**The Gospel of Luke**

**Witness to the Gentiles - #39**

**Cost of Discipleship, Parable of the Salt**

**Luke 14:25-33, 34-35**

**Class term ending, dinner on May 4**

Friends – Just three more classes before the semester is over! Our end-of-class carry-in dinner at E91 is planned for Wednesday, May 4, in the Friendship Room. Details and sign-up sheets to come. Current and past class members welcome. Mark your calendars and we hope to see you there! – Bob

**Luke 14:25-33 – The Cost of Discipleship**

***25*** *Now great crowds were traveling along with him (Jesus), and he turned and said to them,* [***26***](http://biblehub.com/luke/14-26.htm) *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.* [***27***](http://biblehub.com/luke/14-27.htm)*Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.*

[***28***](http://biblehub.com/luke/14-28.htm) *“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?* [***29***](http://biblehub.com/luke/14-29.htm) *Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him,* [***30***](http://biblehub.com/luke/14-30.htm) *saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’*

[***31***](http://biblehub.com/luke/14-31.htm) *“Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?* [***32***](http://biblehub.com/luke/14-32.htm) *And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.* [***33***](http://biblehub.com/luke/14-33.htm) *So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”*

**Notes and Studies**

1. In the struggle there is no neutrality between God and evil. Our Savior very clearly shows unto all who would follow Him, that the pathway of discipleship has no form of neutrality.

1. Our way is to exert a stern and irresistible earnestness; that does not allow us to be relaxed or loving our life to the extent that “*If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.* [*27*](http://biblehub.com/luke/14-27.htm)*.Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.*”

**Does Jesus teach us to hate?**

1. The Greek word ***misen***, hate, is the opposite for ***agapan***, divine love. Luke uses hate in 6:22 and 27 which was used to describe how others look at the disciples of Jesus. Here hate is a word that expresses allegiance, as there is a sharp chasm between Two Camps: the One that belongs to Jesus and the Other that is hateful of Jesus and his teaching.
2. This is a call to cut off all natural affection for all human relationships, if this affection gets in the way of total commitment to the Lord.

**A Short note from Philemon**

**Cutting the Ties**

 Our Lord does not teach us to hate anyone, but here to be a disciple of Jesus means to be rejected as Jesus was rejected, and to be accused as Jesus was accused of being a Samaritan and even demon possessed. He said once that his brothers and sisters and mothers are those who do the “will of the Father” not just those who have a biological origin, the descendants of Abraham.

 If Jesus came to re-create the old creation, Jesus has to point to the obstacles that can keep us inside the circle of the old creation, the affection and the ties that can keep us away from carrying our cross and following the Master.

 I have seen mothers, brothers and sisters who came here to the Monastery trying to persuade novices not to become monks. They even weep and cry out, for what do you think a novice can do? He must fall on the other side of our nature, that is the power of rejection which has the fire of hate, not the hate of the relatives but the hate of the ties that these relatives can bring with them to seduce a person not to carry his cross and to devote totally his life to the Lord.”

**Are we called to despise the laws of natural affection?**

1. Does the Lord call us to despise the laws of natural affection? Does Jesus command us to hate one another, and to disregard the love that is due to fathers from their sons, to wives from their husbands, to brothers and sisters? Shall we make those enemies who are members of the same household; and those, whom it is our duty rather to love; must we count as foes, in order that we may be with Jesus, and be able to follow you?
2. But our Savior commands even those who are violent enemies to be gentle, and forgiving to all who would do them wrong: for, "Love, your enemies: and pray for them that curse you:" How could Jesus wish us to hate those who are born of the same family?
3. What Jesus wishes to teach in these commands, however, is plain to those who can understand what is said in another place expressly upon the same subject:

 *"For he that loves his father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loves son or daughter more me, is not worthy of me."*

By adding “*more than me,*” it is plain that Jesus permits us to love, but not more than we love Him. For Jesus demands for Himself our chief love and from that “chief love” comes all other affections and love.

