

Read: Luke 14:26; Romans 6:1-7

Raymond McHenry in his book *Stories for the Soul*, tells this story about a Texas pastor. "When pastor Jim Denison was in college, he served as a summer missionary in East Malaysia. While there he attended a small church. At one of the church's worship services, a teenage girl came forward to announce her decision to follow Christ and be baptized.

"During the service, Denison noticed some worn-out luggage leaning against the wall of the church building. He asked the pastor about it. The pastor pointed to the girl who had just been baptized and told Denison, "Her father said that if she was baptized as a Christian she could never go home again. So she brought her luggage."

Oswald Chambers once wrote, "Abandon to God is of more value than personal holiness. ... When we are abandoned to God, He works through us all the time."

Think about things in your own life that God calls you to abandon. Dreams? Hopes? Plans? Status? Recognition? Acceptance? Take time to surrender them to Him.

PRAY: Pray prayers of "abandon..." Pray especially for the many in our world that must bring luggage to their baptismal service, because to be baptized means to be abandoned from home.

FRIDAY MARCH 11

Read: Luke 14: 28-33

Many have read these verses and summarized them with the phrase, "count the cost." To follow Jesus says Luke, is to be like one who wants to build a tower; perhaps a tower in his field or his vineyard. Imagine the shame and humiliation he would feel if the foundation of the tower was laid, but the tower was left unfinished. Everyone would see it and lose respect for the builder. Or, he is like a king. Consider the events of Libya today. Imagine, Luke might say, Moammar Gadhafi is faced with economic sanctions of other countries and their military power. He must decide if with his small army and poor people he can resist their influence. Of course he cannot. Would he not try to make peace? If he was in his right mind he would. Only a fool would not (and surely Gadhafi is a fool). So, in the same way, says Jesus, the wrath of God against sin is great. You cannot resist God's wrath. Will you not find a way towards peace? Jesus is our Peace, and God himself has graciously opened up this way for us. Will you not give up all you have for this peace?

"He who has ears to hear, let them hear!" Only a fool would not.

PRAY: That the Lord gives you unwavering commitment to follow Him.

SATURDAY MARCH 12

Read: Luke 15 in preparation for tomorrow's sermon.

Consider coming to morning prayer today in the sanctuary at 6:00AM.

WEEKLY DEVOTIONS GUIDE

MARCH 6-12, 2011

BY: PASTOR ANDREW BEUNK

NEW WEST CRC

SERIES: A 'TANGIBLE DISPLAY' PEOPLE: JOURNEYING WITH JESUS IN LUKE

SERMON: "THE COST OF BEING A DISCIPLE"

LUKE 14:25-34

PASTOR ANDREW BEUNK

SUNDAY MARCH 6

KEY THEME OR TAKE-AWAY:

MONDAY MARCH 7

Read: Luke 7: 1-17; 14:25

In Luke's Gospel we come across the Greek word *óchlos* 41 times. This is the word most often translated "crowd" and sometimes translated "people." This frequency in Luke is significant. Although Jesus has a special ministry of teaching, equipping and modeling for his twelve disciples, much of Jesus' ministry takes place in the presence of the *óchlos*. The crowds come to hear him, follow him, touch him, welcome him, they are amazed by him, are fed by him, they are delighted, blessed, and finally in the last mention of the crowds in Luke, chapter 23, they "beat their breast" because of their offence towards him. The last word of the crowd is anger, and how does Jesus respond, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do." Jesus gave himself up, not only for his disciples, but also for the crowds.

In Luke 14:25, we read that Jesus is speaking to the crowd and his high calling to discipleship is for them too. Sometimes when we hear Jesus saying "anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" we think Jesus is just speaking to the twelve. We think those words are for "special" Christians, people who are particularly "holy" and uniquely called. But no, these words are to the crowds. All followers of Jesus are called to *radical* discipleship, not just the special ones.

Jesus calls the crowds, he calls you and me, to place our loyalty and love for him above all. Above family, above possessions, above all earthly pleasures.

"Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

PRAY: Sing "I Surrender All" (I surrender all (2x), All to Thee my blessed Savior, I surrender all). Renew your commitment to following Christ, whatever the cost.

TUESDAY MARCH 8

Read: Micah 7: 5-6; Luke 12: 51-53; 14: 25-27

These passages describe what many have called the "hard sayings" of Jesus. Hard because the plain reading of these verses rubs against the natural love and loyalty we have towards our families.

Obviously, Jesus is not calling us to literally hate our parents or extended family, at least not in the plain sense of the word. A foundational command in Scripture calls us to "honour our father and mother" and surely honouring and hating, at least in today's use of the words, are towards opposite ends of the scale.

Jesus is using the word "hate" with a relative sense, at it is used elsewhere in the Bible. "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" we read in Rom. 9:13. The word hate in this sense does not mean to despise or disdain, but to

love less. What Jesus is saying in this text is this, "If anyone comes to me and does not love me more than his own father or mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."

For most in our culture this command does not come with sharp teeth. Not too many in our circles must choose between Jesus or family. Few experience family rejection because of their commitment to Christ.

But many in our world do. And so we, with them, must ask ourselves, will we love Jesus above family? Imagine that your commitment to Christ cut you off from all family relationships. No birthday or Christmas gatherings, no reunions, no phone calls, emails, or letters, no contact. Cut off.

Jesus asks all of us, "will you still follow me?"

PRAY: Pray that in your life, in your family, in our church community the "eternal Sabbath" will be tangibly displayed to others...every day.

WEDNESDAY MARCH 9

Read: John 10:10

Life in abundance. Is that how we think of our life in Christ? At times we are tempted to feel that our life in Christ denies us the "good life." We feel as though following Jesus means sacrificing or giving up what many think is the good life. Jesus brings restriction into our lives, or so we sometimes feel. Restrictions of time, of certain pleasures, or various forms of entertainment. And so sometimes, when people follow Jesus they try to follow him in a "half-hearted" way. They say, "I'm a Christian, but not a fanatic." They want to be a Christian, but they don't want the restrictions.

But Dallas Willard says this kind of "nondiscipleship" also comes with a cost. "The cost of nondiscipleship is far greater – even when this life alone is considered – than the price paid to walk with Jesus." Even if we only considered the benefits on this side of heaven, so to speak, Willard says the cost of nondiscipleship is far greater than the price we must pay to follow Jesus. He writes, "Nondiscipleship costs abiding peace, a life penetrated throughout by love, faith that sees everything in light of God's overriding governance for good, hopefulness that stands firm in the most discouraging of circumstances, power to do what is right and withstand the forces of evil. It short, it costs exactly that abundance of life Jesus said he came to bring." (cf. *The Spirit of the Disciplines*).

That is "the abundant life"—peace, love, faith, hope, power—that Jesus opens up for us when we decide to follow Him, no matter what the cost. Truly, no earthly gain can compare to this.

PRAY: Thank the Lord for the blessings of discipleship.... Peace, love, faith, hope, power, forgiveness, strength.... and anything else you can think of.

THURSDAY MARCH 10