing fornication. They had no evidence that he had done so, but there were hints in what they said about each other that this relationship had fornication as part of it. The parents understood the commandment of God that they should not damage the reputation of others. They knew that they were forbidden from damaging the reputation of their children. They conducted no investigation of their son's behavior. They simply paid attention to what he was willing to share. Eventually the evidence grew to such a degree that the mother asked her son whether or not he was engaged in fornication with this young woman.

His answer does not matter. What matters is that she asked him.

On another occasion this young man's father had warned him against fornication with the young woman just in case that was the sin that their son was committing. The son did not like hearing what his father had to say about the situation, but his father said it anyway.

How many parents these days who profess faith in Jesus Christ and attend the Divine Service would have done what these parents did? How many parents would have allowed their children to engage in fornication and broadcast it to the world by cohabitation without a single rebuke? Such parents who allow their children to do such thing against God's Law and will without a word of rebuke do so because they claim to love their children. They do not want to go through the trouble of the pain that it would cause the child to correct him. They do not want to go through with him older what they went through with him when he was younger. The parents say nothing and they continue to attend the Divine Service. They continue to drink the very body and blood of the One whose word they are withholding from their children. They do so in order not to upset the children and by doing so they love the children more than they love Jesus.

The parents who corrected their son loved Jesus more than they loved their son. It was uncomfortable and difficult. There were times of silence in their relationship with their son, but they paid the price. They were disciples of Jesus.

There is a man who has a brother who does not believe in Jesus. Family gatherings are uncomfortable experiences. When the man hosts his brother in his home for a weekend, they go to Divine Service anyway even though his brother and his brother's family stay in their home and do not attend with them. This man leads the family in prayer over the food even though his brother and his family are sitting there not participating in the prayer. It is uncomfortable and difficult.

When the subject of Jesus comes up the man is not ashamed to speak of his Lord. He does not bring the subject up on purpose, but the subject comes up naturally. His brother does not want to speak about Jesus. His brother does not want anything to do with Jesus. His brother wishes that the subject of Jesus would not come up at all.

It would be tempting in such a situation just to skip the Divine Service on the one weekend that his brother came. It would be tempting just to stay home with them, visit, watch TV, go for a walk, or do something fun with the niece and the nephew. It would be tempting on the weekends when the brother is there simply not to pray over the meals. It would be tempting to avoid talking about Jesus even when the subject does naturally arise in conversation.

But this man did not do any of those things. If the brother said something that had to do with Jesus this man would talk about Jesus. If the brother sat down to eat a meal in his home, he would lead the family in prayer. And he would leave his brother and his brother's family in his home and take his family to the Divine Service on Sunday morning. He did not want to be a hypocrite nor appear a hypocrite in the eyes of his children. He paid the price of his discipleship. It was not a price that he wanted to pay, but pay it he did.

When our Lord talks about hating our own lives in order to be His disciples, we often think about giving our lives for Jesus.

Aristotle defined a heroic death. A heroic death is a death where the person dying gives his life in victorious battle, defending and saving the lives of others. It was not enough to die in battle for Aristotle knew that people died in battle because they stumbled over a rock and their enemy caught them and killed them. Aristotle knew that there were those who gave their lives for others, but in nonglorious fashion. Aristotle knew that a truly noble death is a death where you give your life for your cause and save others in the process.

When we think of giving our lives for Jesus we think about this sort of giving. We think about dying for Jesus.

Louis Brighton was fond of an account that he had heard in England. He had met a man who had come out of Europe under Nazi rule. For some reason the Nazi's had captured this man and his family. The Nazi's put a gun to his head and told him to renounce Christ or die. When he refused to renounce Christ the Nazis put a gun to his wife's head and his children's head and told him to renounce Christ or they would die. Before he could say anything his wife and children begged him not to renounce Christ because even if they died they wanted to see him in life everlasting. So he refused to renounce Christ and the Nazis promptly killed his wife and children. Then they released him. He was a widower and childless because of his confession of Christ. Louis Brighton met him in England and that is where the man told him what had happened to him. When we think of giving our life for Christ we often think of something heroic like that. Certainly this man and others like him in Syria, Sudan, and other places have paid the same price, but does that mean that the freedom of religion that we enjoy in the United States prevents us from paying such a price?

The answer is no. You will offer your life to Christ. For our Lord says that anyone who does not hate his own life cannot be My disciple. He does not say that anyone who is unwilling to give His life cannot be My disciple.

So here is the deal, do you love your life in this world? Because if you do, there will come a point in time where you will be asked by Jesus to risk the comforts of this life. There will be times when Jesus will ask you to pay the cost of discipleship by giving up your reputation for His sake, by giving up looking like the rest of the world and getting with the times for His sake. There will be a time when your faith in Jesus will ask you to choose between getting with the times, looking like the world around you and looking like a backwards fool, hanging on to the practices of the past because you believe in Jesus.

The price that you will pay in such a circumstance will vary with the circumstance, but as a disciple you will pay it. Anyone who does not cannot be His disciple.

That is why if salt has lost its saltiness it is thrown onto the manure pile. It is good for nothing.

It would be foolish for a man to start building a new building on his farm, but forget to calculate the cost in advance. It would be really dumb if he laid the foundation and could not finish. His neighbors would talk about him.

It would be foolish for a king who had an army of ten thousand to go out to war against a king with twenty thousand. The price of defeat is worse than that price of peace.

So also it would be foolish for you to be disciples of Jesus without understanding its cost.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.