

Luke

The Gospel for Everyone

Study 23 | Luke 14:25-35

News and Needs

Upcoming Events:

- **Resurrection Prayer Night** - On the second Thursday of every month at 7:00 PM, we will gather at the church to pray for the needs of our church, our neighborhood, and the world. Join us to worship God and ask him as a Father for all that we need. The dates for your calendar are: **March 11**, April 8, and May 13.

Opportunities to Serve:

- Our team left February 12th for Ethiopia and will return February 27th. Please pray for the Project in Addis Ababa, Andy and Bev Warren the project managers, and our team going over this year - Pastor Chris Hildebrand, Audrey Morrison, and Jerod Huggins.

“New Family”

1. Do you think Jesus means what he says in verses 25-27? If so, in what ways? How might family--even when it's good--become a hindrance to following Jesus? How do you find yourself loving 'your own life' more than following Jesus?

Dear community group leader, we're trusting you not to let the first question be a stinker. Try to set it up, please. Or give it some elucidation. And we are thinking primarily of verse 26. Is Jesus being hyperbolic? Setting up some shocking contrast? Does he intend for his followers to 'hate' their family and their life? If he does mean precisely such--in any sense--then *how* does he mean it? In what ways must disciples 'hate' their own lives, their family? How does the love of family normally work in the world? How is this detrimental to the all-out-cost of following Jesus? What sort of priorities, commitments, concerns, double-mindedness, and such result from a love of family? This is how your discussion should evolve: just as it has unfolded in this paragraph. At some point it may be helpful to share that there is a poetic/linguistic technique common to the Hebrew language of the Old Testament that may help us here. Often in the OT you'll see a phrase like "loved...hated" and it doesn't mean quite what we mean when we set up those polar opposites. It has a much softer idea of comparison, wherein one object gets the glory and commitment from a lover, for example, while another is passed over--but not because the lover had personal hatred in his heart for the wedding ring that was passed over. One concrete and famous example: God said, before either of them were born, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated." No Hebrew reader would have taken from this that God despised Esau in his heart of hearts from the time Esau was conceived and wanted to extract pain from him all of his life. No. Rather, it means that Jacob was favored and chosen (even though second-born) and Esau was passed over. Jesus may be picking up on this Hebraism in this section. The question still remains: How can we make family and our own life a distant second in our favor for and commitment to God?

2. How do the illustrations in verses 28-33 help us to make sense of what Jesus is calling us to in discipleship? What are the things that tend to challenge our attempts to 'finish' well with Jesus? What would it mean practically for you to 'renounce' all that you have to be Jesus' disciple?

Remember that in the narrative of Luke and in the actual history it records, Jesus is being portrayed as a revolutionary who is heading toward Jerusalem

and building an army in order to stage a coup and set up his (God's) new kingdom. And so this next section makes more sense. He's actually warning the large numbers of people who are eagerly signing up to be part of his coming-kingdom party how much it will actually cost them. He's tempering naive enthusiasm. 'Would you be my disciple?' he asks. 'Really? Well, you better count the cost of the entire process first!' And the cost is everything. In the end, it is literally everything. These people will not be able to follow him to Jerusalem, take part in a divine fireworks show, and then return home afterward to their kids and vineyard and two-donkey garage. If they want to start the journey, they need to be prepared and willing to lose it all, for good.

The question is how this is true for us? Doubtless you've had many friends come to faith for a while and then walk away. What were the things that ended up being a 'cost' they were no longer willing to bear? Where were their loves for their own life or this world or others too strong, such that they stopped following Jesus? Probably all of you have seen this happen countless times with individuals in the realm of dating, for example. What others have you seen and do you struggle with yourself? What does it mean practically to renounce everything to follow Jesus?

3. What does Jesus mean here by comparing disciples to salt? In what specific areas of life do you think we need to help each other as a community to be more 'salty'? What are some practical ways we can both challenge and assist one another to be more committed disciples in the ways Jesus describes here?

Salt is one of the most amazing little substances in the world. It is unfathomably powerful to *preserve* and to *flavor* almost any other form of food you add it to. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7) Jesus talks about salt and there he emphasizes the preservative nature of salt, and of the Christians he compares to salt. Salt and God's church *preserve* society, keeping it by their holy presence from decaying into the full putrid sinfulness it would run headlong into if there were not Christians in society to stay evil's influence. So we preserve the good flavor of the world by preventing it from sinful misuse and decay. But here Jesus emphasizes the *tastiness* of salt, and of his followers' work in the world. Salt is supposed to taste good and to improve the flavors of other things; if it doesn't, it's useless, like sulfur, so throw it out. And here the tastiness and flavor in question is a disciple's faithfulness and total commitment to Jesus no matter what it costs him or her, even life itself. Remember there is no paragraph break in Jesus' first words. So how is long-term prioritization of and commitment to God over all things like *flavor* for the world? How do we help each other keep this flavor here in New York?

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