

What does it mean to be a true disciple?

Our Gospel for today is breathtaking, first for what it says about Jesus and second for what it says about us. “Unless you love me more than yourself, father/mother/brother/sister, you are not worthy of me” Could you imagine, will any other founder of religion would make such a statement? (Could you imagine Mohammed or Buddha saying: Unless you love the Lord, more than your F/M etc.) None of them would say, “unless you love **me**... more than the most lovable things in the world, you are not worthy of me”. It’s this, making all the difference. For he is not one religious founder among many. He is not a prophet of truth in a long line of prophets. Rather, he is the one, to whom all religions directly or indirectly point. Because he is in person, “the Truth” to which all religions and prophets referred to.

Jesus compels a choice the way no other religious leaders does. Infront of someone who makes such a claim, we have to make a decision. As committed Christians, 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.

Why does Jesus say we must 'deny' ourselves and even our families? Now, the expression '*to deny*' often meant to '*prefer less*'. Jesus used strong language to make clear that nothing should take precedence in our lives, over God. Jesus knew that the way of the cross was the only way to glory, and victory over sin and death. He counted the cost and said 'yes' to his Father's will. We, too, are invited to '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 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

earnestly. (*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 (Prov.24:3).*)

Every landowner who could afford it, fenced 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, everlasting peace and happiness with God. 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 him.

There can be no room for compromise or concession with God. We either give our lives over to him entirely or we keep them for ourselves. Jesus' way to glory and power is opposite the world's way of glory, power, and success. 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?

Joke for the day! A Boss ask his employee: Do you believe that there is life after death? Employee: Certainly not sir; there is no proof of it. Boss said: "well, there is; after you left the office early yesterday to go to your cousin's funeral, he came here looking for you!"