

Rev. Luke C. Werre  
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Luke 14:25-33  
Pentecost 13

## **DITCH EVERYTHING TO BE A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST**

The twenty-something found out that his absolute favorite singer/songwriter would be performing at a music festival that afternoon in a town thirty miles away. He didn't even have to think about it. He grabbed his coat and ditched... he ditched work, that is. His fellow employees tried to reason with him. If he walked out like this he would surely be fired. The boss would never have him back. It didn't matter. To him it was a no-brainer. He could always get another job. He might not get another chance to see a live performance of that singer.

Jesus said, *If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple. Hate?* Isn't this the same Jesus who tells us to love our enemies and now He says to hate our family?

Jesus often spoke like this: *No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.*

Of course you naturally love your family. That's as it should be. But if it must be a choice between Christ or family, hands down it will be Christ. You're not a disciple of mom or brother or husband. You're a disciple of Christ. This is the lesson Jesus is teaching us today.. ditch everything to be a disciple of Christ.

Seems like it should be a no brainer. But, of course, it never is that simple. Your one-and-a-half-year-old daughter reaches up to you from the toddler bed with a huge smile and says, "Daddy!" You love her so much, it hurts. You're in college yet you long to feel your mother's cool hand on your forehead like she did when she put you to bed when you were little. So many undeniable joys and blessings of family. On the other hand, God also permits family to be a source of heartache, sorrow, burdens and even chaos. He does this so that we understand that there is no salvation to be found in family. Do not look to family for your sense of well-being or fulfillment or happiness. Salvation comes from Christ alone.

In fact, one day, all DNA, all blood-relations, all marriage will end. Earthly families will stop. They will have served their good purpose. We will only have God as our Father, Christ as our Brother and all the saints and angels as our heavenly Family.

This is why in his famous hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," Martin Luther penned the words: *And take they our life, goods, fame, child and wife. Let these all be gone. They yet have nothing won. The Kingdom ours remaineth.*

Christ is teaching us when it comes to our status with God, our joy and well-being right now, or what happens to us after we die, ditch everything, even those who are nearest and dearest and cling to Christ, only to Christ. That is the only way to be a disciple of Christ.

If you think ditching family is extreme, Christ takes it up yet another notch. In order to be a disciple of Christ you must ditch even your very self. Jesus said, *anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*

What's valued more highly today than your identity? People base their whole life on their identity or on what they call their authentic self. Nothing today is a greater social transgression than to mislabel someone's person. I imagine that soon jail time will be given to anyone who fails to accommodate or even to recognize a person's declared self. You will be accused of harassment because you are making that person feel threatened. Already local governments and school boards are demanding that schools and businesses make accommodations for every identity.

In putting so much emphasis on identity and insisting that you affirm their authentic self, people are sadly looking for a type of salvation here on earth. They are hoping it will give them a sense of wellness and safety and a sense that they are a somebody that matters.

But to be a disciple of Christ, it is your very self, your person, your identity that you must give up. In essence, you must ditch yourself entirely. That's what Jesus meant by saying you must take up your cross. A cross is for dying on. You must die as your own person and let Christ be your identity. Let Christ be your life. Let Christ be your goodness. Let Christ be your success. Let Christ be your value or significance.

This is the meaning of the two analogies Jesus drew. Though God created you and you are, no doubt, a blessing to those around you... as regards your status with God, your eternal salvation, ditch yourself. Ditch everything about you. Not only the bad stuff but also the good. Anything you think you have to offer, ditch it. Your accomplishments. Your qualities and virtues. Your contribution to society. Even if you were Mother Theresa, none of it will do you any good whatsoever with regard to God and salvation. The apostle Paul calls it rubbish. Everything you have and are is altogether insufficient to give you peace with God, take away guilt, build a bridge to heaven, or defeat death or the devil or rescue you in the day of judgment. Listen again to Jesus' analogies:

*Suppose one of you want to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him and say, "This fellow began to build and was not able to finish." (In other words, "Don't even start. Scrap the whole project. You don't have the resources.")*

*Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with*

*twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. (In other words, "Don't even go there. Scrap the whole idea. You don't have what it takes to succeed.")*

Now comes the clincher. Jesus said, *In the same way any of you who does not give up (or ditch) everything he has cannot be my disciple.*

Do you see what Jesus is doing? Not only is He pleading with you to ditch everything, He is also inviting you to stand by and let Him be everything for you.

Christ and Christ alone is the wealth that builds a tower of salvation. Christ is rich with truly good deeds to win God's approval on your behalf. Christ's righteousness is your true treasure to gain God's goodwill. Your salvation came at the cost of Christ's precious blood when He suffered and died on the cross. The sacrifice of His life is what it took to atone to God for our sins and to purchase for us the many rooms in His Father's mansion. It is His redemption price for you, worth more than all the gold and silver in the world that makes you a somebody - a child of the heavenly Father and citizen of His Kingdom.

Christ and Christ alone is that powerful king who declared war on death and hell and the devil. He did not need to sue for peace. Christ alone was powerful enough to crush the devil underfoot, swallow up death and laugh at hell. Christ and Christ alone is more powerful than all the governments and nations and armies of this entire planet. He laughs at them all and He tells you to take heart because He has overcome the world.

Christ and Christ alone sets you free from guilt, gives you a new lease on life and makes you a new person – a new person with a new identity – your identity is a disciple of Christ.

It is all about Christ. It is all from Christ. It is all in Christ. It is all because of Christ. It is all through Christ. It is all for Christ. His words are clear. Ditch everything else. There is no half way. There are no shared loyalties. There are no alternative routes. There is only Christ. Ditch everything to be a disciple of Christ.