

Scripture:
Luke 14:25-33

“Kingdom awareness.”

Today’s gospel reading is all about Kingdom awareness.

Jesus is telling would be disciples that they need to be aware of what the Kingdom of God is all about before they decide to follow Him and become one of His disciples.

Some passages in scripture offer great comfort for the disturbed and challenged.

And other passages disturb and challenge the comfortable.

Again -----

Some passages in scripture offer great comfort for the disturbed and challenged.

And other passages disturb and challenge the comfortable.

And our passage from Luke’s gospel today falls into the latter category -----
----- rather than offering comfort ----- it disturbs and challenges the comfortable.

Jesus wasn’t ever outright against a large crowd of people following Him ---
He of course did want to share the love of God and the Kingdom of God with many many people.

But at the same time ---- and on a regular basis --- Jesus turned to those who had gathered around Him ----- and challenge them on a deep level --- as we see in Luke’s gospel today.

One commentator I read this week even went so far as to say ---- “Jesus regularly thinned out the herd” ----- of those who gathered around Him.

I’m not so sure I would think of Jesus as thinning out the herd of His followers ---- but this phrasing does speak to the fact that Jesus didn’t ever

just want people to blindly follow Him ----- without first also thinking things through.

Jesus didn't just want lemmings gathered around Him ----- He didn't ever want people following Him who weren't also acutely aware of the demands and expectations of being one of His disciples.

Jesus wanted those following Him to be aware of what exactly it meant to follow Him --- and what the kingdom of God was all about --- He wanted His followers to have a sense of "Kingdom awareness."

And "Kingdom awareness" --- is the understanding that the way of Jesus Christ ----- the will of God --- the Kingdom of God ----- demands that things are done differently ----- it demands that anyone who wants to follow Jesus Christ must be willing to make significant changes in their lives.

And very often the changes that Jesus brings are quite radical and transformational --- and quite often they are also different from anything people might have expected.

Here in Luke today Jesus has a large crowd following Him and then suddenly He turns to them and says some things that are quite harsh ----- things that no doubt turned a few people away from Him.

"If anyone comes to me and doesn't hate father --- and mother ----- wife and children --- brothers and sisters ---- yes even their own life ---- such a person cannot be my disciple." --- Jesus says in verse 26 --- pretty harsh words ----- high demands.

And in verse 33 He says ---- "In the same way if you do not give up everything you have you cannot be my disciple."

These are pretty harsh words ----- "hate your family --- hate your life --- and give up everything you have --- otherwise you cannot be my disciple."

And of course He doesn't just stop at that.

He talks about taking up a cross ---- or killing things off about yourself that will hinder your ability to be a disciple.

And He also talks about the need to be rather prudent and calculating --- and shrewd even ----- in order to be one of His disciples.

The two parables in Luke's gospel today ----- suggest that Jesus was feeling as though many of the people in the crowd that were following Him had not really thought things through enough for His liking.

And so He challenges them to be far more calculating and judicious and to consider certain things before deciding whether or not to follow Him.

He doesn't want anyone to begin following Him only to not be able to finish what they started.

He wants all would be disciples to consider the whole journey of discipleship and not just the first few steps.

And so He tells these stories ----

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower.

Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?

For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, “This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.”

“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king.

Won't he 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 the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.”

In other words ---- “Think through --- plan --- discern --- calculate ---- add up subtract ----- consider all the necessary variables and be ready to give it your all before becoming my disciple and following me.”

“Be ready to be hated even by those you love --- your family ----- and be ready to give away everything you have ---- be prepared to pull out all the stops.”

There is no holding back when Jesus calls us to follow --- and there is no turning back when Jesus calls us to follow.

It’s a radical discipleship that Jesus calls us to.

A profound change of heart and total re-prioritizing.

Jesus isn’t just looking for people who make quick emotional or feel good decisions --- He wants some hard thinkers ----- tough calculators ---- and judiciously shrewd discerners.

He wants people who are prepared and ready --- having thought it through a bit.

And to be clear ----- people who are “ready” ---- aren’t always prepared.

There’s a huge difference between people who are ready and people who are prepared.

I know a lot of people who have gone on hiking or canoe trips that are “ready” in their minds ----- but are far from actually being “prepared.”

Prepared means taking the necessary steps and making the right decisions so that you can actually complete the journey --- water --- food ---- proper clothing --- ways to keep clothing dry if it rains ----- and so on.

I can say this because from time to time I’ve been “ready” for certain things in life --- but not really prepared ----- we all have right.

Jesus wants committed and prepared people.

This is not just some emotional or flippant Hallelujah moment that Jesus is looking for in would be disciples.

It’s a ---
----- do I have what it takes kind of moment

---- do I have what I need kind of moment
 ----- am I truly ready to give everything away if necessary in order to be faithful kind of moment.

It's a -----

---- am I ready for people to ridicule me and perhaps even hate me because of Christ

--- am I ready to do away with certain things --- change certain things --- give away certain things and habits ----- wants and desires

----- am I ready to give everything over to God and do whatever ----- and follow wherever it is that Jesus asks me to go?

