

Colossians 3:16

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,
teaching and admonishing one another
in all wisdom,
singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*



During our Celebration of Missions at First CRC, we have invited some of our missionaries to share a devotional. Today's is from Gary and Mary, former missions workers with Frontier Ventures in Asia.

Scripture

Luke 14:25-33 (ESV) *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. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. 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.' 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. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."*

This passage constitutes the clearest and most demanding statement by Jesus on the cost of discipleship and what it means to follow Him. It has caused many to be confused and others to have great despair. Martin Luther summarized the teaching of this passage as the essence of the first commandment: "To fear, love, and trust God above all things."

Personally, I find this passage more challenging the older I become, because of concern for my spouse, my children and my grandchildren. I am understanding more each day that the discipleship that Jesus demands does not consist so much in outward behavior as in the affections of the heart. Thus, this threefold call to follow Jesus (to forsake family and self, to bear our cross of discipleship, and to renounce possessions) becomes our new identity. This identity is not on the basis of family, nationality, ethnicity, or other social factors, but is on the basis of costly discipleship with Jesus. "Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also," wrote Luther in "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."

After reading, studying, and meditating on this passage during my Daily Quiet Time, I concluded the time by writing an expository paraphrase of this passage.

After Jesus had a meal in the Pharisee's house he continued his journey to Jerusalem and large crowds of people accompanied Him along with His disciples. At an opportune time Jesus stopped and decided to teach those around him what it means to be one of His followers.

He said to them, "If you really want to follow me and become my disciple this is what you must do. First, you need to be willing to give up your primary allegiance to your family and even your own self. Following me entails primary allegiance to me and no person or thing can take the place of loving me supremely. Your love for me will be so great that it will seem in contrast as hatred of all family relationships and even your own self. Secondly, you need to be willing to suffer and endure the shame of rejection and even death, as I am experiencing.

“I am giving you two illustrations to help you understand what it means to be my disciple. First, if you were going to build a tall structure you would first take the time to draw up plans and then calculate what it will cost you to do this project. Because you know that if you didn’t you may get half way through and run out of materials and money. Then you would be ashamed and regarded as a laughing stock of the whole community. Secondly, what leader of a nation would even consider going to war with another nation that was twice as large and more powerful than his nation? If they had a conflict he would consult with his advisors how to settle for a peaceful resolution because he knows that going to war would be too costly. Thus, a person should not begin something without taking time to consider that you have sufficient resources to be able to finish. Likewise to be my disciple you must absolutely surrender all to me without reserve and this renunciation must be continual.”

To summarize: coming to Jesus to follow Him means acknowledging Him as the preeminent relationship in one’s life, accepting His costly mission as the way of one’s life, and knowing Him which takes precedence over all things in this life.

Song

[You can hear the song or sing along here: <https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=FAK2SaKO1NQ>]

A Christian’s Daily Prayer

*As morning dawns and day awakes
To You I bring my need
O gracious God, my source of strength
In you I live and breathe*

*Each hour is Yours by wisdom planned
Each deed empowered by sovereign hands
Renew my spirit, help me stand
Be glorified today*

*As day unfolds, I seek your will
In all of life’s demands
And though the temperer tries me still
I cling to your commands*

*Let every effort of my life
Display the matchless worth of Christ
Make me a living sacrifice
Be glorified today*

*As sun gives way to darkest night
Your Spirit still is here
And though my strength fades like the light
New mercies will appear*

*I rest in You; abide with me
Until our trials and suffering
Give way to final victory
Be glorified today*

Be glorified, I pray