1. The love of God in those who are perfect in mind has something in it superior both to the honor due to parents, and to the natural affection felt even for children. It is from this love and because of this love we love others.

**The Occasion of “such teaching"**

1. This passage contains the words spoken by Jesus at the great banquet to those many who were invited by Jesus in the Parable to attend the feast. But they were men indifferent to it, for they made excuses, it says, with one accord. One said that he had bought a field and must go to see it, another that he had bought five yoke of oxen, and a third that he had married a wife. Here these persons refused the invitation and vexed him who invited them. We are therefore given most clearly to understand that when God calls us through Christ, to make us partakers of His feast, we must disregard all other concerns, and set no value whatsoever upon the things of this life, but exerting all our force must advance to those things which will never have to be abandoned, and which fill us with all blessedness, as God bestows with a bounteous hand upon us His gifts, and like one welcoming us to a costly banquet, admits us to the right of rejoicing with the rest of the saints in the hope of future blessings.
2. What we have and see of this earthly life are but of little value and last only for a time. They all belong to the “fallen and corrupt” cosmos: but those things which are divine and spiritual constantly and without ceasing accompany those who have once been counted worthy of receiving them, and reach onwards to unending worlds. What value therefore will men of sense set upon earthly farms, or the love of carnal pleasure, or the respect due to kinsmen in the flesh? If it be laid down for love's sake unto Christ, we must disregard all these things that have been named.
3. There are many instances of men desirous of a blameless life, who even after touching, so to speak, the dust of the earthly life and making a trial of the combats therein, and all but attaining to the right of receiving the crown of the heavenly calling, have been drawn backward, as it were, either from regard to relatives, or from being too weak to bear a struggle of endurance, or from being entangled in the snares of carnality, and foolishly preferring present pleasure to the blessings laid up in hope. To many, the fear of death has terrified, and when the season called them unto persecutions, that being proved they might receive the crown of incorruption, they have denied the faith, have avoided, that is, the duty of suffering patiently, and having shown themselves weak and cowardly have fallen from their steadfastness. Our work therefore is a mind incapable of being broken, that makes us careless of every worldly matter for our love of Him. He commands us to hate even our relatives according to the flesh, and our own self also, if, as I have just said, the season calls us thereto.

**Building the Tower and seeking peace with adversary – Cyril of Alexandria**

1. Jesus used has two examples to encourage unto an invincible fortitude those who are His friends, and to establish in an unwavering zeal those whose desire it is to attain to honors by patience and endurance. *"For if, says He, any one wish to build a tower, he reckons first if he have means sufficient to finish it, lest when he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, men laugh at him."* For those whose choice it is to lead a glorious and blameless life, they ought to store up beforehand in their mind a zeal sufficient thereunto, and to remember him who says, "*My son, if you draw near to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for every temptation: make your heart straight, and endure."* But those who have no such zeal, how will they be able to reach the mark that is set before them?
2. *"Or what king,”* He says, *“wishing to make war with another king, does not consider with himself, whether with his ten thousand he can prevail over one who is more mighty than himself?"* And what does this mean? *"Our wrestle is not against blood and flesh, but against governments; against empires; against the world holders of this darkness; against wicked spirits in the heavenly regions."* We too have a crowd, as it were, of other enemies, the carnal mind, the law that rages in our members, passions of many kinds, the lust of pleasure, the lust of the flesh, the lust of wealth, and others: with these we must wrestle; this is our savage troop of enemies. How therefore shall we conquer? By believing that "in God we shall do valiantly,” as Scripture says, and “He shall bring to naught those that oppress us:" In this confidence one of the holy prophets said, "*Behold the Lord helps me: who shall make me ashamed?*" And the divine David also sings, *"The Lord is my light, and my Savior: whom shall I fear? The Lord is the helper of my life, at whom shall I tremble? For He is our strength, and by Him we shall gain victory: for He has given unto us to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy.*” As therefore He says, *"Salt is good: but if the salt be tasteless, with what can it be seasoned? It is cast out,"* He says. *“Let there be therefore,”* He proceeds, “*salt in you,*” that is, the divine words which bring salvation: but which if we despise, we become without a savior, and foolish, and utterly useless. Such things must the congregation of the saints cast out, by the gift unto them of mercy and love from Christ, the Savior of us all; by Whom and with Whom to God the Father be praise and dominion, with the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever, Amen. (*Abridged Hom 105 on the Gospel of Luke* by Cyril of Alexandria)