It's only after these ----- and similar kinds of questions ----- have been asked and answered that we can truly have a Hallelujah Amen kind of moment in our lives.

Discipleship costs --- and Jesus wants us to make sure we're ready to make the changes ----- and do the things that will be asked of us.

And very often the changes that are asked of us are not ones we even thought of.

Luke's gospel today reminds us that there is very little room on the kingdom of God train for those who are only ever half hearted ----- God is looking for some long distance runners with a sense of dedication and duty.

It's committed --- prudent ----- tough decision making --- sometimes even shrewd decision maker's that Jesus wants on board.

To be sure ---- this is not to say that only some people are worthy or "good enough" ----- to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

Not true.

We are all good and worthy enough in Christ's eyes.

What it is to say --- is that we have to be ready and willing to change --- make some tough choices ----- and difficult decisions and then follow through on them.

We have to have a keen sense of Kingdom awareness --- the willingness to admit that even though we may not always fully understand what God is asking of us we are willing to trust and have faith and do as He so leads us.

We don't necessarily need street smarts -----

----- we don't necessarily need a very high level of intelligence

----- we don't even necessarily need common sense

--- there are many Christians who lack commonsense ---- we've all met some before right.

We don't necessarily need street smarts --- or diplomas or degrees ----- or even common sense in order to follow Christ ---- but we do need Kingdom awareness.

We need to be ready to do anything that God may ask of us ----- and we need to follow through on what we begin --- and we need to do these things even when other people may completely disagree with us and perhaps even despise us and look down upon us because of our convictions in Christ.

Just as Jesus didn't suddenly turn away when things got a bit challenging for Him --- so He doesn't want us to turn away and give up should things get tricky.

Jesus didn't get to Jerusalem and then say something like ----- "Hey wait a minute God it looks like they want to kill me --- this isn't what I signed up for --- this isn't how I thought it would go --- I'm going to turn away now and go back to Nazareth or Bethlehem and take up fishing or wood working instead."

He was all in --- He was committed and ready and prepared and good to go right through to the bitter end.

And these are precisely the kinds of people Jesus is looking for when He suddenly turns on this large crowd in Luke's gospel today and says some pretty harsh words to would be followers.

Christian discipleship can be difficult.

Honing Kingdom awareness can be difficult sometimes too.

It can be beautiful ---- and fulfilling --- and rich and life giving --- saving ---- -- but it can be tough and brutal and challenging from time to time as well and we can't just turtle or hide our heads under the sand when things appear in our lives that demand our attention.

Sometimes the in breaking of the Kingdom of God ----- brings great comfort in trying circumstances ----- and sometimes the in breaking of the Kingdom of God awakens us from an unfaithful place of complacency or luxury.

Jesus wants us to plan --- all the while recognizing that there most certainly will come a time when our plan must give way to God's plan ----- and that we mustn't give up when we don't necessarily get our way and God leads us somewhere we might not really want to go.

“Don't start something you are not also willing to finish.”

“Think about what you are doing before you start doing it.”

And as one theologian I heard recently said --- “We'll figure it out.” ---- is not a Biblical model of living.

“We'll figure it out.” ---- is not a Biblical model of living.

Yes sometimes we do have to figure things out as we go.

But having ----- “We'll figure it out.” ----- as a life slogan is not what Jesus is talking about in Luke's gospel today.

“We'll figure it out” ----- doesn't always cut it.

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower.

Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?

For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, “This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.”

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Jesus has acted decisively --- the battle is over --- God wins ---- evil loses --- the devil is defeated.

Nothing of this world can ever change this.

But following Jesus --- being a disciple --- coming to terms with these truths --- sharing them with a sometimes hostile world and resistant culture is a grand invitation and challenge ---- one we must take up.

God wins the war ---- God has already won the war --- but the battle still wages on ----- and we part of the army of God ----- we are disciples building the kingdom of God.

Some passages offer great comfort for the disturbed and challenged.

And other passages disturb and challenge the comfortable.

Clearly Jesus wanted to disturb and challenge any would be disciples who thought that following Him would always be easy and smooth.

We have to be ready for anything when it comes to following Jesus.

"In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples."

Something we didn't see coming ----- just might be asked of us for the sake of the kingdom of God.

Eugene Peterson in *The Message* ----- translates Luke 14 verse 33 this way - -- capturing much of what this passage is all about.

“Simply put ---- if you’re not willing to take what is dearest to you ---- whether plans or people ---- and kiss it good-bye ----- you can’t be my disciple.”

“Simply put ---- if you’re not willing to take what is dearest to you ---- whether plans or people ---- and kiss it good-bye ----- you can’t be my disciple.”

Kingdom awareness is all about never giving up or turning away ----- it’s about being ready to do whatever it is that God asks of us.

It’s about making His will our will.

“In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.”

Amen.