

SERMON DRAFT

TEXT: LUKE 14:25-35

SERMON: “WALKING THE WALK WITH JESUS”

The Sundays after Pentecost focus on the life of Christ that is lived by the Christian through the working of the Spirit of Christ. The Mystery of Easter (death and resurrection) and Pentecost (Holy Spirit) provide the liturgical basis for understanding the life of the Christian as the life given in Baptism.

Do you like to walk? Some people like to walk fast for exercise, some like a nice slow walk to relax. Either way walking is good for us. The Scriptures and the prayers of the Church often speak of this life as a “way” or as a “walk.”

Such a walk is not a meandering but a purposeful and goal-oriented walk. It is a walk according to the commandments of God; it is a walk according to the life of Jesus. One who walks according to the teaching of his teacher is a disciple. Therefore, our text has Jesus speaking of the cost of discipleship in terms that reflect his own perfect discipleship of his Father’s will. The way of Jesus was the way of the cross, but this way was also the way of life, leading to eternal life.

The parable immediately preceding our text for today was the parable of the great banquet (Luke 14:12–24). Here, too, the obligations of the world (family, possessions) are a fateful hindrance to accepting God’s invitation to his feast. The invitation goes out to all in the highways and streets.

In our text this morning Jesus speaks of this invitation in terms of being his disciple. Therefore, he emphasizes the conditions of discipleship in similar fashion. Discipleship involves a total commitment of life. Only when such an invitation is received and accepted will the joyful blessings of the royal banquet be rewarded. But discipleship isn’t always easy. There can be and usually are many distractions and obstacles to distract us. Just like walking can be hard depending where one is walking.

There is a hymn, written in 1913, entitled “In the Garden.” Ann Murray and Alan Jackson both recorded it. It’s inspired from the Gospel of John chapter 20. I think it’s a great song but we probably won’t see it in our Lutheran hymnal anytime soon.

*I come to the garden alone, While the dew is still on the roses,
And the voice I hear falling on my ear, The Son of God discloses...
And He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He tells me I am
His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there, None other, has ever, known!
He speaks and the sound of His voice, Is so sweet the birds hush their
singing, And the melody that he gave to me, Within my heart is ringing
...
And He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He tells me I am
His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there, None other, has ever, known!*

This song describes a wonderful and comforting image of a pleasant day in a garden, conversing with Jesus, a good friend, while walking along quite casually and with no apparent destination or schedule. Indeed a nice image.

However, the words of our text present a different image. Jesus is not a sweet friend but a teacher making clear the demands for those desiring to be his disciple. Nor is the image that of a pleasant stroll. We are to walk not merely with Jesus but behind him (“follow me”) as his disciple. And that demands a cost. Jesus walked the way of the cross; now we are to walk that way.

We, unfortunately, since the exile from the Garden have our own way of walking. Man was created to live. Immortality in communion with God was to be the destination of man's way. Man knew God and trusted him from the bounty and beauty of creation. God was there to supply everything needed and more.

But now man loves created things and possessions; money, success, family, health (Luke 14:25–27). Such love is the source of many evils (1 Timothy 6:10). Evils such as fatalistic pursuit of pleasure and self-indulgence, even over-eating, gluttony. Evils such as insensitivities, And that's a big problem today in this me myself and I society. Evils such as idolatry, especially idolatry's baneful effects on trust, hope, love. The love of all of these things can take away from our relationship with God. As we learned in confirmation the first commandment is number one for a reason. Thou shall have no other gods before me. God is to be number one and when we allow earthly possessions and desires to distract us then we are not walking as we should. And I guess that's the real problem in the world today putting our self before others and before God.

Such love of stuff and ourselves compromises our love of Christ and his kingdom. Such love brings death: ***“Whoever keeps the commandment keeps his life; he who despises his ways will die”*** (Proverbs 19:16).

On their own and when used properly these things are wonderful gifts from God for us to use and share, the problem arises when we value them more than our relationship with God and use them for the wrong purposes.

Christ himself walked the way of the perfect disciple of God. He was sent to do the will and work of the Father (John 5:30, 36–37). He was the obedient Son, even to death. Christ’s obedience was a love for God wholly and completely. He emptied himself of all majesty to become the obedient Son (Philippians 2:6–8). He was the Son of Man who had no place or home (Luke 9:58). Christ’s willing death was the ultimate “leaving” the world behind to follow after his Master, his heavenly Father. God first and then all these things will be added.

In Baptism, we are united with Christ to walk the way of his death, that we may walk in the newness of his life (Romans 6:4–8). We “put on” Christ (Romans 13:14) and so share his nature and example. We share his mind (1 Corinthians 2:16). We share his humility (Philippians 2:5–15). We share his way. But do we truly understand what it means to “count the cost” (Luke 14:28–33): this is the way of the cross. The way of the cross is the way of death to self.

Freedom from lusts and passions (Romans 6:12–14). Freedom from bondage to temporal goods (Luke 9:57–62). The way of the cross is the way of love and sacrifice. Freedom for human commitments rooted in love and service. Marriage, children, co-workers, friends, society. The way of the cross is the way of life that leads to God (John 14:6). Jesus would go to the Father via the cross. Jesus’ cross gives us life with the Father. ***“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you”*** (Matthew 6:33).

In “The Imitation of Christ”, a devotion book by Thomas à Kempis written back in the 1400’s. In it there is a dialogue between Christ and the disciple. At one point, Jesus says: My son! I came down from heaven for your salvation; I took upon Myself your miseries not of necessity but drawn by love that you might learn patience and might bear temporal miseries without murmuring. For from the hour of My birth, until My death upon the Cross, I ceased not from bearing of sorrow; I had much lack of temporal things; I oftentimes heard many reproaches against Myself; I gently bore contradictions and hard words; I received ingratitude for benefits, blasphemies for My miracles, rebukes for My doctrine.

Upon hearing this teaching, the disciple responds: Lord, because You were patient and most of all fulfilling the commandment of Thy Father, it is well that I, a poor miserable sinner, should patiently bear myself according to Your will, and as long as You will have it so, should bear about with me for my salvation, the burden of this corruptible life.

Every way has a destination and every path has an end. The way that is Jesus leads to the cross. But there is both way and destination, for Christ the Crucified is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. So, it is our goal to walk along with Jesus staying focused on the goal. And when our earthly walks are through following the path that Jesus has prepared we will no longer walk along the path Jesus prepared for us but we will walk with Jesus as intended back in the Garden.

Amen.