

9/7/25
13th Sunday after Pentecost
For Group Meetings from August 31st – September 6th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: Direct us, O Lord God, in all our doings with your continual help, that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name; and finally, by your mercy, bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER

Share: How did last week's scripture (Luke 14:1, 7-14) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Luke 14:25-33

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Who is Jesus addressing in this teaching?
2. What images does Jesus use to explain discipleship?
3. What do you think Jesus meant by saying his followers must "hate" their families and even their own lives?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What are some of the "costs" for you of following Jesus today?
2. What daily habits help you stay focused on Jesus when distractions or pressures pile up?
3. What is something you're tempted to hold back from Jesus? Why is it hard to surrender that area?

Memorize this verse: "Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:27) What "cross" do you feel you have been asked to carry in this season?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 1. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

There are sacrifices and then there are sacrifices. At least that's what struck me when I read Jesus' familiar words about taking up the cross. We tend to associate Jesus' talk of the cross with sacrifice. And understandably so, considering that he is on the way to Jerusalem to make the ultimate sacrifice of his life on the cross to demonstrate God's love for us. And we assume that his talk of "taking up the cross" implies sacrifices on the part of those who identify as his disciples, whether selling one's possessions or bearing the burdens of others or giving up prior allegiances and even relationships, or more.

But here's the thing: I think we've been so led by our culture to think of sacrifice as a bad thing that it's difficult for us to hear this passage. Actually, it's a bit more complex than that. We've been trained to admire those who make sacrifices – Olympic athletes, fire fighters, those serving in the military, etc. – but have also been induced to think that there's no reason we should ourselves have to sacrifice in an instant access and immediate gratification kind of world. And yet we all make sacrifices. Parents to give their children a good life. Innumerable persons seeking to finish their schooling or to accomplish something in their career. Life choices and freedom to get married or start a family. All kinds of "discretionary" purchases to save for a down payment on a home. And not only do we make these sacrifices, but often we do so with a sense of joy. Why? Because there are sacrifices and then there are sacrifices. Some that lead to greater life, and some that don't. Which doesn't mean that life-giving sacrifices are easy or fun or comfortable. Just that they lead to a greater sense of purpose, life, and joy. Whereas other sacrifices lead to less life, and sometimes to death.

Which helps me hear this passage a little differently. Jesus isn't inviting meaningless sacrifice. He isn't inviting door-mat discipleship or a whiney Christianity ("that's just my cross to bear"). Rather, he's inviting us to a full-bodied Christian faith that stands over and against all those things that are often presented to us as life by the culture. Jesus invites us to the kind of abundant life that is discovered only as you give yourself away. The kingdom of God Jesus proclaims is about life and love. And just as love is one thing that only grows when it's given away, so also is genuine and abundant life. Again, not that such sacrifices are easy. Some around us may very well not understand why we spend less on ourselves in order to give more to others or why we'd invest our time and resources on a person or effort the culture considers a lost cause. The choices we make, the relationships we decide to pursue, the way we spend this life we've been given, may cause not just puzzlement but dissatisfaction, even upset, among those we care about.

The challenge, of course, is that our choices are not always as clear as we'd like. Sometimes we get just plain confused about what is the right choice, the life-giving choice. And sometimes we may hear Jesus' voice calling us to sacrifice for the sake of life but it gets drowned out by the cultural voices holding out success and accumulation and security as life. And sometimes the choices in front of us are just incredibly ambiguous. Which is why Jesus makes his own sacrifice, of course. To assure us of God's love and forgiveness, so that whether we are confused, overwhelmed, unclear, or just choose badly, the promise of life is always in front of us.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen