

**"A Disciple loves Jesus above all"
(Luke 14:25-27)
Pastor Jane Shin
March 8, 2015**

NIV LUKE 14:25-27

²⁵ Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶ "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. ²⁷ And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

In verse 25, we see that a large crowd was traveling with Jesus. A crowd was always following Jesus. But don't be deceived to think that because they followed Him from town to town that they were disciples of Jesus, that they had the things of Jesus on their hearts and minds, that they wanted to learn the ways and words of Jesus and followed them completely. Among the crowd were probably:

- those who were part of the miraculous feedings and was looking for another hand out,
- those who saw a miraculous healing and wanted to be wowed again,
- those who wanted to catch Jesus doing or saying something that can get him in trouble
- those who wanted to test Jesus or show off their knowledge such as the religious leaders
- those who found some benefit from their association with Jesus
- those who were curious about Jesus
- those who wanted healing from Jesus
- and of course among the crowd were those who were sincere and devoted to Jesus

So it was this eclectic group of people traveling with Jesus towards Jerusalem where He will be falsely accused, tried, flogged and killed on the cross.

To this crowd, he turned to them and what he said is quite surprising on many levels.

Let's read the passage again:

²⁶ "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. ²⁷ And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

First, Jesus did not commend them for travelling with Him. I think this may be what the crowd was expecting. If I was part of that crowd, I surely would want Jesus to turn around, with a big smile and say, "good job keeping up with me. I'm sure it's not easy for all you. But thank you for travelling with me. Without you, this journey would have been uneventful. You are awesome!!!"

Second, Jesus separated the crowd into two clear and distinct groups. His disciples on one side and the rest on the other side. No middle ground. You would think that the large crowd and his immense popularity was what Jesus needed to legitimize His teachings. "Look at the crowd, they all believe and follow me. My influence is far and wide. It is good stuff I'm doing and teaching. Don't you want to be part of this?"

We often think that popularity means to a certain degree quality, veracity, authenticity, and power. It's that conversation starter, "did you hear about this? Everyone is doing it or buying it or following it. We should get in on it."

Jesus was not the latest big thing that people should clamour about for a minute and then tossed aside when the next big thing came. Jesus was not a trend to receive a popularity award. Jesus is Saviour, Lord and King to follow all the days of our lives and into eternity.

And Jesus' authority and identity was never connected to the number of people travelling with Him. His authority and identity came as the Son of God.

Third, in saying what He said, he was discouraging them from following if they were not His disciples. There was no pleasure in seeing people travel with Him if their heart was distant from Him, if their ways were inconsistent with Him, if their life was aligned to someone else other than Him. He would rather see the numbers dwindle to a few who were true disciples than thousands of people who were only disciples by name and not life.

He was not interested in large crowds, no matter how numerous. He was interested in individuals who would wholeheartedly follow Him as His disciples.

Some may have assumed that just travelling with Jesus, physically following Him, watching and listening were the marks of a disciple. If these were the standards, then almost all could be considered a disciple. However, there was no such assumption in Jesus. Instead he told them plainly and bluntly who was His disciple?

In essence, when Jesus turned to the crowd, he was saying, "why are you following me?" And then, "How are you following me?" But instead of asking the questions, He gave them the answers.

Church, as the crowd had many different reasons for travelling with Jesus, I also believe you are here with many different reasons. Jesus is turning to you and asking the same questions, "Why are you following me?" "How are you following me?"

- Is your following of Jesus just at Sunday thing?
- Is your following a habit you have had for a long time and now you don't really know why you do what you do?
- Is your following to please someone in your life?
- Is your following of Jesus more about fitting in with everyone else?
- Is your following of Jesus going nowhere?
- Is your following of Jesus growing you to be more like Jesus?

This afternoon, I want you to soberly, seriously, and deeply think about first whether your understanding of discipleship is the same as Jesus and second, whether according to his definition, you are living out your life as His disciple.

In verse 26-27, Jesus told the crowd who was His disciple. There are two indicators.

His disciple loves Him above all others.

His disciple loves Him above oneself.

Before we look at these two things, one thing must be clear. The life of a Christ's disciple begins at salvation where you place your life upon the Saviour of your life. You came to Him realizing that the shame and guilt of sin cannot be washed away:

- by your morality of never crossing the line demarcated by you,
- by your good works of charity and generosity,
- by your excellence in your school, work and family life,
- by your pursuits all things good.

