

Challenging passage to follow on from Father's Day last Sunday.

- On phone to dad last week – didn't mention working on today's sermon...

Part of Luke's gospel called travel narrative

- Luke 9 – "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem."

That time when Jesus would go to the cross as a result of confronting the powers of the world.

- Perhaps we don't relate to the phrase "whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple"
 - There would have been no doubt what Jesus meant to those hearing Jesus say these words
 - "Carrying the cross" for them meant carrying that object on which you were about to die.
 - There was the instance around 4BCE that no doubt the people of Jesus' day would have still remembered – where General Varus and his troops went into a town and in a single day crucified 2000 Jews.
 - The cross was a graphic, shameful and brutal way to die

And yet for us we see today's passage as somewhat strange and definitely challenging with statements like...

- "whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brother and sister..."
 - As St Augustine notes in his commentary on this passage that it seems like a great paradox we are presented with
 - Holding in tension with the call to love God and neighbor – and surely our mother, father... are our neighbours...

The language of hate is not a relational one but one of priorities

- This can be seen in the way Jesus says we are to hate not only father, mother, brother, sister etc.
 - But he says "even life itself".

In fact commentators say that Luke 14 as a whole is Jesus' reflection on The Great Commandment found in Deuteronomy 6

- "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."
- And earlier in the gospel this commandment was expanded with "and your neighbor as yourself"

Jesus is challenging us to think about what this means for us to day we love God.

For tied to this is the matter of loyalties

- Throughout Luke's gospel Jesus brings this idea of competing loyalties into the discussion about being his disciple – wealth, politics/nations
 - Allegiance – San Diego baseball game – military appreciation day

And in today's passage... families...

- Although our families are important ...
 - God is starting a new family
 - One we enter into through our baptism
 - And found in Christ and being God's people

No longer are we to divide ourselves along social, cultural, ethnic lines.

- For we are all one people

Paul in Galatians states that it's a family where there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female – for we are all one in Christ

In a way this is what Paul is trying to get at in Philemon

- He's trying to work out the implications of how this new family of God works
 - Where we see him trying to reconcile a runaway slave with his former owner
 - And balance the expectations that each has on the other given their new identity

And so this passage in today's gospel reading calls us to think about our discipleship.

- It wants to suggest to us that discipleship / following Jesus is not an easy thing
 - For example the call for us to love our enemies – responding to evil with good – is challenging
 - In fact it's something that theologians suggest requires that we learn how to do this for it doesn't come easily

And we learn this by being a part of this people called the church – learning to ask forgiveness when we wrong each other

- Learning to see ourselves – not as morally or spiritually superior to others
 - but as brothers and sisters all learning together what it means to be God's people

It's because this way of following Christ is so at odds with how our social and familial norms are set up

- that Jesus uses language that is meant to startle us,
 - to cause us to pause and take heed of the decisions that we make in being his disciple.

For Luke, being a follower of Jesus, being his disciple isn't about having my life... with Jesus added on

- Instead we are called to have Jesus as the foundation of our lives

- To have Jesus be the one from whom all the rest of our life flows out from.

It's to reframe how we see our lives

- For example – to see that those things we take for granted or see as a right
 - like our families, our homes, our jobs, our friends
 - Are in fact gifts from God

We won't always – and at times much at all – get this prioritizing right.

- There'll always be things pulling on us
 - trying to make a claim on our lives
 - trying to take the place of God in our lives
 - Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker trailer... competing loyalties

But that's why we come back to this family of ours

- Where we seek God's forgiveness
 - Where we seek each other's forgiveness
 - Where we take the bread and cup remembering the work that God has done, is doing and will continue to do in us
 - And where we give worship and glory to God

God has given us the gift of each other, the gift of the church – to sustain us all on the journey.

Earlier in Luke 9 we see Jesus promising us – that if we lay down our lives for God we in fact don't lose our life but find it.

Let us be encouraged this week

Let us be challenged this week

- With the call of discipleship
 - And may we find life – the fullness of life as intended by God – as we journey through this coming week

And as we come to receive the bread and wine in the Eucharist,

- May we hold on to the promise of Jesus that in so partaking we encounter him
 - His presence to keep and sustain us on the journey of discipleship.