

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

How Much?

Sermon Reflection Notes

Pastor Ron began a new sermon series this week titled *All In* which will be centered on what it means to be a disciple—a follower—of Jesus. Sections of scripture like Luke 14:25-33 are a real challenge for all of us who want to follow Jesus; in fact, Pastor Ron said we might want to be “all out” by the time we hear Jesus’ teachings about what it really means to follow him. The audience for Jesus’ words here in this text shifts from dinner guests in a home to a large crowd of people who enthusiastically want to hear Jesus but who seem totally unaware that Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem and to the cross. These are people who have not been able to imagine that death lies ahead; these are people who may be excited about the possibility of a clash between peasants and power, Jews versus Romans, Jesus versus the establishment. But Jesus responds to these hasty volunteers with “think about what you are doing and decide if you are willing to stay with me all the way.” And that is something we should think about too.

Sometimes, the gospel of Jesus Christ is reduced to ‘promoting traditional family values,’ or causing the ‘success and prosperity’ of a group or nation even. And these views, these ideas, were never the centerpiece of Jesus’s message. Jesus never asked his disciples to start a new religion or subscribe to a certain way of believing. Rather, Jesus invited his disciples to follow him. It sounds so simple, yet it is a journey we probably aren’t fully prepared to take.

The opening of the scripture text is not one we are going to find embroidered on a pillow. It is a frightening demand to hate one’s family and one’s own life. “Hate” doesn’t sound very Jesus-like. Scholars finesse this a bit, tame it down if you will. But even if the wording is ‘tamed,’ it doesn’t change that Jesus is calling the disciples and us to relinquish relational and socioeconomic safety and control. To hate is a Semitic expression meaning to turn away from, to detach oneself from. There is nothing of the emotion we experience in the expression “I hate you.” If that were the case, then verse 26 alone would cancel all the calls to love, to care, to nourish, especially one’s own family found throughout all the Bible. To hate one’s own life is not a call to self-loathing.

Instead, what is demanded of disciples, is that in the network of many loyalties in which all of us live, the claim of Christ and the gospel not only takes precedence, but, in fact, redefines the others. This can, and will involve some detaching, some turning away. To follow Jesus means we are going on a wild journey, always on the move, never stationary, never really comfortable, moving away from what is familiar and secure and into the unfamiliar where we don’t know what awaits us. But we do know who is with us. The journey, which is not for the faint of heart, shows us again and again that not even death can separate us from the love of God. God is all in. And we are called to be. We are called to the journey, to divest ourselves of all but love; it is a journey where the blind find their sight, the prisoners are set free, the stranger is welcomed, the outcast finds companions, and children run the show. The cost of following Jesus might just be everything. But the benefit of following Jesus might just be everything. It’s costly, but it is beautiful. And Jesus is there with us each step of the way.

Scripture

Luke 14:25-33 (NRSVUE)

Now large crowds were traveling with him, and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ “Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether

he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'
³¹ Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he cannot, then while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace.
³³ So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

Discussion Questions

1. To be "All In" implies covenant living. What does it mean to be in covenant? What is covenant living? What restrictions does it hold? What freedoms does it offer?
2. Let's look at verse 26 again. What does this bring to mind? How do we talk about that with other people, even family members? How would you explain it if somebody asked you what it meant?
3. Pastor Ron mentioned 'cheap grace' versus 'costly grace,' something Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote about in his book *The Cost of Discipleship*. What is grace? What is cheap grace? What is costly grace?
4. Pastor Ron mentioned St. Frances who gave everything away, Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was hanged for his opposition to Hitler, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn who survived years in the Soviet labor camps known as the Gulag as examples of followers of Christ who were 'all-in.' They are certainly excellent examples, but they also feel removed from our 'ordinary' lives. What are other examples of people following Christ no matter the cost...examples that come from everyday life perhaps?
5. The scripture this week focuses on the cost of discipleship, but the sermon ended with this: *If you think to yourself, for reasons I can't quite explain, "I'm ready to start this journey," the path begins right here at this baptismal font. And you can join us, too. It's costly, but it's beautiful.* What is beautiful about being a disciple of Jesus? What is gained when we decide to be 'all in'?

Closing Prayer

Holy God, we confess that we make all kinds of vows, oaths, and promises. We commit ourselves to faithfulness. We sign on for obedience. We sign on seriously, but also we sign on casually and too easily. And then we find ourselves looking for quick fixes, for "stuff" we think we need, for ways to control what cannot be controlled in life. But today, we hear your voice once more, calling us to follow Jesus, calling us to trust that you will help us, calling us to be obedient to the vows of our baptism. Again, we are summoned by you, and we commit our lives once more to you, knowing that commitment leads us to new life. We pray to be faithful. We pray in the demanding name of Jesus. Amen.

"Following Jesus is a costly endeavor. But it is a beautiful one."