



Daily Reflections

September 4, 2016

Scripture

Luke 14:25-33

Great crowds were traveling with Jesus,
and he turned and addressed them,
“If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother,
wife and children, brothers and sisters,
and even his own life,
he cannot be my disciple.

Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me
cannot be my disciple.

Which of you wishing to construct a tower
does not first sit down and calculate the cost
to see if there is enough for its completion?

Otherwise, after laying the foundation
and finding himself unable to finish the work
the onlookers should laugh at him and say,
‘This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.’

Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down
and decide whether with ten thousand troops
he can successfully oppose another king
advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops?
But if not, while he is still far away,
he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms.
In the same way,
anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions
cannot be my disciple.”

Our Scripture Reflection

Jesus and His disciples have gotten close to the city of destiny, Jerusalem. In what seems to be an attempt to check their status as disciples and the level of their desire to follow Him all the way, He gives them a very serious lesson. By telling them they must be willing to "hate" even their parents, His words are reflecting the Hebrew language which contained no superlatives. Rather than calling them to hate their parents, or anyone for that matter, they must be able to LOVE JESUS MORE OR ABOVE ALL ELSE. Jesus then calls them to prudent reflection:

Count the cost of your commitment BEFORE you say "Yes" to making that commitment. As a builder must know that he has the needed materials to build or a king has the soldiers needed for war, so too, the disciple must discern his or her ability and willingness to commit to Jesus' mission. The journey can be costly and require every drop of personal effort and sacrifice. Are they, are YOU, ready and willing?

Food for your Journey

Do not depend on the hope of results. When you are doing the sort of work you have taken on, essentially an apostolic work, you may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no result at all, if not perhaps results opposite to what you expect.

As you get used to this idea, you start more and more to concentrate not on the results but on the value, the rightness, the truth of the work itself. And there, too, a great deal has to be gone through, as gradually you struggle

less and less for an idea and more and more for specific people. The range tends to narrow down, but it gets much more real. In the end, it is the reality of personal relationships that saves everything

All the good that you do will come not from you but from the fact that you have allowed yourself, in the obedience of faith, to be used for God's love. Think of this more and gradually you will be free from the need to prove yourself, and you can be more open to the power that will work through you without your knowing it.

— Thomas Merton, in a February 21, 1966, letter to friend Jim Forest, in *Thomas Merton: A Life in Letters*, (Harper One, 2008).

We hear Jesus call us to "carry the cross," but do we really know what he is asking? In the book *Smoke on the Mountain*, Joy Davidman reminds us:

Our generation has never seen a man crucified except in sugary religious art; but it was not a sweet sight, and few of us would dare to have a real picture of a crucifixion on our bedroom walls. A crucified slave beside the Roman road screamed until his voice died, and then hung, a filthy, festering clot of flies, sometimes for days -- a living man whose hands and feet were swollen masses of gangrenous meat. That is what our Lord took upon himself, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Discipleship quotations from *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.

When all is said and done, the life of faith is nothing if not an unending struggle of the spirit with every available weapon against the flesh.

Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such

grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: "Ye were bought at a price," and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.

Discipleship is not an offer that man makes to Christ.

Prayer from the Heart

Precious Lord, when I gaze upon Your wondrous Cross, I see the price You paid for me. You did not hesitate or ponder, You entertained no questions or doubts, You chose to die for me. Strengthen my faith and make me resolute, Lord. May I become a joyful and grateful giver of myself to You. Amen.