

# Radical

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’<sup>28</sup> But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”  
(Matthew 5:27–28 ESV)*

*Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.  
(Luke 6:36 ESV)*

*For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees,  
you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.  
(Matthew 5:20 ESV)*

## **Radical Discipleship**

**September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

**Luke 14:25-35**

**Rev. Paul Carter**

### **Introduction:**

Good morning church! I’d love for you to open your Bibles now to Luke 14:25-33; that’s on page 874 in your pew Bibles. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> message in the radical series and you’re probably getting tired of me saying this – but once again this one FEELS to me like the most radical of them all. I should probably have chosen a different series – because this one is rocking me.

Full disclosure: This passage makes you wonder whether you are even a Christian – or whether you want to be a Christian. After we read this passage if you are wondering whether you have chosen the wrong religion – you will not be alone in asking this question.

This is an impossible passage.

Full disclosure #2: This is not the original sermon that I wrote for this morning.

The first sermon I wrote was really good. It explained the passage in detail and on Wednesday afternoon I threw it in the garbage because I realized that you don’t need this passage explained in detail. This passage is easy to understand but seemingly impossible to live out – so in this message we are going to focus there. We’ll take a few minutes and make sure we hear what Jesus is saying

but then we'll spend most of our time trying to figure out if it is even possible for us to live this out.

Hear now the Word of the Lord, beginning at verse 25:

Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them,<sup>26</sup> “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.<sup>27</sup> Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.<sup>28</sup> 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?<sup>29</sup> Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him,<sup>30</sup> saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’<sup>31</sup> 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?<sup>32</sup> And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.<sup>33</sup> So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.<sup>34</sup> “Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?<sup>35</sup> It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Luke 14:25–35 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

Well, as I said, this text really isn't that hard to understand it's just incredibly hard to live out.

Jesus is saying here that following him – becoming a true disciple – will require you to DIE to the life you thought you were going to live. Remember this series is called RADICAL – we are looking at the many ways in which the teaching and call of Jesus Christ represents a RADICAL DEPARTURE from the path of 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism – and from the path of 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman paganism – and for that matter – from the path of every instinct and inclination we have as fallen human beings today.

We run THAT AWAY – and in this passage Jesus is calling us THIS WAY and it's a whole different way. It is SUCH A DIFFERENT WAY that we immediately understand that we will not

be able to follow Jesus while living LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE. We aren't going to be able to have one foot in the world and one foot following Jesus – that will literally RIP US APART.

This is one of those “in or out” passages – and Jesus means it to be. Look at who he is speaking to here. Look again at verse 25:

“Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them...” (Luke 14:25 ESV)

Are you seeing that?

This is Jesus thinning out the crowd.

This is “Purge Sunday” – Jesus style! When your church is growing faster than your parking lot you have to have Purge Sunday when you say to the casual followers – are you in or are you out? Are you playing footsies with Jesus here or are you ready to take him as your Savior and Lord – because if you are just playing around – we need your parking spot.

That's Purge Sunday – we had to do that a couple of years ago – and Jesus is doing it here. He is turning around and he is saying: “How many of you guys are serious here and how many of you are not?”

And then to help them make their decision he tells them the truth. This is what is required he says. Look at your Bibles – you don't need a whole sermon on this because its right there in the text. He says basically, you've got to love me more than three things:

1. **Your family (26a)**
2. **Your life (26b and 27)**
3. **Your stuff (33)**

That's it – that's what he's saying. I'm not sure how much help you need seeing that.

That is what it takes to be my disciple, Jesus says, that's the bar. That is the minimum requirement for followers of Jesus.

And then while people were thinking about that – Jesus tells two really scary stories.

The first one is about a guy who starts building a tower. In those days if you built a tower you were basically a noble. At that point you were in charge. When an enemy attacked your town all the people would gather up their children and their valuables and they would scurry up the tower and close the door against the invader. The tower was the refuge and the place of strength and safety. We remember in Proverbs 18:10 it says:

“The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.” (Proverbs 18:10 ESV)

So that's good – towers are good and the guy who builds the tower is good.

But here Jesus is telling a story about a guy who starts to build a tower but then he runs out of money halfway through. And now all of his neighbours are laughing at him. “You wanted to be the big man. You wanted to be our refuge. You wanted to be the salvation of the village but now all you have is a giant pile of rocks in your front yard. You are not a big man – you are a fool.”

You don't want that, Jesus says.

And you don't want to be the guy who gets into a fight he can't win – that's the second story he tells. A wise man assesses his own strength before engaging the enemy and if he knows he can't win then he sues for peace while his enemy is still a long way off. Don't be the guy who bleeds and dies for nothing.

Figure out who you are. Figure out what you're willing to pay lest you find yourself attempting the impossible.

So this is not a great recruiting speech - and he's not done. He goes on to conclude with a little saying about salt which basically seems to mean that if you try these impossible things and you

come up short – then you are basically just going to end up in the way. I. Howard Marshall explains saying:

“Disciples who cannot stay the course are as useless as ‘salt’ which has lost its flavor”.<sup>1</sup>

Wow - let us close in prayer.

Right?

Because here is my question – after that speech who in the world decided to stay?

Luke doesn't tell us – Jesus did this once in John's Gospel, do you remember that? There was a huge crowd of people hanging around and Jesus knew they didn't really understand and they weren't really committed so he preached the hardest and most obscure and demanding sermon that anyone had ever heard. There were thousands of people around Jesus when the story started and then at the end, John says this:

“After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. <sup>67</sup> So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” <sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, <sup>69</sup> and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” (John 6:66–69 ESV)

So John says that on that day Jesus preached his congregation down from 5000 to 12 – that's a serious Purge Sunday!

