

Walking with Jesus
Andrew Kneeland, September 4, 2022
Luke 14:25-33

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

There was once a great king who held a valuable treasure.

Some kings hoard treasure; they watch it pile up in their royal coffers and hide it away somewhere secret, somewhere safe. Some treasures are hidden in dark caves, or in deep dungeons, or on dangerous mountaintops. Walls are built and guards are hired to protect these treasures, to keep the treasure away from anybody who might try to steal it.

The king in this story, though, was a good king, and he wanted to share this treasure with everyone he could. So this good king wrote a map that showed—step-by-step—how to get his treasure. A treasure map to immeasurable riches.

If you haven't already guessed, this good king is Jesus and the treasure he wants to give away isn't silver or gold, but an eternity of perfect paradise, far away from all the brokenness and hurt of this world.

Jesus gives us a treasure map in our Gospel text this morning. But the instructions on his map can sound pretty confusing. I just read from Luke 14 before our sermon hymn, and a few of those verses might have sounded pretty startling.

But let's pray before we look at this treasure map: *Father God, thank you for this Word of Life. These are more than ordinary words, God. These are words that YOU have spoken, which means they are living and powerful words that can grow our faith. Help us understand them this morning, and draw us closer to you. In your name we pray, amen.*

Jesus was walking toward Jerusalem here in the Gospel of Luke. At this point in the story of Jesus' life he had called his twelve disciples, been transfigured on the mountain, performed several public wonders and miracles, fed the 5,000 people, and healed many, many people. He was making his way toward Jerusalem where he knew he would be betrayed, tortured, and executed. And he

had attracted quite the crowd of interested followers. Jesus knew that some of these people wanted to follow him and become one of his disciples.

And so, *verse 25*: “Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them: ‘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.’”

“Hate” is a strong word, isn’t it? It’s surprising that Jesus, of all people, would tell us that the first step on this great treasure hunt is to *hate* our family.

But we know that there must be more going on with this instruction, because all over the rest of Scripture we’re told to *love* our family, *honor* our parents, and even *love* our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

In the original language this word “hate” is talking more about *actions* than emotions. This isn’t talking about how we feel towards our family, but Jesus is saying that as we follow this treasure map to eternal life we can’t choose family over our faith.

We love our families. We care about our families. Our family is who we are. This first requirement turns our lives upside down. Jesus is using strong words to tell us that we need to look at things differently. If we want to follow him, we are first and foremost a child of God who lives like a child of God. We are first and foremost a member of the family of God who lives like a member of the family of God. We can’t choose family over our faith.

Becoming a disciple of Jesus is something that involves your entire life. You can’t “come to Jesus” and still hold on to your old ways of doing things. Your old ways of ordering your priorities, your old ways of constructing your sense of value and worth.

Our identity should come from *this* family. Our decisions and actions come primarily from *this* spiritual family. Only when we have this properly ordered can we be a good parent to our earthly children, or children to our earthly parents, or siblings to our earthly siblings.

This command to hate includes our own lives, too. Again, Jesus isn’t telling us to emotionally despise ourselves, but to recognize our true priority and purpose.

The true center point and organizing principle of our lives is not us, but God. When that truth is firmly planted we can have healthy lives and relationships as we follow Christ on this journey to the treasure of eternal life.

Let's look at the next verse, verse 27: *"Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."*

Going after Jesus and following Him means sharing what is His, even the painful rejection and persecution He endured.

Jesus said: "In this world you will have trouble," and Paul writes that "all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Followers of Jesus are no longer required to pay the consequences for their sin—Jesus took that punishment away—but there are worldly costs and pains involved with following this treasure map to eternal life.

So these are the first two requirements of being a disciple of Jesus; the first two instructions on this road map to eternal life. Jesus pauses here to give us and the people listening to him a few stories to illustrate what he's talking about.

Verse 28: *"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? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'"*

The second story is similar, verse 31: *"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? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace."*

Being a disciple of Jesus is not a small thing. Following this treasure map is not something you can simply pick up one day and forget the next; it's a costly and demanding decision. Martin Luther said that when someone believes in Jesus they have made a lifelong enemy. Following Christ's treasure map should take careful consideration.

You wouldn't go to Home Depot one day, decide to build a shed, and pick out a

few 2x4s, a couple of boxes of nails, and a random tool or two. That's not how construction works; you need to sit down and figure out exactly what you need to finish the job, otherwise you'll have an embarrassing half-finished project.

And kings don't go to war without doing their research. They sit with their advisors and consider not just how many soldiers they have, but how many their opponent has, how ready their troops are, and anything else that might give them an advantage or disadvantage before deciding to pursue war or sue for peace.

The point of these two illustrations is this: Jesus didn't say the man shouldn't build his tower, he said he should think carefully before he begins. The king shouldn't necessarily avoid war, he should just carefully consider every angle before he decides.

Jesus wants us to join this treasure hunt. But he also wants us to know that it isn't an easy road. Following Jesus is costly, and it isn't something you can do half-heartedly.

But listen to the next thing Jesus says, verse 33: *"So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."*

This roadmap to treasure is a costly and painful journey, but it's also a journey that you can't bring any of your own supplies on. Your possessions are no good on this expedition toward eternal life. Your networking and relationships and social status won't help you get closer to the king's treasure.

If you tried to muster your own strength and fill your hiking backpack with all of your best and favorite things, you'd end up no better than a half-constructed tower, or a twenty thousand to ten thousand military defeat. You don't have enough, so Jesus asks you to renounce all of it before you begin.

We've been talking about a treasure map today. A treasure map that a good king leaves us to show us the way to his immeasurable treasure. Jesus told us the way to the treasure; he showed us exactly where to walk and how to step to follow his map.

But there's something about this treasure map that I haven't told you yet. We have the map, but we can't follow it. We're not able to, no matter how much we

might want to.

That is where the story ends for many people. They know of a great and priceless treasure, and they hear someone tell them about a treasure map that leads right to everything they've been yearning and desiring for. But they can't follow the map—they aren't able to—so they give up, still wishing and longing for that perfect fulfillment and to be rescued from this broken world of sin.

They build half-completed towers; they go to battle against far superior forces.

But for us, the good king himself goes with us on this treasure hunt. He goes for us, walking the paths we aren't able to walk, and carrying us through the paths we can't walk alone.

He gives us his strength and endurance and supplies. Everything we need to follow this journey with Jesus. He fills our hearts with joy and courage; he fills our mind with powerful truths of Scripture; he strengthens our hands and feet to lovingly do what we are called to do.

Those of us who are believing in Jesus this morning are on this journey to Christ's treasure of eternal life. We're walking this path with Jesus, and he continually supplies us with everything we need. Through baptism and daily repentance we are made members of God's family. Through the Lord's Supper we are forgiven and restored in our relationship with God. Through this Word we are every day refreshed and fed with the reminders of God's great promises. We are empowered to continue this often painful journey through our earthly lives, often filled with troubles, heartache, sickness, and persecution.

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart!" Jesus said. "I have overcome the world."

The way to eternal life is a life of perfect holiness. A life that isn't distracted with the cares of this world; a life that is willing to take abuse and scorn and maybe even death; a life that is wholly and completely focused on the goal of perfectly fulfilling God's high standard of what a perfect life looks like.

We can't do that. But our good king knows that, and he offers to go on this treasure hunt with us. A journey to eternal life behind and alongside the one who

won the treasure and wrote the map: Walking with Jesus.

John 5:24: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”*

Amen.