You hope that these things will bring a sense of satisfaction and peace but they only brought more misery, more dissatisfaction, more greed, more anxiety, more unsettledness. Because at the core of it all, sin is the issue not the externals.

Sin is a spiritual issue not a moral issue, a behaviour issue, a mental issue. Sin cannot be erased by anything other than the blood of Jesus Christ. So Jesus died on the Cross to save us from our sins.

And only upon the cleansing of our sins, the forgiveness of our sins, the redemption of our lives, will we finally find true satisfaction and peace not in anything or anyone else but in Jesus Christ.

Upon receiving such a gift, we recognize that we can no longer live our lives in the way we did before Christ. So upon salvation, we switched allegiances, we turned our backs on all things that would tempt and lure us back to the life of sin, we wanted no longer to be trapped and pulled in by sin but now live a life of holiness and godliness.

And to that end, only Jesus can teach us, only Jesus can lead us, only Jesus can show us, only Jesus can do it.

So we are now students of Jesus, under His feet we sit to listen, to take in, to live by His Words so that it is no longer about us but about Jesus.

This is where a disciple begins. Jesus has the stuff so that I will never again experience the emptiness, the hopelessness, the misery, the dissatisfaction, the joylessness of a life before Christ. Nothing and no one must be greater than Jesus in my life. If anything or anyone comes to take Jesus' place in my life, then surely, we will no longer walk in holiness and godliness but return to the life of sin and misery.

Where Jesus is in your life is not a matter to take lightly or simply. It is a matter of spiritual life and death. You must wake up and seriously reflect upon your relationship with Jesus.

Our salvation was not just so that we would feel better but our salvation was always to lead to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in our lives. Brothers and sisters, do not take His name as yours unless you are living it. **Do not say you are a Christian without understanding that Christ must be your all not your some, but your all.** He is to be the Lord of your life, the King of your life.

And with this in mind, let's go back to our two indicators of a true disciple.

1. **Jesus' disciple loves Him above all others.** His disciple's devotion, commitment to Him is wholehearted, without competing allegiances, influences, loyalties, and loves. His disciple obeys only His Word, is centred upon His Will, transforms to become more and more like Him, lives in Him, through Him, for Him and with Him and above all else, loves Him.

Jesus' disciple loves Him. And how do we show this love?

In John 14, Jesus gives us the answer.

Verse 15: **"If you love me, keep my commands."**

Verse 21: **"Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me."**

Verse 23 and 24: **"Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching...Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching."**

Your love for Jesus must be expressed in your knowledge and obedience of His commands and teachings.

- If you know His commands and teachings and without hesitation share them with others, but you do not obey them, it's not love but meaningless information.
- If you know His commands and teachings but you pick and choose which ones you will obey, this too is not loving Jesus because it's not true obedience.
- If you obey yet you do not know His commands and teachings because you are not taking in regularly the Word and in fact, it's been a long time since you even opened the Bible, then you should question who you are obeying. This too is not loving Jesus.

Loving Jesus is knowing Him so well that you take on His character, His purpose, His desires, His Word, His will as yours. If there is no transformation, no fruit from your love relationship with Jesus and you are doing, saying, thinking, feelings exactly the same way as before Christ, then you are not His disciple. You are your own disciple.

This is why we are engaged in this church-wide campaign to read the Bible in a year plan. We want you to get to know Jesus. We want you to know what He said, what He did and how He did it.

Loving Jesus is a Spirit-inspired, Spirit-filled expression of our worship, devotion, commitment, and obedience. It is not something that comes from us.

And so, all others, regardless of who they are, cannot have the same level of love, impact, and authority as Jesus does in the disciple's life.

In verse 26, we read,

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters.”

Now, I can see some eyebrows raising and I'm sure, some hearts are thumping a little louder than usual, and some are wanting to ask, “how can Jesus ask us to hate our family?”

Jesus is not asking us to hate our family. In fact the word, “hate” is used to compare two things or people, where one is elevated over the other. So this verse should be read as, “to love your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters less than Jesus”.

In other words, love your wonderful family but you must love Jesus more and obey His commands at the expense of your family.

