

✠ Luke 14:25-35 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

Our Lord does not leave room for negotiation. He is uncompromisingly honest. He does not mince words and He does not leave the coward a way out. “Any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”

Good, bad, or indifferent, whatever is yours is of no avail. Your businesses, your homes, your cars, your video games, your pets, even your very family, sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, are all of no avail in the kingdom of heaven. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Towers are built for the glory of the builder and wars are waged, fought, and won for the glory of the king. If the builder cannot finish his tower, he will be laughed at because he would have been a fool to start something for his own glory that he could not finish. What king, in order to bring honor to himself and to his kingdom, would wage war against an enemy he could not defeat? He would be ridiculed and mocked because he would be a fool and an idiot.

Yet who among us has not followed such a king or helped such a builder? Who of us is free from having followed lofty ideals only to have them betray us in the end and make us look like fools? Who among us has not submitted ourselves to the kings of money or genealogy, synodical pomp, congregational solidarity, or personal preference? Only to have the king turn and admit that he was a fool for engaging in combat when he could not win? And we were left standing in the wake of the fool, fools ourselves for putting our hope in such an empty and false kingdom.

Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? Humpty Dumpty cannot be put back together again even by all the king’s men. His high wall of self-reliance and self-assurance has betrayed him and he has landed hard, broken into a thousand pieces. He is left to wallow in his failure and inadequacy.

Yet we hear Jesus’ words and rightly think that He is speaking to us, yet wrongly assume that we can be the builder who has enough in himself to get the job done. We wrongly think that we are the king that must sit down and consider ourselves before we fight the good fight. Yet we are betrayed by our actions. True, we want to do good, but we end up lying or hurting our neighbor. We want to be devoted, but we find our minds wander in the middle of the sermon or we let ourselves become distracted from hearing the words of Jesus. But we don’t condemn our faults. We excuse them.

Humpty Dumpty should have heeded the warning: if you do not hate your wall you cannot be my disciple. What is there in your life that you keep as your hallowed treasure? Is it your fishing rod? Your cabin on the lake? Your golf bag? Is it your job or your mistress? Or is it your family? Do you love your spouse more than you do Jesus, so that when your husband or wife needs correction you leave them be because you love them so, and do not want to upset them? If I were a betting man, I would wager that, no, it’s not your fishing rod or vacation home, it’s not your golf game, and it’s not even your family that you love more than Jesus. I would wager that it is yourself that you love most of all.

You only love your things because your things make you feel good. You only love your

hobbies because your hobbies serve your sense of pride and self-worth. You only love your families because without them you would be lonely and afraid. They make you feel important and included; they make you feel good about yourself. Repent.

Whoever does not bear his own cross and follow Jesus cannot be His disciple. Whoever does not die to self, crucified to the things of this world, cannot be Jesus' disciple. For His kingdom is not of this world. His kingdom is not made up of your family name. His kingdom does not consist or subsist on your ability to give it money or care for its rafters. His kingdom is not wrapped up in buildings and committees, synods or evangelism programs.

His kingdom is the grand sum of His Word. For where His Word is preached, where the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed, there is His kingdom. Where He His, there His kingdom is. And His kingdom is not added to by the works of men. Neither is it diminished because some flee His kingdom searching for what their itching ears want to hear. No, He had enough currency to finish building His kingdom without the help of men. He had enough strength to wage the war and win the victory for His glory.

He paid with His blood and fought with His death. He took up His cross, your sins, and deposited all He had so that now your cup runneth over. He considered the cost, giving up the glories and honor of heaven, and becoming man and dying the death of a common criminal, and considered you worth the cost.

It is not fair. It is not a good deal. He got you and you got Him. He gave up everything, hating even, as it were, His heavenly throne so that He would gladly give it up so that He might save you from the punishment of hell that you deserve.

No one can say of this Builder, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." For He Himself is the foundation and the building. He is the new temple, fashioned by His Father in the tomb for three days. No one can mock this King for He waged war and won. He did not seek peace with sin and death so that He has to share you with the devil, but He destroyed sin and killed death and so has freed you from the kingdom of the devil. He has won.

And you are the benefactor of His victory. You are the recipient of His reward – eternal life. He built His building and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. And in His building, His Church, He keeps and sustains you, His treasure. You are His glory. He has placed His name on you and guards and keeps you from all evil of body and soul, possession and reputation. You live in His kingdom, serving Him in righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. He gives you the strength to endure because He is your strength.

He has prepared a Table before you in the presence of your enemies. He has prepared for you a wondrous feast to feed and sustain you. To keep you with Him even into eternity. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