

Luke 14:25-33 – 8am 8/9/19

Today we hear Jesus laying out a realistic vision for anyone who truly wants to follow him. And one of the things that seems evident is that there will inevitably be tensions between family and calling,

Luke seems to be interested in Jesus and his family life. Luke's Gospel is the only one that tells us that Jesus and John the Baptist are cousins – and the only one that tells us a little about Jesus' early life as a twelve year old boy, when he was lost during a visit to Jerusalem –

But like the time when Jesus was 'lost' – and found in the synagogue – his Father's house –

In today's reading we see that Jesus has always been anything but lost – whether it be a little boy found teaching wisdom in the synagogue of Jerusalem – or a thirty three year old man found teaching wisdom to would-be followers – his sight has always been set firmly on Jerusalem – the vision of Jesus is Jerusalem – and those who do choose to follow – must know from the start what that will mean....

Those who travel the road with Jesus must live the cost – perhaps the cost of family-life – the cost of worldly security – and the cost of giving up all that they own and all that they know...

This is serious – hangers-on will hinder – the crowd of followers has to be narrowed down

Family life was central in those days – to choose to leave their responsibilities and to follow Jesus would have been a huge upheaval for the family – members of family businesses – wage-earners – husbands, sons – and some women it has to be said – all leaving huge gaps in family and community society – a radical prophet demanding radical discipleship.

No wonder there would have been many who resented Jesus – calling their folk to give up everything and follow

But you can understand why some would be compelled to follow – having witnessed the wonderful things experienced and promised – and the many blessings associated with the Kingdom of God'

But it is the liabilities Jesus is focussing on right now -

Jesus illustrates his point through two stories about buildings and battles, familiar scenarios of the day showing that nobody would waste effort, time and resources on a building before knowing that it could be finished – or waging battle against a king whose military far outnumbers their own.

Follow if you dare, Jesus is saying, but let wisdom and discernment inform your decision.

Jesus didn't condemn anyone who didn't follow him – he understood that not everyone would hear his message – he just wanted people to be aware of what they were getting involved in. – Discipleship is not something to take lightly

And discipleship today is just as risky – only different twenty first century challenges – being counter-cultural in going to church – refusing to take part in detrimental conversation and attitudes – being shocked by lack of human dignity in so-called TV entertainment - trying to live by Sabbath principles in a secular consumerist world – the list goes on

We also have our crosses to bear within the church - being inconvenienced to do service we might not always want to do but which has to be done – or should be done – having to try and give a little more financially – to give a little more time to others ...

But despite all the so-called discipleship-liabilities – we can remember that after the heavy burden of the cross – comes resurrection hope – ascension wonder – and Pentecostal joy of the spirit – we can have faith rooted in a journey that leads to everlasting life and love.

God's promise of the Kingdom is the driving force of discipleship – the call above all calls – Jesus – the leader above all leaders – the one whose call compels us to follow – because nothing less will do...

– by keeping our hearts open and our eyes fixed on the destination of God's realised promise of peace and fulfilment through loving him and loving our neighbour, we will find it easier to carry the burdens of life that come to us on the way.

Is there a burden that you – or someone you know - is carrying today – that needs to be lifted and carried to the Jerusalem cross so that it can be lifted with Jesus in despair and renewed in his resurrection hope and promise of eternal life and love?

Say a prayer to Jesus today – ask him to walk with you in the name of the Lord – and for God's spirit to enlighten, and embrace you and strengthen you.

We must keep trying to journey on and be a witness in the world to the light and hope of Jesus Christ, turning to God for strength and encouragement along the way – because for us faithful Christians, trying to do our best – nothing less will do...

Rev Jacqueline Drake-Smith