Now Luke doesn't tell us who stuck around after this message but I don't think it is a stretch to assume that once again it was only the 12. This passage was meant to thin out the herd and to test our commitment and so we assume that it did what Jesus intended it to do and I want to give it the chance to do that work in us again today.

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<sup>1</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* in *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1978), 596.

We don't need your parking spot anymore – that's not what this is about. We expanded the parking lot and we have all the space we need for now – praise the Lord. That's not what this is about. We don't need the space but we do need to know where you stand.

We're trying to build a refuge here. We're trying to build a tower, metaphorically speaking, in a world under siege. We want this church to be a place where scared men and women, boys and girls can come and find SHELTER and SAFETY in the storm. We are building a house of salvation in this city – are we not? And brothers and sisters, by the grace of God we have a firm foundation – that's not our problem. We are building on the foundation of the prophets and apostles with CHRIST AS CORNERSTONE – so we are all good there! But do we have the resources to finish the job?

That's what I'm asking today.

I don't want to be the fool with a giant pile of rocks in our front yard.

I don't want to tap out halfway and then end up as an obstacle for those coming behind.

I want to go the distance.

I want to build a city on a hill.

I want the tower and so I want to sit and think with you today about whether or not we have what it takes. That's what we're supposed to do! That's what this passage is for and so I want to ask question can we finish this tower? I'm speaking in the metaphor of the text here – but just so I don't leave anybody behind, let me translate that into straight forward speech – I'm asking the question:

### **What Do We Need To Do To Build A Community Of “All-In” Followers Of Christ?**

That's the question and based on what Jesus said here in this story I think we can identify at least 3 things. Number 1, and I think most obviously,

## 1. We have to demote our idols

Look at verse 26 again. He says:

“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.” (Luke 14:26 ESV)

Now, to be clear, Jesus is using hyperbolic language here. We know that because we just looked at Jesus’ radical teaching on love. He says that you’ve got to love everybody – so he’s not turning around here and telling us to hate people. Leon Morris says helpfully here:

“There is no place in Jesus’ teaching for literal hatred.... Jesus’ meaning is surely that the love the disciple has for him must be so great that the best of earthly loves is hatred by comparison”<sup>2</sup>

Hatred by comparison – that’s the point. It’s even more obvious in Matthew’s version. In Matthew 10:34-38 Jesus says:

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.<sup>38</sup> And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” (Matthew 10:34–38 ESV)

So however you want to say it – the point here is brutally obvious. In order to love Jesus at the entry level disciple way – you are going to have to radically demote your family; that’s what he is saying there.

Your kids cannot be your idol.

Your parents cannot be your idol.

Your wife cannot be your idol.

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<sup>2</sup>Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. IVP/Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 253.

You can still love them – Jesus tells you to love them – but they can no longer be your God.

Your love for Jesus and your loyalty to Jesus has to be PRIMARY AND UNCHALLENGED. So he puts his finger on family first and then he puts his finger on our own lives and then he puts his finger on our stuff at the end.

He says: You've got to love me more than family, life and stuff.

Those things have to DEMOTED.

Our love for those things must look like HATRED in comparison to our love for Jesus.

So how in the world do we do that?

That's what we are supposed to be thinking about before we decide we are going to be in or out, so let's do that.

I think demoting your family means taking the family budget and the family calendar out of the barrel and deciding to put the big rocks in first. I'm using Stephen Covey language here – does that still work? Back in the 90's Stephen Covey wrote a hugely influential book called "The 7 Habits Of Highly Successful People" and one of the most important things he said was that successful people PLAN AROUND THEIR PRIORITIES.

They put the Big Rocks in first!

They decide what is ultimate – and they budget for it first. They SCHEDULE FOR IT FIRST.

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**2. We have to focus on the future**

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**4. We have to fall in love again with Jesus**

In the August 27<sup>th</sup> edition of the Christian Post there was a story about an 11 year old girl in India. She was born mostly deaf – and as we talked about last week, in India, heaven and hell are experienced in this life so she was RUTHLESSLY bullied and abused within her culture. But then, a Christian aunt told her about Jesus and began bringing her to church and she loved it; the Post records her as saying:

“Almost every time I went to church, my brother and father beat me,” she continued. “About three months ago, they were fed up with me. My brother and father yelled: ‘If you continue to go to church, we will punish you!’ They beat and kicked me badly. Then they gave me some clothes and pushed me out the door. My father said, ‘You are not our daughter anymore.’”

Desperate, Saree fled to a relative’s house, walking six miles in search of safety. However, her mother found the young girl and brought her home, where she was once again beaten by her 22-year-old brother.

“Leave Jesus Christ!” he screamed, beating her with a stick and slapping her with his shoes.

But Saree refused, stating. “I won’t leave Jesus.” Fearing for her life, she fled to her aunt’s, where she has been living with her for the last few months.<sup>3</sup>

Are you hearing that? I WON’T LEAVE JESUS! You can beat me, abuse me, threaten me and abandon me BUT I WON’T LEAVE JESUS!

That is a girl who has counted the cost and has found Jesus to be worth every penny.

Because in Jesus we get a friend who will never leave us or forsake us. We get a friend who will lay down his life for us. We get a friend who will rule over all things for the glory of his Father and for the good of his people forever – so as Martin Luther said, let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also. The body they may kill, his truth abideth still – his kingdom is forever.

That’s our Jesus. That’s the prize at the end of the journey – and this is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God, let’s pray together.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.christianpost.com/news/india-11-y-o-deaf-girl-beaten-abandoned-by-hindu-family-for-christian-faith-refuses-to-deny-christ.html>