

HATE YOUR LIFE AND BEAR YOUR CROSS!

The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

(Luke 14:26-27)

²⁶ "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷ "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

Grace, peace and mercy from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen!

Do you remember those bumper stickers that said "Hate is not a family value." I didn't understand what that meant until I heard that those who speak openly against immorality are considered hate mongers. Just because you argue against something doesn't mean you hate those who do it. If you really care about people, you are going to try and warn them against the dangers facing the body and the soul.

In our text Jesus says something that is difficult for us to understand. As Christians are we really supposed to hate our families, and our own lives? What about "love your neighbor as yourself?" Or "love one another as even as I have loved you?" So what does it mean to hate ones self? Today we think of hate as taking away people's rights. Hate can mean discriminating against someone for various reasons, for color, for beliefs, for vocation.

If by hate you mean belittling people, calling them names, denying them a place in society, taking away the freedom of speech or human dignity, then hate is indeed wrong.

- It's wrong to make fun of people trying to hurt them.
- It's wrong to yell at people trying to humiliate them.
- It's wrong to call them derogatory names.
- It's wrong to lie about them and misrepresent them before others.
- It's wrong to treat people differently and deny them love because you don't like the way they look or the things they wear or things they really can't change.

It's wrong for us to do anything that contradicts God's love for all people. After all, Jesus said, "***Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. If you love only those who love you in return, what good is that? Everybody does that. Love those who don't love you and I will reward you in heaven***" (Luke 7).

But Jesus did use that word "hate" MISEO in the original tongue. But if you don't hate others and yourself, you can't be My disciples, Jesus says. Is that true? HOW DID THAT GET INTO OUR BIBLES?

As I've said before, "What are the three most important things to properly understanding the Scriptures?" CONTEXT, CONTEXT and CONTEXT! To understand this passage we need to hear through the ears of the original hearers. We need sitzen im leben, how does it sit in life? What is the historical-social context? The people of this region of Jesus day didn't use lukewarm terms. There wasn't the word "like". No "liking" someone. In some ways I imagine that made it easier. That way you didn't have someone asking you "Do you love me or just liked me". No, for the people speaking Aramaic there is no word "like in there language you had the choice of "love" or "hate".

The Biblical world talks in absolutes. Genesis 29 (30-31) says that Jacob had two wives, Rachel and Leah. It says Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. "***When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he allowed her to have a child, but Rachel was without a child.***" Do you see the

comparison between hate and loving something less? Jacob took care of Leah his wife, stayed with her, honored his vows, and raised his children. But he had more loving feelings for Rachel. Being loved less is called being hated, or despised. It's a matter of degree. Brings a new meaning to that Everly Brothers' song, "You Lost that Loving Feeling", doesn't it?

Jesus says in Luke 16:13 ***"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will serve the one and despise the other."*** He doesn't say the servant will yell at the other master, call him dirty names, discredit him and try to ruin his property and business. But he will have to obey the call of one master and ignore the orders of another. This is Biblical hate.

So when your family, friends, or even your old Adam tells you to follow something or someone other than Jesus, you have to say no, deny it, and stop listening to it. You can't follow Jesus and obey another voice. The Lord God doesn't take second place to anyone, nor should He. That's what it means to be God. When we try to believe Jesus is less than God when we won't follow Him. In the Word of our text, we hate Him.

So when Jesus tells us to hate others and self, it means we should be willing to renounce all that would keep us from following Him. Now before you label this as extreme, imagine what would happen if we honored all the commitments and commandments like Jesus expects us to honor Him as our God.

When a man and a woman are married, for the rest of their life they would honor each other. They would not let anything take the place of their commitment for each other. By doing so they wouldn't drift away from each other, and their love would only grow for one another. They would always place the other in higher esteem than themselves. They would constantly be trying to give more than ever received. And absolute peace would exist in that marriage because perfect love cast out all fear.

If you took a job you would trust your employer. He would treat you with dignity, since you have committed a major portion of your life to him. He wouldn't fire you to reduce the payroll and benefits he has to pay out. And he would know that you are doing your absolute best to produce that product or service that the company offers. He would always speak highly of you; place the best possible construction on everything you did.

