



▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

Saturday/Sunday, 10/27-28/18

Ignite: The Cost of Discipleship

Luke 14:25-35 (New International Version – NIV)

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters — yes, even their own life — such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’

“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out.

“Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

Family Activity: Experiment eating foods with and without salt. Talk about how salt can make a food taste better. Discuss how salt has different flavors. (Sample if you have some.) What flavor personality does each one around your table have? Talk about how God can use you to bring God’s love to others through your special flavor.

Monday, 10/29/18

“Letting Go”

Luke 14:25-26

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters — yes, even their own life — such a person cannot be my disciple.

The large crowds traveling with Jesus are those who are curious about him. Maybe they are interested. Perhaps they are skeptical. Jesus turns to teach what it means to follow him – to be a disciple. He begins with the startling words about hating one’s family. How can this be? Jesus

commands us to love our neighbors, to love ourselves, to love our enemies. If taken literally, there is a contradiction in Jesus' message.

This is an example of a biblical teaching that is not intended to be taken literally. There are different styles of writing in the Bible. Here we have "hyperbole," which my husband would define as "exaggeration for effect." I think The Message Bible provides clarity, "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."

- Why do you think Jesus uses hyperbole in this passage?
- What does it mean for you to "let go" to be a disciple of Jesus?

Prayer: "Take My Life and Let It Be" by Frances R. Havergal

*Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in endless praise.*

*Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.*

*Take my voice and let me sing,
Always, only for my King.
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.*

*Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
Every pow'r as Thou shalt choose.*

*Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.*

*Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.*

Tuesday, 10/30/18

"Taking Up the Cross"

Luke 14:27 (NIV)

And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

What does it mean to carry the cross? You may find “bear,” “shoulder,” or “take up” used in place of “carry,” depending on the translation. I have heard or read that the cross is a *burden* to bear, but I have yet to find it to be scriptural. I remember (from long ago) a seminary professor saying very emphatically the cross is never a burden; the cross gives life.

“The People’s New Testament Commentary” teaches: “Christology and discipleship are always related. How one understands Jesus’ nature and role in God’s plan directly affects how one understands what it means to be a follower of Jesus, and vice versa.” This is as true today as it was in the early days of Jesus. Mark, who wrote after Nero’s persecution of Christians in Rome, refers to “taking up one’s cross” as literally the cost of discipleship. Twenty years later, when Luke was written, this was no longer true.

- Yesterday I invited you to join with me in reflecting on what it is we might give up in order to be a disciple. Now, let’s reflect on what it means for us to take up the cross? Which language works best for you?
- How does your response to the above question shape your understanding of who Jesus is, and vice versa?

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the gift of Jesus. Your power, creativity and presence are so overwhelming, I need Jesus to show me your personality. I need Jesus to teach me what it means to be a disciple. Show me your path. Guide all my senses to experience you. Make me to pay attention to your presence in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Wednesday, 10/31/18

“Count the Cost”

Luke 14:28-33

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’

“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

Over the past months, Pastor Steve has repeatedly said that the building of the worship center, and all that goes with it, does not measure up to the call and challenge facing PWUMC to grow spiritually, to increase in engagement, and to reach the unchurched. This is both the vision and the challenge for us.

On the one hand, we must consider the influence of the first verses of this passage about letting go and carrying the cross. On the other hand, we are called to be as intentional, focused and driven as we were in the building project. When the disciples gave up everything (Consider: What is your “everything?”) to follow Jesus, “the cost is seen in the prospect; in the gospel (good news of God’s love) itself, as in life, the cost of discipleship is learned along the way and seen in retrospect.” (Commentary)

- What (specifically) are you willing to give up in order to give to the vision of PWUMC? How will you support PWUMC with your prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness?
- How do you hope to grow in your spiritual journey, and your commitment to Christ through the church?

Prayer: Dear God, you have been my help and hope in ages past. You gave Jesus to love and care for me personally, as well as to bind all your children together to be the church. Turn toward all of us. Show us how to be your church. Give us opportunities to greet the unchurched, and to pay attention to the opportunities. Be our strength, courage, hope and joy in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, 11/1/18

“All Saints Day”

Luke 14:34-35

“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out.

“Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

In the Catholic Church, there are particular qualifications for one to become a saint. They include good works and miracles. One is not named a saint overnight, but through a lifelong process. Saints are the salt of life. They make a difference.

Although Protestants do not recognize saints, the call to live a saintly life is relevant. As a church, we are called to make a difference, to be different, to flavor the world (one by one) with God's love, grace and forgiveness. To do anything less is to choose not to hear.

- What flavor (talent, gift, ability) do you bring to the church?
- How are you nurtured so you don't lose your flavor?

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the gift of your church – Christians coming together to be your body here on earth. Give us wisdom. Give us courage that we might face these times boldly with love, compassion and attentive senses always ready to reach out to the stranger, our neighbor, our family. Fire us up to sizzle with your love, to be a spark that grows PWUMC to be a blazing fire through Jesus. Amen.

Friday, 11/2/18

“Partners”

Story – “Partners” by Marc Gelman, “Does God Have a Big Toe?”

Before there was anything, there was God, a few angels, and a huge swirling glob of rocks and water with no place to go. The angels asked God, “Why don't you clean up this mess?”

So God collected rocks from the huge swirling glob and put them together in clumps and said, “Some of these clumps of rocks will be planets, and some will be stars and some of these rocks will be ... just rocks.” Then God collected water from the huge swirling glob and put it together in pools of water and said, “Some of these pools of water will be oceans, and some will be clouds, and some of this water will be ... just water.”

Then the angels said, “Well God, it's neater now, but is it finished?” And God answered, “Nope!!”

So, on some of the rocks God placed growing things, and creeping things, and things that only God knows what they are, and when God had done all this, the angels asked God, "Is the world finished now?" And God answered, "Nope!"

God made a man and a woman from some of the water and stardust and said to them, "I'm tired now. Please finish up the world for me ... really it's almost done." But the man and woman said, "We can't finish the world alone! You have the plans and we are too little."

"You are big enough," God answered them. "But I agree to this. If you keep trying to finish the world, I will be your partner." The man and the woman asked, "What is a partner?" and God answered, "A partner is someone you work with on a big thing that neither of you can do alone. If you have a partner, it means that you can never give up, because your partner is depending on you. On the days you think I am not doing enough and on the days I think you are not doing enough, even on those days we are still partners and we must not stop trying to finish the world. That's the deal." And they all agreed to that deal.

Then the angels asked God, "Is the world finished yet?" And God answered, "I don't know. Go ask my partners."

***This week's devotional was written by
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