

Sermon: 16th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Luke 14:25-35

Theme: To estimate the cost of being a disciple of Jesus

Goal: The cost is complete surrender to Jesus

Dear Friends:

Introduction: When I read this text, I have always to remember a good friend of mine in my first mission congregation in São Paulo. He was a prosperous business man, running his own business. He had been baptized in the Catholic Church, but he was not a church goer. Struggling with his own doubts and concerns about his future, he visited several churches and even some secret societies, searching for the truth in his life. Through a brother-in-law he visited the Lutheran Church, and, as he lived in the same suburb where we had begun a new mission, he decided to join our church. We had lots of good chat sessions. He and his wife were instructed in the Bible truths and were received as members. Their children were baptized. He became a great leader in the new church.

One day he came to my office. 'Pastor, it is not that easy to be a Christian. I had to change lot of behaviours in my private life and in my professional life. All my concurrent are dishonest, using bribes to get their business. I cannot do it anymore... I am in disadvantage!' I asked him: 'Are you sorry that you became a faithful Christian?' 'NO', he said. 'I'm in peace with God, and I was searching for this all my life!'

This happened more than 30 years ago. He and his family are still faithful Lutherans. He had several ups and downs in his business and is now retired; but he understood very well what does it mean to deny himself and to follow Jesus.

If someone comes to Jesus just looking for some financial advantages or health issues (as many did in Jesus time and many does it nowadays), that person doesn't understand what it means to follow Jesus. God doesn't want to give us just some crumbs, but He wants to give us the whole Bread of Life and with Him a new and eternal life. And God doesn't want us only 50%, but He wants us 100%: our whole life! He doesn't want 'half Christians'.

I – The family

This helps to understand the difficult beginning of our text: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children... he cannot be my disciple.” “Large crowds were traveling with Jesus” and Jesus makes clear to them what discipleship involves. Jesus, of course, isn't advocating hatred of our family. But He does mean that if things come to such a pass that it's a choice for us between Him and our family, we're to choose Him. Obviously, this isn't easy. Fortunately, most of us are spared this decision. (SC 231). A similar passage in Matthew explains it better. Jesus said: “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of me...”

(Matthew 10:37). It's a matter of priority, as we preached about some Sunday ago.

Even our own life is not that precious as the life with Jesus. In Mark 8:36 Jesus said: “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”

This became very clear in the lives of the Apostles. I read this week: *If prosperity and good health are signs of God's love, God must have hated Paul, the Apostle!* - We know by experience that it is not always as we wish it. But God knows what the best for us is. *We love Him and trust in Him above all things* (M. Luther, 1st Commandment).

II - Two stories

To illustrate His teaching about discipleship, Jesus told two stories: A man was planning to build a tower and he had to sit and to estimate the cost to see if he had enough money to finish it. A king was preparing for a war and he had to consider if he had enough soldiers to win the battle. - Business people understand well what Jesus was taking about. Even a house wife must plan and see if she has all ingredients before she begins to bake a cake. Everything in our lives must have a plan; sometimes a short and emergency plan, sometimes a long term plan. Decisions must be taken with responsibility. If we do things just in an impulsive way, we have to suffer the consequences. *The point of both these stories is to count the cost of Christianity, to realize what it involves.* (SC 231).

Christianity is not a matter of impulse. We have to consider what does it mean and how much it cost. It cost our life! We don't belong to ourselves anymore to do what we want to do. We belong to Christ, to whom we were given in our baptism, and we are following Him and His will. He takes us through a right path and He lifts our eyes to the true hope that only He can show us. Paul confessed: "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

(Galatians 2:20). *As someone wrote: If we give Him (God) an inch, He'll take a mile" ... If once we call Him in to cure something... He'll do it. But He won't stop with that. He'll give us the full treatment, and we end up getting much more we bargained for. God is delighted to have us claim by faith in Jesus that, in spite of what we know ourselves to be, we are children of God.* (SC 230).

III – 100%

Jesus doesn't want to discourage anyone to be a disciple. He is just

warning about false hopes. His good will is that everyone becomes a disciple, leaving the wrong way that leads to condemnation, and following Him on the right path that takes us to heaven. *Jesus wants to make clear to us that becoming His disciples means more than joining an organization called the church as we would join a Rotary Club. Christianity is more than having one's name on a membership list... Christianity is a life to take and live, and to live it one hundred percent under the sway of God. I repeat: God doesn't want half; He wants all!* (SC 232).

Conclusion: To illustrate it in another manner: When we get marry, we don't want to share our wife or our husband with someone else. It's a mutual belonging. Some partners are not aware what it means when they enter matrimony. Friends, job, even the own family (father, mother, siblings) go to a second plan. And some are not prepare to do it. Some partners become jealous when wife/husband spends too much time with friends, with the previous family or with the job. How to do the correct balance without affecting the love between the couple is a matter of wisdom and awareness.

Our relationship with Jesus is like a marriage. He is the groom; we are the bride, His holy Church. He wants the best for his bride and He even gave Himself for us to rescue us for Him. It's a matter of love. He loves us. Do we love Him? If so, then it's not difficult to be close to Him and to follow Him. Everything else will be put in a second level to enjoy the company, the presence and the love of our groom.

- Did you understand what Jesus is saying in this text? He doesn't want to discourage us, but He wants to call us closer and closer to Him, because in Him we have love and life! Amen.