And parents, if your kids honored you the way Jesus expects us to honor Him. There would be no more arguments with them, and discipline would be a joy. Because fathers wouldn't provoke children and the children would obey parents. Parents wouldn't need to overburden the kids with expectations and chores. Parents could give their children their undivided attention, and wouldn't need to leave them out of all their fun.

What a messed up world we live in! When we see people who are honoring God in their commitments, we don't throw a party and say, "Look at that? I've never seen such a faithful person before?" No we wonder what type of drugs the kids are on and what cult the parents are involved in? If you're thinking about what it means to be a Christian, Jesus wants you to count the cost. If you want to follow Christ, then you have to follow Him. There's no saying, *"Jesus, you go on, I'm going to hang out around here for a while, I'll catch up with you later."*

There's no covering over your sinful behavior. It's exposed to God for what it is. He says, "Give it up. You can't follow me and act that way." If we want to follow Jesus, it's going to make a big difference in your life, and people are going to see that difference. You might be able to fool some of the people, some of the time, or all the people part of the time, but you can't fool God. So stop trying!

There's never a time we can't show love to others. And one of the ways we show love to other people is by warning them. We warn them that their sinful life may end eternal damnation. Be alarmed when sexual immorality is called a civil right, or when someone refuses to give up a behavior that hurt others, or steals or cheats or lies about others. That kind of living needs to be exposed for what it is, because it's misleading people and causes them great suffering. And it's never hateful to express what God has to say about it.

Yes we are passive in justification, it's invisible. But sanctification is visible and active in our lives. Let me explain that. There's a cost to being a Christian. Salvation is the free gift of God. When Jesus died on the cross, He took our sins on Himself. When the Holy Spirit brings someone to believe in Jesus' love, they are declared not to be guilty, at no cost to themselves. God saves them. We don't add a thing to that salvation; in a sense it's invisible.

But the Christian is always to follow Jesus. That's where our faith is visible. We are to love God by obeying His commands, and to love others by serving our neighbor, those around us in genuine need. They may be our friends. They may be our enemies. But we are called to serve them. That's the cost of being a Christian. That is the work of the Holy Spirit living through us. We cannot do it ourselves, but the Holy Spirit can. Don't get me wrong, we can stop the work of God's love in our lives. We can turn to the flesh and be - - well let me read what St. Paul say we can be. Galatians 5:19-21: ***“Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God”***. If we are busy creating strife, suffering from anger, being suspicious caught up in enmity then we are stopping the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and we are missing out on the blessing God wants for us. We are stifling the work of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus says, ***“Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”*** To his original audience this would mean, “Do you count your own life as meaningless compared to being Jesus disciple? Are you will to be crucified for the faith?” They all knew what crucifixion was for they had seen many criminals killed in this way. But they followed Him (✝), and they would not be disappointed.

To us today it means, “Are you ready to put everything else as secondary and non essential and follow after Him (✝)?” Are you ready to let go and let God?

- Bad things may happen to you. But Jesus says, “Trust me!”
- People may call you names. But Jesus says, “Don't worry about them. Listen to what I say!”
- You will have to help people you don't like being around. But Jesus says, “I did that for you!”
- You are going to have to hold your tongue and open your mind and your wallet. But Jesus says, “There's nothing that will bring you more joy than I can!”

This is the cost of following Jesus. Are you still going to follow him?

You might be thinking pastor that an awful high expectation of this church and of Christ. But there's no other path that brings peace to the soul and joy in the heart. It brings the security of knowing who you really are and why you are here. In case you've forgotten that let me remind you once again: You are a fallen and sinful person who deserves God's full wrath and eternal damnation. So go ahead, count the cost. But Jesus came to die in your place and to pay the price for your sin. (✝) He loves you that much. Count the cost! It cost Him, (✝) His life! God

loves you that much, for Jesus sake, that He says to you, that all your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, paid in full by the blood of Jesus.

How could you not follow Him? In Jesus name, Amen and amen!

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, AMEN!