

Session 6

May 19, 2019

“HATE YOUR FAMILY”

Luke 14:25-35

Of the difficult sayings of Christ, few compare to the blunt declaration found in this week’s text: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, and even his own life—he cannot be My disciple.” How could our loving Savior utter such harsh words?

Now is a good time to re-visit those principles of interpretation I mentioned back on April 14:

- 1) Always interpret the text *plainly*. In this case, the words are extremely plain! But is Jesus being literal here? Or is He using a figure of speech?
- 2) Always use Scripture to interpret Scripture. This principle is really important here. At first glance, there is an unacceptable contradiction to deal with.
- 3) Always remember the saying, “Context is king!”

We know what Jesus said. But what did Jesus mean?

The context again involves Jesus and the multitudes. Whenever the momentum of Jesus’ ministry and miracles swelled the crowds around Him (see John 6:1-14), the Lord challenged them to reconsider both His mission and theirs. Three emphases are apparent.

The cost of discipleship (vv. 25-27). That Jesus is using a figure of speech is apparent for two reasons. First, we use Scripture to interpret Scripture. The undeniable theme of God’s love permeates the Bible. Jesus taught His followers to love both their neighbors (Mark 12:31) and their enemies (Matt. 5:44); so ordering them to actually hate family members is obviously out of the question. The second indicator that this is a figure of speech is the admonition to hate even one’s “own life” (v. 26) to the point of “bearing his own cross” (v. 27). Many misinterpret this phrase to mean bearing some sort of burden. But the cross is an instrument of death! Jesus is saying that love for Him requires such commitment that earthly affections must be abandoned, and that selfish ambitions must be put to death. This radical love for Him makes all other relationships pale in comparison.

The risk of discipleship (vv. 28-33). Not only does Jesus warn His potential followers about what must be abandoned, but He also warns them about the possibility of personal attacks. It’s interesting that Jesus warns would-be followers of the risk of ridicule. In this case, the ridicule comes as a result of starting something that cannot be finished. Verse 28 uses the illustration of constructing a building (a tower) that is begun, only to be left unfinished. That half-finished building then will serve only as a monument to failure! The second example is that of a pending battle entered into without forethought. Could a kingdom survive the onslaught that awaited him? In both cases, Jesus’ point is clear: the decision to commit one’s self must be carefully weighed before it is made.

The reason for discipleship (vv. 34-35). So why is this commitment so important? Why could it not be a part-time, temporary infatuation with Christ? The reason is that Christ has a definite purpose: “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10), and believers are called to share

in that purpose. The reference to salt relates back to Matthew 5:13, where believers are called the “salt of the earth.” While salt has a multitude of uses, it has one main characteristic: its distinctiveness. But regardless of all of its uses, once it loses that distinctiveness (its “saltiness”), it’s not any good for anything at all. In the same way, half-hearted part-time followers of Christ have lost their distinctiveness; and they are of no value to the Kingdom.