

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost - Year C

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Psalm 1

Philemon 1-21

Luke 14:25-33

09/04/2022

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke:

25Now large crowds were traveling with [Jesus;] and he turned and said to them, 26“Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. 27Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. 28For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? 29Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, 30saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ 31Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. 33So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.”

The Gospel of our Lord

### **Prayer**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

### **True Cost**

Good morning! As many of you are aware, I'm a big car guy, a gear-head. While my passion mostly transcends any one particular brand or model, a certain car manufacturer in Italy holds a special place in my heart... Ferrari. I'm sure you all remember me talking about the 1987 Ferrari F40 in a previous sermon, and while it's fun to imagine owning a car from the marque, it just isn't very likely. Even IF I save all my pennies for the next however many years, it won't happen. And I'm not talking about the F40 here, that car is selling for easily over a million dollars now. No, even if I had the money to purchase a car, I doubt I could afford the maintenance.

Listen to these figures. The 2002 Ferrari Enzo, the last car that the famous Enzo Ferrari green lit before he died, is another car that I love but will never be able to own, regardless of it regularly selling for over a million dollars too. It would cost me \$500 a tire just to replace the old rubber. An oil change costs \$1,500, and the typical service of the car is a \$9,000 job. A new clutch, which needs replaced after 5 full throttle starts, will set you back another \$5,000. If you don't find any of those numbers staggering, then sit down for the cost of a full brake job, which will set you back an even \$40,000!<sup>1</sup> It's not just the brand's hypercars either. Estimates on the most affordable used Ferrari cars will see oil changes between \$1,000-2,000. The tricky F1 transmissions they started using in the early 2000's cost \$6,500 to service, and belts, you know, those things that typically cost a few bucks at the auto store, need to be changed every 15,000 miles and can cost as much

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.secretentourage.com/lifestyle/autos/cost-of-ownership-ferrari-enzo/>

as \$4,000! Spark plugs are \$3,000 and I doubt that either of those jobs are something that can be done easily. Most of the servicing of modern Ferrari's requires the engine and transmission to be dropped out of the car and removed from the chassis. The most expensive Ferrari to maintain is probably the 250 Testarossa, a \$20 million dollar car with an average maintenance cost of \$10,000 annually.<sup>2</sup> Oh, and don't even get me started on insurance! That \$600 service charge from your last dealership visit seems pretty reasonable now, doesn't it? As you can see, my dream of owning a Ferrari will always remain just that, a dream.

Italian supercars are far from the only example of this sort of cost, yachts and airplanes are famously costly to purchase and even more expensive to maintain. It seems that we often don't know the true cost of something. In today's Gospel Jesus is trying to drill into the disciples and the crowds around him that to be a follower means to give up everything. Jesus wants them to understand the true cost, so as not to be surprised.

Imagine the scene around him. Jesus has been working around Israel teaching and preaching a radical call that challenges the establishment, all the while performing miracles of healing and other astounding feats of power. Anyone following him has been swept off their feet and pulled along. It's like those first few months when dating someone where everything is new and exciting and it seems impossible for anything to stifle your passion. Jesus, seeing where things are going, takes this time to stop and drive home the point that this will be no walk in the park.

*26“Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. 27Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my*

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<sup>2</sup> <https://motorandwheels.com/ferraris-maintenance-cost/>

*disciple.*” The word seem harsh and jarring to our 21st Century ears, but remember, this is coming from the same man who, a few chapters earlier in Luke 8:19-21, when his family couldn’t get to him because of the crowd responded “*My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.*” But, the word “hate” does need to be unpacked. The Greek word used is *miseō*, and one scholar defines it this way: “*In Jewish traditions, ‘hate’ is used regularly of the animosity between actual enemies, to be sure. But it is also used in binary wisdom aphorisms employing ‘love’ and ‘hate’ as paradigmatic responses of discernment: the wicked are said to hate discipline, justice, and knowledge, while the righteous hate wickedness, falsehood, and gossip... understand that Luke 14:26 is not advocating intense hostility toward kin and life, but, rather, is promoting the steadfast refusal to allow something less valuable to displace something more valuable.*”<sup>3</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson writes that “*The terms denote attitudes and modes of action, not emotions. The point is not how one feels towards parents and family, but one’s effective attitude when it comes to a choice for the kingdom.*”<sup>4</sup>

So, for Jesus, the focus is not on forming a negative emotional response to one’s family, but is about making sure that we put our life with Jesus first. It demands everything from us, and is costly. It’s interesting Jesus’ use of the word cost. The word is used only one single time in the whole of the Second Testament, and it’s right here in the Gospel of Luke.<sup>5</sup> And just as the builder estimates the cost before building, Jesus wants to

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-23-3/commentary-on-luke-1425-33-5>

<sup>4</sup> Johnson, Luke T., and Daniel J. Harrington. *The Gospel of Luke*. Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1991. pp. 229-230.

<sup>5</sup> Bartlett, David L., and Barbara B. Taylor. *Feasting on the Word. Year C, Volume 4*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008. p. 46.

make it very clear that God will demand a high price. How many times in the Hebrew Scripture have we been reminded of this? *“For you must not worship any other god, for the LORD... is a jealous God.”*<sup>6</sup>

If you’re overwhelmed, take a deep breath. Emile M. Townes in their commentary on this text makes a beautiful observation... discipleship is a process.<sup>7</sup> and in this process we become *“living disciples.”* While God demands full commitment, God also understands that change takes time.

The call to give up our possessions is about more than material things. Our "stuff" can take on a variety of different forms. *“Our need to acquire, our yearning for success, our petty jealousies, our denigrating stereotypes of others, our prejudices and hatreds, and more.”*<sup>8</sup> These are all possessions that block us from following Jesus. Townes invites us to realize that *“at the heart of discipleship is transformation. The cost of discipleship is not just becoming accumulators of new information about life and living it fully, or changing our behavior in regard to Jesus’ teachings. The cost is engaging in a profoundly radical shift toward the ethics of Jesus with every fiber of our beings... Following [Jesus] means that we cannot be shallow or uncommitted believers— the adjectives simply do not fit the noun.”*<sup>9</sup>

Jesus is inviting the crowds, and us as listeners, to think. This isn’t about blind obedience. God wants us to understand what we are committing, what we’re giving up. If we want to claim to be Christians, and this applies to all of us, myself included, we cannot be halfhearted in our devotion. The text forces us to ask a heavy question... Are we ready to be

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<sup>6</sup> Exodus 34:14 NET

<sup>7</sup> Bartlett, David L., and Barbara B. Taylor. *Feasting on the Word. Year C, Volume 4.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008. p. 46.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 48.

disciples of Jesus? Are we ready to carry our cross? It's a question we can only answer for ourselves. So... look inside yourself... Are you ready? Amen.