



I Don't Wanna Do The Work Today!

Pastor John Klawiter

September 4, 2022

Thirteenth Sunday After Pentecost

Luke 14:25-33

Grace and peace to you my friends in faith,

Most weeks, I look ahead to the following Sunday by checking what the preaching text will be, usually the gospel, on Sunday afternoon. I don't really start reading it closely or looking at commentaries until Tuesday when I prepare for Bible Study.

Sometimes, the scripture is exciting and fits nicely with what we are talking about. Sometimes, I get a passage that is rich with historical insights and I can tell it will be fun to study.

Sometimes, after reading a passage, it is clear that some verses will need to be added or subtracted, or in some instances, an alternative translation should be considered.

This was one of those weeks.

The Message Bible, which we just heard, offers a modern paraphrase of what Jesus is talking about. Unfortunately, in the versions of the Bible that we typically read, like the New Revised, New International and even the King James, there is a verse in today's passage that just doesn't make sense and, if I left it and didn't name the elephant in the room, you wouldn't be able to focus on ANYTHING else.

Don't believe me, it's the word that Old Guys and Women of Wisdom were fixated on. This doesn't sound like Jesus, it can't be what Jesus wants from us, right?

Here is actual footage of me reading Luke 14, verse 26

VIDEO

Two things are probably now clear to you.

First, I don't wanna preach about **hating father and mother, wife and children, siblings, and even my own life (slide of verse).**

And second, you don't have to worry me about deciding to become a TikTokker. Whatever that means.



So I didn't do anymore work on Sunday. Or Monday. I took my sabbath, but then, there was work to do on this really interesting text. Not just the hating, but also preparing to build a tower or a king going up against another king with a larger army. Where do we even begin?

Let's go back to that naughty word, shall we?

Hate.

I grew up being told that "hate" was on the naughty list. I only said, "Oh my God" if I was praying, the only dam uttered was a "river-blocker" and hate was the equivalent of a swear word.

One of my kids had his back-to-school conference this week. Taryn gave him the pep talk ahead of time about how to act with his new teacher. It didn't matter. He walked in to meet his teacher and promptly said, "I hate school."

This did not go well for him.

Hate is a word that gets overused today, but when we see it in the Bible, we perk up. Hate sends a strong message, which is why, after those Bible study conversations on Tuesday, I wanted us to hear the Message translation of verse 26:

"Anyone who comes to me but refuses to let go of father, mother, spouse, children, brothers, sisters—yes, even one's own self!—can't be my disciple."

Notice, Jesus isn't saying that we are to hate those people in our lives, but we do need to let them go... if they impede are ability to follow Christ.

Hmm, it's sort of helpful, but still.

Deacon Nina and I were talking about the new **First Nations Version of the New Testament (SLIDE)**. It's an indigenous translation of the gospels and epistles that was just published in 2021. It's a beautiful telling of the stories using a lens of many of the tribes of Turtle Island, North America.

I wondered how this translation would handle this passage.

It did not disappoint.

Creator Set Free, Jesus, was coming near to Jerusalem. Large crowds were following him, so he said "the ones who come to me must put me first, above all others. To walk the road with me, they must love and respect me above their own fathers and mothers, wives and children, and aunties and uncles.



I love that... put Jesus first, above all others.

Isn't that so much clearer? It's like, why didn't you just say THAT, Creator Set Free Jesus!?

Because, the Greek doesn't lie, Jesus says "hate." Context matters, a lot. When does hate not mean hate?

In the Jewish context, the word translated as "hate" is more accurately described as **"to turn away from, to detach oneself from"**.

In the first century, especially in this part of the world, everything was about family. You belonged to your family. You believed what your father believed and your father believed what his master, or Lord believed.

If Jesus is offering a new way, it was clearly going to run counter to belonging with your family. If the rest of your Jewish family didn't believe that Jesus was the Messiah, and who could blame them, why on earth would they accept a child who abandoned them to follow Jesus?

Jesus knows this. Following him in the year 30 was a direct challenge. You weren't just checking things out in the desert and seeing if you liked it. You can't go back. You were sacrificing EVERYTHING.

Then, Jesus suggests that they'll have to pick up their cross and follow him? Follow me, even to death. Ahem, (*whisper*): this is what you call foreshadowing.

None of the 12 disciples carry a cross to Golgotha, do they?

Jesus isn't talking to an audience in 2022 that has established legions of Christian churches around the world that all claim devotion to Christ despite all of our different beliefs, creeds, and practices.

Yet, there is some truth to putting Jesus first. We are not great at putting Jesus above all others.

There are times when we just don't *wanna do the work, today*, aren't there?

We fail to plan ahead. We don't give our whole heart to Jesus.

Like the person building a house who only lays down the foundation and didn't figure out how much money it would cost to finish it.

Or the king who goes into battle against an army twice their size, if there's not a path to victory, the king sends for a truce.



It's like Jesus anticipates that we won't be able to complete these tasks on our own. Jesus knows the cost of this mission. There's no white flag.

Jesus knows that, upon his death, there will be some who laugh. He didn't finish what he started. He said he was the Son of God and he dies like a criminal on the outskirts of town.

What a loser?!

Jesus knows it will cost his life on a tree... and then rising from the dead three days later. Who's laughing now?

How do we turn away from the things that come between us and Jesus?

Guess what, I'm not going to proclaim that you should hate everyone.

Instead, what about a different mindset? What if we helped change the world through our confidence in Christ? Why are we afraid of people? We shouldn't be.

What does it mean to do the work? What does it look like to put Christ first?

Here's a tweet I saw from a basketball coach, Tom Crean.

Be first. Speak and say hello first. Hold the door 1st. Greet and introduce 1st. Give your seat up 1st. Those simple things can change someone's day. You never know what people are dealing with.

Our kindness matters.

While you're at it, smile. Look someone in the eye. What if, by putting OTHERS first, we are really putting Christ first?

Remember my son who walked in and told his teacher that he hated school? He quickly learned that this was not the right thing to say. He thought about it all day and later that night, he talked to me and Taryn. Unprompted, he goes, "I regret that I said that. I like my classroom, I will try to do better this year."

There's hope after all. Is he truly willing to turn away from his old behaviors? We'll see. It starts with a positive mindset... I can tell that he wants to turn things around.

Can we intentionally put Jesus first? First in our families, first in our interactions with others, first in our own hearts. I know that I am willing to *do the work today*... are you? Amen.