

Old Testament: Deuteronomy 30.15-end (NRSV)

¹⁵See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. ¹⁷But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, ²⁰loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Gospel: Luke 14. 25-33 (NRSV)

²⁵Now large crowds were travelling with him; and he turned and said to them, ²⁶‘Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For 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? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰saying, “This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.” ³¹Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. ³³So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

Why it is hard to be a disciple of Jesus - Luke 14:25–33

Our Gospel reading today is about The Crowd & the Core Team

- Jesus is surrounded by *large crowds* (v. 25). Many are curious, but few are committed.
- We live in a culture that loves the *idea* of Jesus but often resists the *demands* of Jesus.
- In this passage, Jesus turns to the crowd and deliberately makes it harder, not easier, to follow Him.

1. The Crowd and the Call

The scene opens with *large crowds* travelling with Jesus. They are intrigued—some by His miracles, some by His teaching, some perhaps just swept along by the movement.

But Jesus does something strange. He turns to them and says words that sound almost designed to thin the crowd:

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even life itself—such a person cannot be my disciple.”

It’s JARRING. It’s uncomfortable. **And it’s meant to be.**

Jesus is not trying to make discipleship sound easy. He is telling the truth: following Him will cost us. And that cost is not just about giving things up—it’s about **reordering our LOVES, our LOYALTIES, and our LIVES.**

Let’s unpack that a little bit.

Verse 26 is about Jesus Coming Before Everyone Else

We have some pretty strong language here which makes this section sounds really harsh – particularly in our modern understanding. But here “**Hate**” here is **not about hostility**—it’s a **Hebrew way** of saying “**love less by comparison.**”

For some, this will mean family misunderstanding. For others, it will mean cultural rejection. For those who live with disability or difference, it may mean resisting the pressure to conform to society’s narrow definitions of worth and belonging.

Jesus is saying: ***Your identity in Me must be your deepest anchor.*** Even the most precious human relationships cannot take His place.

2. Carrying the Cross (v. 27)

In the first century, the cross was not a metaphor for inconvenience—it was an instrument of execution.

To “carry your cross” is to embrace a way of life that the world may see as foolish, weak, or costly. For some, that cost is public ridicule. For others, it’s the daily endurance of pain, limitation, or injustice—and still choosing to follow.

Discipleship is not about projecting strength; it’s about walking in the way of Jesus, who Himself was “despised and rejected” (Isaiah 53:3), yet bore the cross for love.

3. Counting the Cost (vv. 28–32)

Jesus gives two mini-parables:

- A builder who starts without enough resources.
- A king who goes to war without enough soldiers.

Both are about *thinking ahead*. Discipleship is not a momentary emotional high—it's a lifelong commitment.

It is a bit like the marriage liturgy where it notes it is not something to be entered into lightly and without much consideration.

For the Church, this means being honest about what following Jesus involves: it will challenge our comfort, our prejudices, and our priorities. It will call us to welcome those the world overlooks, even when that welcome costs us time, money, or reputation.

4. Verse 33 talks about Surrendering All

“Those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.”

This is not about compulsory poverty—it's about radical reorientation. Everything we have—our resources, our influence, our buildings, our traditions—belongs to Him.

For an inclusive church, this means asking: *Does **what we have** serve the Kingdom's welcome?* Are our spaces accessible? Are our liturgies hospitable? Are our relationships marked by grace?

That why it's hard:

- It confronts our idols—comfort, control, approval. How we spend our time, our money what we honour
- It demands ongoing sacrifice—not just once, but daily.
- It requires perseverance when the crowd moves on. When things are no longer the latest fad or craze.

So why is it worth it?

- Well, Jesus offers life that is eternal life.
- There may be a cost to us in the way we live our lives, but the reward is greater.
- Because Discipleship is not about loss—it's about finding our true selves in Jesus.

Summary

The crowd in our reading love a spectacle. Jesus has been doing lots of them. He wants disciples who love the Saviour.

So, one should not become a disciple impulsively but with a carefully thought through commitment, with full awareness of what is involved.

To keep the commandments mentioned in our Deuteronomy reading but also the New Commandment to Love one another.

That has felt particularly important this week as flags have gone up trying to incite a particular political opinion in our Benefice.

It is something that has challenged me a lot as I recognise that I am called to love and care and pray for all those opinions in equal measure.

The good news here is that the One who calls us to carry the cross also carries us and walks with us every step of the way.

If we had read the next 2 verses of this passage 34 & 35 it talks about us being the salt. Salt which enhances flavour like a packet of “salt & shake” crisps. The tiny blue sachet of salt improving the flavour when added into the mix.

Here in our communities right now I believe spreading some Christian love in amongst some of the other voices is going to be a helpful thing. Though not necessarily an easy one. That difficult path of discipleship.

But as we leave here today perhaps we can plan to try and be the seasoning in our villages and town as we are a sprinkling of Christian salt across our communities and enable God to use us all for his good works.

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus,

You call us away from the safety of the crowd and onto the narrow road of discipleship. You ask us to love You above all else.

When the way is hard, when the path is steep, when others turn away, keep us steadfast in Your love.

Be our centre, our hope, our joy, and our life.

We choose to follow You—not in our own strength, but in the strength You give, trusting that the One who calls us will also always hear us and carry us.

And for this we give you thanks.

Amen.