

Sermon - 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2019

### The Cost of Discipleship – Luke 14: 25-35

Last week we looked at the call of Jeremiah and his ministry to the Israelites, who had chosen to operate their own way rather than heeding God's commands. They forgot the God who brought their descendents out from Egypt to the Promised Land.

We studied certain words that were important to the call of Jeremiah, namely appointment, consecrated, formed and knew.

In this morning's gospel story Jesus invites people to become his disciples, and cautions them with comparisons to a builder planning to complete a tower and a king preparing for a war. In this way he tells the crowd to estimate the cost beforehand so that the task can be completed, rather than having to give up halfway and be ridiculed. Christ gave them this caution knowing that the road ahead would be difficult for His disciples, and that it would be important for them to be ready to face what it would cost them.

Who is a disciple? The word disciple in Greek/Hebrew is Mathetes. In English it means a learner. In this case the learner learns intentionally by inquiry and observation, and is always willing to learn from the teacher or master. Jesus calls the disciples to take Him as their primary teacher as they journey together. He is trying to forewarn His disciples, knowing that they do not yet fully appreciate what being His disciple will cost them. That facing the truth of their call will be the only way they will succeed in their endeavour.

However Jesus will provide them with the much needed spiritual support and sustenance. These thoughts and ideas of Jesus may have not been grasped by the disciples, as they were still novices.

The cost of being a true disciple is what Jesus warns the crowd about through his teaching. Christ is not stating the fact that we hate our friends, family members, brothers, sisters and the loved ones. What he is actually saying is that sometimes close ties will be the obstacles in an individual's faith.

Let's look at the criterion for discipleship:

- A) One's willingness to be disencumbered, free from the ties of:
  - i) Family – we all love our family and Christ loves family. He was born in a family. The point expressed by Christ here is that we must not let the family become an obstacle in our focus on God. That we love God and family together in our journey as disciples. Families should help us in our discipleship, not become an obstacle.
  - ii) Possessions – God has blessed us with possessions and monetary wealth. Putting too much trust in possessions and wealth is foolish according to the story of the rich fool and his large barn (Luke 12: 16-21). God has blessed us with abundance of wealth and possessions to assist in carrying out our work as disciples.

- iii) One's own life – Christ said if want to be my disciples you must deny yourself, lift up your cross and follow me. Last week we learnt that God chose Jeremiah and “knew” him before he was born. Knowing thyself means that one is able to stand up for Christ and voice an opinion that runs counter to the evil and unjust structures of the society. One cannot become a true disciple without knowing themselves.

B) Discipleship is following Christ's example:

- I) The price is high – one needs to count and make up their mind to face uncertainties within their discipleship journey. They will face persecution, rejection, shame, the lists goes on until finally coming to the cross. Jesus chose to pay the price and opened the gate of glory after the cross.
- II) If we can overcome the point in I) above the journey to the cross is the ultimate goal of discipleship. We will have won.

Discipleship is not an easy calling. Jesus warns us that it involves a huge cost, yet nonetheless it is achievable. True disciples will come out a winner at the end of his/her discipleship journey.

Since God formed Jeremiah and gave Jeremiah his mission, so God has called us to respond to the call of discipleship.

A disciple is a learner and we learn from our master. For some of you, you will have accepted the call for a long time and have learnt much. For others, the learning may have just begun.

Christ will take care of our calling, and the Holy Spirit who is our advocate will be our teacher all the way to the cross. If we lift our cross to follow Jesus, be assured that when the cross becomes heavy Christ will come and put it on His shoulder.

Jesus said “I will be with you till the end of this world and beyond.” The support is there, the spiritual sustenance needed for our journey and discipleship.

The teacher who is the Holy Spirit is with us and will teach us everything we need to know.

Amen.