There are many times when your good-intentioned family members will speak into your life about many different things, big and small from spirituality, to career, to friendships, dating, marriage, etc.

Who will you listen to, who will you obey, who will you love when Jesus says, go one way and your family is saying go another way?

And according to this passage, if you are His disciple, you must love Jesus more than your family.

Home is the place we unload. We are not as patient, not as caring, not as sensitive but when we need a shoulder cry on, when we need a listening ear, when we need a cheerleader, our family is always there to protect, to shield, to be on our side.

And this is why at times, family members lose perspective and become unbiblical. Their desire is to protect the family. But Jesus' desire is to lead us into a life of holiness and godliness. More often than not, our purposes do not line up with Jesus'.

Loving Jesus above all else does not come out of a vacuum but from your love relationship with Him, from your connection with Him, from your rootedness in Him, from your "remain in Jesus, as Jesus also remains in you".

As John 15:4, Jesus said

⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

But the amazing thing about loving Jesus more is that we learn to love our family with even more grace, mercy, patience and understanding because we are becoming more and more like Jesus.

Moms, dads, wives, husbands, children, brothers and sisters, that's all of you in this room, I want you to help in this process of loving Jesus more. Love Jesus more yourself so that there is no competition for Jesus' disciple. Point the way to Jesus at all times. Be biblical in your responses.

Jesus' disciple loves Him above all other relationships.

Are you following Jesus because you love Him?

Are you following Jesus because you want to know more so that you can obey more?

Are you following Jesus because there is no one else in this whole wide world you'd rather follow?

Are you following to the point that you are becoming more and more like Him?

Do you love Jesus more than your family?

Do you love Him to obey His commands and teachings more than your words of your family?

2. A Disciple loves Jesus above oneself. In verses 26-27, it says,

²⁶ "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. ²⁷ And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

In the same way as you love your family less than Jesus, He is asking you to love your life less than Him. In fact Jesus tells us how to love our life less.

Verse 27 says,

²⁷ And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Jesus had said this before.

Luke 9:23: Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

Matthew 10:38-39: ³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

In all these passages, Jesus is saying the same thing. "If you are my disciple, then you will walk the same path as I did. You too will be persecuted, humiliated, ridiculed and suffer greatly. You

too will give up your life for the life of others. If you are my disciple, you will need to carry the cross and follow me.”

In our day, giving up our life is not often physical death, although this has happened to many a Christian but in our North American context, it is more about dying to ourselves. Dying to ourselves, surrendering and yielding to Jesus so that it is no longer you who live but Christ who lives in you.

Gal 2:21: ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Is your life, your rights, your freedoms, your thoughts, your loves, your dreams, your ambition, your attitudes, your feelings more precious than Jesus?

Will you without reservation surrender these things so that you can follow Him and only Him all the days of your life? Sounds like a wedding vow.

We talk about this a lot, not just in sermons but in small groups and in conversations about how we are not carrying our cross, yet the reality is that Christians are not carrying the cross because at the end of the day, they just don't want to.

They would rather be proud, self-absorbed, self-centred, self-indulgent, self-promoting than to be God-centred and others-centred.

- It's so much easier to just focus on your needs than others.
- It's easier to do what you want to do than to think about what others may need from you.
- It's easier to slightly push someone aside so that you receive the benefit.

But if a life of ease and comfort was what you wanted, than Jesus is surely not who you want to follow.

When you accepted Jesus as your Saviour and Lord, you, in essence, was saying that my life needs a complete overhaul and only Jesus can do it.

He knows what is needed for you to be holy and godly. He knows your sinful patterns, thoughts and behaviours. He knows your heart that is so fickle and so changing. He knows that you are your worst enemy in the process of holiness. He knows you.

So surrender into the wonderful hands of our Saviour and Lord and see your life transform so that as a disciple of Jesus, you become more and more like your discipler, Jesus.

Jesus' disciple loves Him above all other relationships

Jesus' disciple loves him above oneself.

Questions:

1. Why are you following Jesus?
2. In Luke 14:27, it says, “whoever does not carry the cross is not my disciple”. What does “carry the cross” mean? In what areas of your life is the Lord asking you to surrender?
3. How does John 14:21, “Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me” help you understand Luke 14:26-27? Share some situations where loving Jesus meant hating your family.
4. How does this inspire you to be a disciple of Jesus?