

Devotions – September 8-14, 2019

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Sunday, September 8, 2019

Read Luke 14:25-33

²⁸ For 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?

Planning for discipleship is an interesting concept. “What do I need to plan for?” may be the questions that many ask. While discipleship may be following Jesus and his teachings, a common thought process seems to be “as I want to”.

Jesus makes it clear here in Luke that there is a cost to follow him and that it is not something to be undertaken lightly. Putting Jesus first, above all things, may mean rejecting things that we hold dear. It may mean rejection by family and friends or at least rejection of choices that we make as a result of following Jesus. Does being a disciple mean giving up all of our earthly possessions in order to follow Jesus? That is a question that is best answered on an individual basis as you sort out the cost of following him. It does mean, however, that following Jesus becomes a higher priority than the things that we possess or desire to possess.

Planning to follow Jesus is a choice that needs to be planned for. Not specifically the steps to be taken, but rather the meaning, the changes, the losses and the gains that will come with making the choice.

Let us pray: *Holy God, grant us an awareness of what it means to follow you. Give us courage to know that we have to depend on you and the willingness to follow you even in the midst of doubt and anxiety. Amen.*



Monday, September 9, 2019

Read Deuteronomy 30:15-20

¹⁵ See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity.

Decisions or choosing are a part of daily life. Choosing is a part of the rhythm into which we slip unconsciously as we go about the ordinary in our daily patterns. Yet each decision that we make in some way reflects our relationship with God.

God has set before us a vision of what following and trusting God's providence looks like. The scriptures show us God's intent and purpose for us. God's invitation to us is to take that vision and live it as followers, as disciples.

It is in daily life and the decisions we make, the manner in which we use our extra resources of time, ability and money, that the true indicators of our discipleship are visible.

Following Jesus so deeply affects the manner in which we act so that we do it automatically, without thinking, as God has called us to do in the gift of scripture.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, you have given us the tools and guidance to live as disciples of Jesus. Give us hearts to study and learn what you have put before us. Strengthen and guide us in our decision making. Fill us with joy in your presence. Amen*



Tuesday, September 10, 2019

Read Philemon 1:1-21

⁸ For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, ⁹ yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love

In this reading we have a true sense of what the costs of following Jesus can look like. Onesimus is a runaway slave, formerly owned by Philemon. Philemon is a wealthy man and a leader in a house church to which Paul hopes to return. Runaway slaves could be put to death if the owner so desired.

For the sake of the gospel and the love that Christ has already shown us, Paul has asked Onesimus to return to his master and by this letter is asking Philemon to forgive and accept Onesimus as a brother in Christ. Both are being asked to give up feelings and ideas and the relationship of the past and to forge a new one in the love of Christ.

To follow Jesus means decisions of which we may not be able to see as we plan the costs of following Jesus. Yet rest assured we will be confronted with decisions and need God's guidance in making them.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, as we face choices and new ways of living our faith, new ways of doing church for the sake of your Kingdom, fill us with grace, forgiveness and caring for others. Help us to be the people that show the world your face, your presence. Amen*



Wednesday, September 11, 2019

Read Isaiah 57:14-21

^{15b}I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Part of being a disciple is recognizing our own brokenness and sin. Discipleship becomes about admitting our need for God. Discipleship involves recognizing our need for God's forgiveness and God's strength for moving on.

God comes to us in these times, these moments, to revive us and refresh us for the work of the Kingdom in our daily activities. This energy for Kingdom work, for "building up and preparing the way", is not something that we do on our own. This is a work that is empowered by the "high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy"^{15a}.

Following Jesus is God's work in our lives coming about as a result of our need for God. Discipleship becomes the God power in our lives as we allow God to be a part of each and every moment of each and every day.

Let us pray: *God of grace, I come to you as a broken and sinful follower of Jesus Christ. Fill me with your spirit that I might be refreshed and renewed with a new vision of your hope for the world. Amen*



Thursday, September 12, 2019

Read Luke 14:15-24

²³ Then the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled.'

Those who think that they are worthy yet go about their lives thinking only of themselves will find themselves on the outside looking in. Being a disciple means hearing the invitation and responding, despite the cost or our personal preferences.

We don't like to think of a Kingdom that doesn't include everyone. Yet, many passages such as this one seem to indicate that some will be included and there will be those who will be excluded.

While scripture uses earthly examples to make a point, it is not up to us to include or exclude by our own earthly interpretation of those examples. Just as there are those who have been excluded by their own choice, the story indicates that the invitation has been extended to all. It is God who determines who and how the invitation is rejected. Discipleship draws us to accept the invitation and the banquet and the fellowship that awaits us.

Let us pray: *God of invitation, open my eyes to your invite in the midst of each day. Make me into a living invitation to your banquet with joy and caring that is evident to all. Amen*



Friday, September 13, 2019

Read Philippians 2:19-23

²¹ All of them are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

It is so easy to apply all of our wants, our ideas, our visions to the Kingdom of God. The problem being, then it is no longer the Kingdom of God, the place where God is in charge.

The church needs more disciples like Timothy. The church needs people who are comfortable enough with their faith that they can put aside their own interests, to serve Christ and his interests in the midst of the needs of the world.

Jesus said there would be costs and sacrifices. Jesus said we would each have to carry our own cross upon which we would lose everything. As disciples, Jesus' interests are our interests.

Let us pray: *Lord of the church, move my heart and mind to open to your interests and your path. Remind me of the love that Timothy had for you and instill in me that same kind of love for you and for others. Amen*



Saturday, September 14, 2019

Read Psalm 1

1 Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; 2 but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night...

Being a disciple would appear to be a great deal of hard work with a great deal of sacrifice. Yet in God's economy, God's way of the world, it is just that sacrifice which brings substance and joy to living life.

We are afraid of losing control of something that we have little control over in the first place. Scripture readings this week have reminded us that we are more apt to recognize God's presence in the midst of uncertainty and need, always being invited into a deeper trust in God's providence and a life of discipleship.

Happiness is there in the midst of God's promises and our faith.

Let us pray: *God of love, as I grow in my discipleship and my capacity to follow Jesus, keep me in the joy and confidence that comes from your counsel and your teaching. Keep me in the midst of your loving care. Amen*

