

Sermon Draft for September 7, 2025

Text: Luke 14:25–35

Sermon: “Discipleship”

To love the Lord, to obey his voice, and to hold fast to him requires grace. It requires the gifts of Word and Sacrament and the Holy Spirit who works through these means to create and preserve faith in our hearts and to anchor us always in Christ and his perfect atoning work for us.

Our Gospel further illustrates the life of the believer, the one who bears his cross and follows Jesus. Such a life requires that we renounce the ways of the world, even our own natural relations, if necessary, when these hinder us from following Jesus.

Jesus’ words are not just for the apostles but for all people. In other words, there is no distinction between the apostles and the ordinary believer. The same high standard of following Jesus applies to all.

Building a building isn't cheap. It costs. A lot of developers have put out a big proud sign with their name on it over a downtown lot and then gone bankrupt, leaving an embarrassing start of steel and concrete.

Going to war is risky. A king, a president, maybe a dictator is putting the fate and future of a whole nation on the line at the cost of countless lives.

Perhaps surprisingly, sea salt, mostly sodium chloride, also contains other minerals that can be worked into fertilizer to make soil more productive. Unfortunately, it breaks down rather quickly, losing those helpful elements.

In our text, Jesus talks about each of these. They are each illustrations of how difficult the Christian life can be. But these are just the illustrations. Jesus also gives us a scenario we really may face.

God forbid that we ever find ourselves in this situation: Someone you love very much, a spouse, a child, a parent, an in-law isn't a Christian and not only makes that obvious but takes every opportunity to nip, to rag, to pick at your faith. Day after day. Morning, noon, and night. A constant barrage. That's a tough life! To bear it takes courage and strength. And that's the real-life lesson Jesus teaches us in our text.

To be a disciple of Christ requires courage and strength. To be a disciple of Christ is to follow him alone (vs 25–27). Eager crowds are following Jesus; everyone wants in. So, Jesus alerts them to what following him means.

Our text is part of what some call Jesus' "travel narrative" in Luke's Gospel, Jesus' final trip to Jerusalem. Jesus knows where he's headed and why. It's not a trip everyone will really want to take with him. Jesus is walking a definite path; some would prefer another. But we cannot walk both ways.

Jesus says, ***“No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other”*** (16:13). Jesus warns that the path of discipleship could come to this: hating one’s own family (v 26). We are, of course, to love father, mother, family.

The Bible, though, uses “hate” to describe anyone who is not the loved one (Genesis 29:30–33). There can only be one Number One. A father who sets a wicked example, the mother who neglects bringing her children to church, grown children who keep their own children from Baptism, sister-in-law who protests prayer at the Thanksgiving table, none of these can be the loved one. There can be only one.

Jesus’ trip to Jerusalem will take him to the cross, and being his disciple means following him to our crosses. Loving Christ over husband, wife, kids, family is one of the most painful crosses! It takes courage and strength!

To be a disciple of Christ comes at a cost (vs 28–33). Jesus gives two of those illustrations we talked about. The ill-advised tower everyone can see, and when it's left unfinished, it earns the builder mockery. He failed to count the cost! Any king who'd go to war outnumbered two to one would be a fool. Failed to count the cost! What are those costs when it comes to being disciples of Jesus?

That is, perhaps losing the affection of our families (9:59–62)! All worldly possessions, Jesus says (v 33). Like the nest egg we worry God won't stretch far enough, the extra 3 or 4 or 5 percent of income that would complete our tithe, the weekend place at the lake that kept us away from the Divine Service last Sunday. We cannot have the world and follow Jesus too (9:57–58). Count the cost! Do you want out now?

Lots of Jesus' eager crowd soon enough did opt out (8:13–14). Following Jesus, being a disciple, will be costly! Will we start to build that tower, follow Jesus, and then not finish? As Christians, we'll always be outnumbered, like the king going out to war.

Will we settle for peace with the world and lose Christ? It takes courage and strength to follow Christ!

To be a disciple of Christ means being the salt the Holy Spirit uses to point others to Christ (vs 34–35). Here's Jesus' other illustration of Christian discipleship: salt. It seems odd, salt losing its saltiness, its "taste." Here, though, Jesus is going beyond table salt. Salt has in the past been used as fertilizer. If you work it into the soil before the helpful elements break down, it has long-term benefits. But if not used in time for that, what good is it? Jesus has made each of us his disciples. He did go to Jerusalem, was abandoned by all those fair-weather followers and even by his closest disciples, and he did die on his cross. That earned for you and me forgiveness for loving other people, other things, more than we love him. It earned us eternal life in heaven. And by our baptism into Jesus' death and resurrection, we are his disciples.

That means he has made us salt. To be a disciple of Christ, to follow him alone, to renounce the ways of the world, is not to withdraw from the world. We are the salt used by the Holy Spirit to point others to the perfect and all-sufficient saving work of Christ.

But living in a hostile world that criticizes and mocks our values takes courage and strength. Those family members who oppose our faith, the world when it sees us make a good start in our Christian walk and then fall again and again will mock and scorn us. The easy way out is to withdraw into apathy. We have to be all in! This will be difficult! It takes courage and strength!

So, we pray in the Collect: ***“O merciful Lord, You did not spare Your only Son but delivered Him up for us all. Grant us courage and strength to take up the cross and follow Him.”*** And he does give us courage and strength, he does maintain our saltiness, as we abide always in the Scriptures and in the gathering of all the faithful around Word and Sacrament. Only by the very grace of God can we have the courage and strength to bear our cross and follow Jesus.

But this he gives.

***“Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord
Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I
to the world”*** (Galatians 6:14).

Costly. Painful. Difficult. Discipleship. And with it, life and good. In
Jesus name! Amen