

Scripture Study

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C



Opening prayer

Wisdom 9:13-18b

(Ps 90:3-6,12-17)

Philemon 9-10,12-17

Luke 14:25-33

Overview of the Gospel:

- In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus continues his journey to Jerusalem. After being the dinner guest of a leading Pharisee on the Sabbath (Luke 14:1-14), he resumes his ministry of teaching, making use of a great many parables (Luke 15—16).
- As he traveled, great crowds ("multitudes," in the RSV) followed him about, no doubt creating an expectant "buzz" and festive anticipation around him.
- Jesus, however, wants them to be under no illusion as to what it really means to be his follower. Attachment to family would be no excuse for not following him: God must take priority over all else (verse 26. Also, see Luke 9:59-62; Matthew 10:37).
- Jesus' call demands readiness to bear persecution and suffering (verse 27). In this, he gave us both an example to follow (John 9:16-17; Matthew 16:24-26), and the means possible to join our crosses to his (Colossians 1:24).

Questions:

- In the First Reading from the Book of Wisdom, what point is the writer making about the limitations of our knowledge? About those limitations compared to things that can only be known by God? What should our attitude be when questioning God's ways?
- Our Second Reading comes from the short letter of St. Paul to a Christian disciple named Philemon. Paul is sending this letter along with an escaped slave named Onesimus who Paul is sending back to his master, Philemon. What is Paul's primary concern in this reading? What attitude of heart does he wish to inspire in Philemon in regards to Onesimus? What should our attitude be toward those who have strayed from the Faith or wronged us personally, but are now returning in repentance?
- In the Gospel Reading, who is Jesus' audience in this teaching? Why do you think they were following him at this time? What do you think they expected from him? What would they have made of this teaching of his?
- What is Jesus saying about family? What does he mean by "hating" (verse 26)? By carrying one's cross (verse 27)?
- What do each of the parables tell us about how to give our lives to Jesus?
- What has your decision to follow Christ cost you thus far? What do you think it might cost you in the future? What should it cost?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 1618, 2544

Closing Prayer

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

'He started to build and was unable to finish!' A sad commentary, which, if you don't want, need never be made about you; for you possess everything necessary to crown the edifice of your sanctification—the grace of God and your own will. -St. Josemaria Escriva

Whoever does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple"

Scripture: *Luke 14:25-33*

Meditation: Why does Jesus say we must 'hate' our families and even ourselves? The expression 'to hate' often meant to 'prefer less'. Jesus used strong language to make clear that nothing should take precedence or first place in our lives over God. Jesus knew that the way of the cross was the Father's way to glory and victory over sin and death. He counted the cost and said 'yes' to his Father's will. We, too, must "count the cost" and be ready to follow Jesus in the way of the cross if we want to share in his glory and victory. What is the "way of the cross" for you and for me? When my will crosses with God's will, then his will must be done. The way of the cross involves sacrifice, the sacrifice of laying down my life each and every day for Jesus' sake. What makes such sacrifice possible and "sweet" for us is the love of God poured out for us in the blood of Jesus Christ. Paul the Apostle reminds us that *"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit"* (Romans 5:5). We can never out-give God. He always gives us more than we can expect or imagine. Do you allow the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with the love of God?

What does the parable of the tower builder and a ruler on a war campaign have in common? Both risk serious loss if they don't carefully plan ahead. In a shame and honor culture people want to avoid at all costs being mocked by their community for failing to complete a task they began in



earnest. This double parable echoes the instruction of Proverbs: "By wisdom a house is built" and "by wise guidance you can wage a war" to ensure victory (Proverbs 24:3-6). Every landowner who could afford it walled in his orchard as a protection from intruders who might steal or harm his produce. A tower was usually built in a corner of the wall and a guard posted especially during harvest time when thieves would likely try to make off with the goods. Starting a building-project, like a watchtower, and leaving it unfinished because of poor planning would invite the scorn of the whole village. Likewise a king who decided to wage a war against an opponent who was much stronger, would be considered foolish if he did not come up with a plan that had a decent chance of success.

Jesus tells his would-be disciples that they, too, must count the cost if they want to succeed as his disciples. Jesus assures success for those willing to pay the price. All it cost is everything! What does Jesus have to offer that's worth giving up everything else? More than we can imagine! Jesus offers the gift of abundant life and everlasting peace and happiness

with God. (See the parable of the treasure hidden in the field and the pearl of great price in Matthew 13:44-45). It's natural to ask what will it require of me or cost me before I sign up or agree to pay for something. Jesus was utterly honest and spared no words to tell his disciples that it would cost them dearly to follow after him. There can be no room for compromise or concession with God. We either give our lives over to him completely or we keep them for ourselves. Paul the Apostle says, *"We are not our own. We were bought with a price"* (1 Cor. 6:19b,20). That price is the precious blood of Jesus Christ shed for us upon the cross to redeem us from slavery to sin and death.

The love of God compels us to choose who or what will be first in our lives. To place any relationship or any possession above God is a form of idolatry. Jesus challenges his disciples to examine who they love first and foremost. Jesus' way to glory and power is opposite the world's way of glory and power. The choice is ours, but the Lord does not leave us alone if we choose to follow him. Does the love of Christ compel you to put God first in all you do (see 2 Cor. 5)?

"Lord, may your love transform me that I may truly desire nothing more than life with you. May you always be first in my thoughts and intentions, and in my words and actions."

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