

13th Sunday after Pentecost- Proper 18 (C)

Luke 14: 25-33

Clay in the Potter's Hands

Sept 4, 2022

Christ Episcopal Church

Towanda, Pa.

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Was it just a couple of weeks ago that we heard about Jesus wreaking division among the ranks? Needless to say, within households?

Can this be the King of Peace speaking this way? Here we are yet again with the same sharp confrontation to the hearers of the Word which include us! Is peace something that Jesus brings or isn't it?

When Jesus said in Luke 26: If

any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”] he was on the road to Jerusalem. He knew that he was on his way to the cross; the crowds who were with him thought that he was on his way to another empire. That is why he spoke to them like this. In the most vivid way possible, he told them that those who followed him were not on the way to worldly power and glory, but must be ready for a loyalty which would sacrifice the dearest things in life and for a suffering which would be like the agony of a man upon the cross.

We must not take his words with cold and unimaginative literalness. When Jesus tells us to hate our nearest and dearest, he does not mean it literally. He means that NO love in life can compare with the love we must bear to him.

To move further into this truth of the passage -

- (1) It is possible to be a follower of Jesus without being a disciple; to be a camp-follower without being a soldier of the king; to be a hanger-on in some great work without pulling one's weight. Once someone was talking to a great scholar about a younger man. He said, "So and so tells me that he was one of your students.' The teacher answered devastatingly, ' He may have attended my lectures, but he was not one of my students.' Do you see the distinction here?
- (2) It is one of the supreme handicaps of the Church that in it there are so many distant followers of Jesus and so few real disciples. What do I mean when I say this?

The purpose here is to address a very profound issue in human nature and the whole presentation of the Kingdom of God—peace yes,, but not any kind of peace. A distinction to help us at this point is to understand the distinction between *peace lovers* and *peacemakers*. It is only the latter that Jesus congratulates in the beatitudes: "*Blessed are the*

peacemakers”, a very **high level of participation in the values** of the kingdom.

Peace **lovers** like the way things are, either at home, their local community, in their nations, or their religion. They want no disruption of the status quo; no rocking of the boat by raising concerns or questions or pointing out things that need improvement or perhaps things that are unjust. ¹

Every one who is oppressed or suffers injustice or privation has to have a myth. It’s the nature of human beings. These myths support a hope. And so in the time of Jesus, the favorite myth of the Israelites was the Kingdom of God that was to be established by a Messiah who would, by force, free the people from the oppression of the Roman occupation, which was smothering their social aspirations as well as their religious sensibilities.

This idea of the Kingdom of God, was not Jesus’ idea. His knowledge and experience of the God of the universe as a loving father was totally different. This experience of Jesus brought him into intense and enormous conflict with the authorities of the time and with the popular mind that was

¹ Thomas Keating *Our Myths of Peace* - August 19,2001, Contemplative Outreach News. Vol 39 No. 2: June 2022 - an unpublished homily.

saturated with the idea of success—vindictive triumph, liberation, freedom from the miseries of daily life that the occupation of the Romans had caused.²

This was the myth that Jesus responds to as he says, “Do you think that I have come to establish **your idea of peace** in this world? Jesus came to shatter the false symbols of happiness and peace in order to stop oppression, alienation, despair and human mystery.

It is a Christian’s first duty to count the cost of following Christ. Things have to be let go of to become a disciple. We can liken this to becoming clay in the potter’s hands. We are like clay in God’s hands.

Faith and trust in God often involve letting go of preconceived ideas, plans and ideologies we have camped on to. Using this beautiful metaphor of being formed, we can be invited in the here and now to dismantle the myths we have been deluded with. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are we in God’s hands. It is upon us for the sake of future generations.

What is it like, in our time to bear all in giving witness to Jesus. It might involve the risk of losing our possessions. Relationships may need to

² *Ibid*

change in order to follow God's commandments. We may need to be changed from the form that is comfortable and knowable. We may be made into a new vessel, differing in shape, size and function as we are reformed on the potter's wheel. We may not even know how God is reshaping and reforming our lives, but we are on the wheel on His commanding hand, loving us, forming us, challenging us- dispelling our preconceived myths in order to have the opportunity to be a "peacemaker."

It is so with the Christian way. If we are daunted by the high demands of Christ, let us remember that we are not left to fulfill them alone. He who has called us to the steep road will walk with us every step of the way and be there at the end to meet us. ³ We do this in community, we do this in love, we do this in Christ.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to Him *be glory* in the church through Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever.

Amen.⁴

³ William Barclay - The Gospel of Luke - The New Daily Study Bible WJK Publishing pg 232-234

⁴ Ephesians 3: 20-21

