

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 8, 2019

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“My Way, Or the Highway”

Based on Luke 14:25-33

After Paul's soft handed invitation to the Ephesians last Sunday, of “Come as you are, and be one with us,” Luke's proclamation of Jesus' words this week, most certainly shakes us out of our complacency:

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. (v26)

I don't know about you, but that doesn't even sound like the Jesus I know and love.

This passage, in my opinion, is one of the most difficult in all of the New Testament to digest, to ruminate over, and eventually, the most challenging to honour and carry through.

- Time and time again, the things of everyday life get in the way of me making the best choice to follow Him.
- Time and time again, the challenge to love and serve Christ first and foremost becomes muddled

with the demands of family, the church family, and the balance of trying to keep everyone happy.

- Time and time again throughout history, and still today, these blunt, almost dismissive words have sent good men and women on rabbit trails of spirituality that have not served them well.

“AND
WHOEVER DOES
NOT CARRY
THEIR CROSS
AND FOLLOW ME
CANNOT BE MY
DISCIPLE.”

~LUKE 14:26

o It was these very words that inspired ascetic monks of the Medieval Period, to live in caves or the desert, far away from the temptations of daily interactions that might attempt to draw them away from the purest form of devotion to their Saviour (in their opinion)

o It was these very words that spurred Dietrich

Bonhoeffer to use his influence in Nazi Germany to point fingers towards clergy, community leaders, and fellow Christians when they did not stand up against the tyranny of the day.

o It is these very words, heard out of context by seekers or lurkers over the generations, which has made them turn their back on the church forever.

So what is going on here? Because this really doesn't sound like the Jesus I know and love.

A quick read of the full chapter in Luke begins to give us some clues. Jesus had been having a challenging time playing nice with a tough crowd. First it was a dinner party that was everything about politics, and nothing about dinner. Ever been to one of those? Where you're afraid to ask the question, “Where's the beef?” and using the wrong fork for your escargot could end up on Facebook the next day. It was a see and be seen kind of dinner, where everyone wanted to be seen with Jesus, but nobody wanted to hear what Jesus had to say.

When Jesus had tired of the cat and mouse game at the dinner table, He started being a little more direct:

“Why don’t you come and follow Me?” He said, as He pointed to someone at the other end of the table.

“And how about you, over there. Will you come and follow Me today, right now?”

Dead silence as dessert was served.

Then, out came the excuses, one after the other.

“I thought not,” said Jesus quietly.

“Look,” continued Jesus, as we move into today’s passage.

“This isn’t a game. This is something you need to take seriously, and the think about seriously, before you commit. A king doesn’t go into battle without first planning his strategy (v31-32). An engineer does not build a tower without making sure the foundation stones are solid and steady and his budget is secure (v28-30).

Look at all the nice things you have.

Look at the people you care about around you.

Look at all the perks that this life affords you.

**Are you ready to love Me, more than these?
Are you ready to love Me, first?”**

You will notice I changed the wording a little bit around. (a

bad choice, in my opinion, to use the English word, ‘hate’) A deeper look at the Greek behind the word ‘hate’ implies a softer word than ‘hate’ or ‘despise’ ... ‘more than’ ... which allows us to alter Verse 25 to sound something like:

“If anyone comes to me and does not love me more than his [her] father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.

So while we may have been able to soften a difficult passage of scripture to be a bit more palatable, the questions from Christ continue to linger in the air:

**Are you ready to love Me, more than these?
Are you ready to love Me, first?**

While I have some mixed views on Bonheoffer, he rather did hit the nail on the head. At some-point, somewhere along the faith journey you are taking with your Saviour, there is a moment: where you have to decide if this *Sojourn of the Spirit* is simply a Sunday afternoon stroll through the park of warm and fuzzy moments, or a disciplined exercise program of faith with a goal and a direction. At some point, you have to make the choice: “My way, or the highway.”

It is a natural choice for some.
It is a difficult choice for some.

It is an impossible choice for some.

What kind of a choice is it for you?

- It would be easier to sit on the fence, would it not?
- It would be safer to hedge our bets on the world and keep Christ as the back-up plan, would it not?
- It would be less difficult if we didn’t have to make a choice and kept meandering on this faith thing at our own pace, would it not?

But then, that questions would continue to linger in the air...

**Are you ready to love Me, more than these?
Are you ready to love Me, first?
Are you ready?**