**A Great Dialogue with Philemon**

**The Contradictory side of Love**

 It was a warm spring day after Easter. Our mentor was hiding as was his custom. But he came out knowing that I will leave soon to go back to the Seminary.

 Before I spoke to him he said, “I know from our previous talks during Lent that the Teaching of our Lord is causing a problem, for you keep asking yourself how can the Lord who gave up his life for sinners teach us to hate our family, fathers, mothers and the rest. I have myself gone through this before you, but I don’t have the best vision. Love has two sides, not one side as we imagine. The Lord recommends the absolute love, which we want, but the other side of this is absolute rejection of all obstacles that can hinder this absolute love. Be careful with how you define these obstacles, for the one who is crucified daily with Jesus, his life is no longer his own. This moves all attempts to define what is good and what is bad from his life, to what is useful and keeps the union the foundation of all things. Now, does this bring hate? Yes it does for three reasons:

1. What may hinder our union with the Lord brings not only rejection but also is a danger of losing that union.
2. This danger comes with the relationships (with other things) and so we need to have a new relationship where the Lord is the Lord, I mean first and Last and also the sole Lord of our life and our relationships.
3. We hate the relationship, not the persons, for we all are given the power to hate for our self-defense. Hate is like anger, is a gift to protect our life.

 Hate like anger is redeemed by love; not by denial but by becoming part of our absolute love. What I want to say is this, when we love we reject our former life, and we hate it because with hate as an active positive power we don’t go back to it. This comes from love not from fear. It is our love for Jesus that gives us this new accommodation. When the first martyr Stephen asked Jesus to forgive those who were stoning him, do you think that Stephen enjoyed being stoned? Do you like and would enjoy stones breaking your bones? We are told that the Holy Spirit gives aid and comfort; for Stephen this was Jesus and he was comforted. But nevertheless Stephen’s pain was great. He asked for forgiveness because of his great love for Jesus, and his hate was for the way he was hurting.

 That is why he prayed for the killers.”

(April 23 1960)

**Luke 14:34-35 – The Parable of the Salt**

 ***34*** *“Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?* [***35***](http://biblehub.com/luke/14-35.htm)*It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear let him hear.”*

**Notes and Studies**

1. Some scholars were speculating whether “salt” is what we know as sodium chloride or was it one of the Palestine salts which can lose its savor when moisture makes it disintegrate or by having gypsum mixed with it.
2. “If salt is tasteless” echoes what Job said, *“…can that which is tasteless be eaten without salt?*” (Job 6:6). There is a nice tale from the Babylonian Talmud, attributed to Rabbi Joshua Ben Hananiah,:

 “There was once a mule which had a foal. On this mule was hung a chain with writing that this mule can raise up to 100,000 mules from his father’s family.

 The Rabbi was asked, ‘Can then a mule, which is barren, bear offspring?’ He said, ‘This writing is just a fable.’

 He was then asked, ‘When salt loses its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?’ He answered, ‘With the young of a mule.’

 He then asked, ‘Does then the unfruitful mule have young?’

 He answered, ‘Can salt lose its savor?’”

This story was recorded around the 4th-5th centuries A.D. It may be a response to the saying of Jesus.

1. “*It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile*” is a sharp condemnation where the salt-less salt is utterly useless. It could not used for the soil or for a ***kopria***, a dung-heap. Salt was known to have been used as a fertilizer for soil in which certain kinds of vegetables were to be planted. The insipid salt would not be good for this purpose and it would probably even ruin the dung-heap which is also added as a fertilizer.

**Question**

Is there any teaching in the Gospels or the entire NT about being neutral or impartial?

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