

13<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY after PENTECOST

September 4, 2022

**COLLECT:** GRANT, US O LORD, to trust in you with all our hearts; for, as you always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast of your mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**THE LESSONS:** First Lesson: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Psalm: 1

Second Lesson: Philemon 1-21

Gospel: Luke 14:25-33

**THE SERMON:** As Jesus began his ministry, the word of the miracles and healings he was doing began to spread. Blind people were able to see, the lame were made to walk, the deaf could now hear, people with demons were restored to their right minds, people with blood hemorrhaging were cured and the crooked were made to walk straight.

These things were happening wherever people were meeting this rabbi Jesus. It could be in the streets, in a house, in a synagogue. It didn't matter where you met Jesus. It also didn't matter who you were. You could be Jew or Gentile, young or old, man, child, or woman.

Jesus didn't require a sacrifice, as the temple did, you didn't have to give him a fowl, animal or grain offering. Regardless of your condition, he was not afraid to touch you. He may not even ask you any questions. He would call you to himself and heal you instantly.

This rabbi was different, he was itinerant. He didn't stay in one place, he walked about the villages, small towns and cities. There was no cost for his healing. He did not dress in fancy and colorful robes, He dressed as ordinary did, a seamless robe, maybe a tunic and wore sandals.

He had a vast knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures and taught and preached at the temple and synagogues. He used parables to help explain the lessons he had read from the Torah and other readings from the Hebrew Bible. Yes, this rabbi was different.

A growing crowd of people followed Jesus. They wanted to know who he was and to see what he would do. Was this the Messiah, that had been prophesized about in the Hebrew scriptures? Was this Israel's savior? Was he going to overthrow and drive the Roman captors out and put control of the government and land into the hands of the Jews? Was he just a prophet like Ezekiel and Isaiah? Would he have power and make changes? Was he really a holy man given power by God or was he a man given power by Satan? Was this bread of life he preached about and was going to take care of their physical needs? All these were questions that people wanted to have answers to.

So, as people encountered Jesus, they saw him healing and listened to him preach and teach in the temple and synagogue., They spread the word about what they had seen and heard. This, of course made people curious and increased the size of the crowd that wanted to follow him.

Now, what did Jesus require for a person to be his follower? He said, "Whoever comes to me and does not **hate** father, mother, wife and children, brother and sister and even life itself can't be a follower or disciple

of mine.” Do you think Jesus was talking about hate as we know and understand it today? Perhaps he was saying you have to love them less and cut some of the ties.

Jesus wanted the person to be free to make a commitment and not have anything to hold them back.

Jesus knew there would be difficult days ahead. People would not always accept his teaching. His preaching was differing from the Laws of Moses which guided people by rules. His teaching was more of a personal responsibility rooted in a love for God. Some people in some towns would want to drive him out and some would even want to stone him to death.

He knew the religious authorities would be angered by his teaching and some of his practices. His disciples ate without washing their hands as prescribed by ritual. He didn't seem to recognize people as clean or unclean requiring them to go through the ritual of purification before he healed them. He dealt with and healed people wherever and whenever they approached him.

Now of course, this had an impact on the temple, less people coming to the temple you could say, a decrease in the membership. Less people coming to the temple also caused an economic impact, there would be less money, less sacrifices of meat, fowl and grain to sustain the temple staff. Now, these are just two reasons.

The major reason the religious authorities objected to Jesus was that he was changing the faith; The way of worship and the people's relationship to God. For this reason, they watched or spied on Jesus constantly hoping to

hear say or do something wrong so that they could take him and have him put to death.

Jesus knew all this, so, he wanted followers to, "*carefully consider*" before making the commitment to follow him. In essence he was saying, "Think about all the things, the good and the negatives, I have told you and be sure this is really what you want. This cross I have to bear; can you bear it too?"

Jesus wanted the proposed followers to know they would have to pay a personal price. They would have less time for their families, families might not agree with what they would be doing or understand what they would be saying so they would have to cut some family ties. They would have to give up all their possessions so they would not be a distraction to the work they would be doing or a hindrance to their traveling.

If they could not do this, then they shouldn't be a follower. Perhaps they should cut their ties and go back to the life they were living.

At Jesus time and afterwards, it was difficult and dangerous to be known as a follower of Jesus. You could be imprisoned or even killed. Today it is so much easier. It still requires a personal commitment, but you don't have to hide it. We practice it very openly by building houses of faith and openly attending and practicing that faith.

What do I think is required of us today? I think we should love the Lord with all our heart, mind and soul. WE should love and respect the dignity of all our neighbors.

Who are our neighbors? I would say anyone you meet during your journey on this earth.

God has shown his love for us, he offers us forgiveness for all our wrongs and he has promised his love as a fence around us.

What does it cost us to be a follower of Christ? Simply, it is to love and treat others as you do to yourself. Amen.

Rev. Lionel Starkes