

- ***READ Luke 14:25-33*** As our Lord is fully immersed in His ministry of teaching the crowds of the coming Kingdom and the Messiah, He takes a moment to lay down some strong teachings concerning what is demanded of those who seek to follow after Him. Within the past few months we have considered what is said in this passage and its parallel Gospel accounts of what it truly means to take up your cross. These words by Jesus were given metaphor for us to understand that following Him means that we must be willing to give up our lives entirely for His sake. Anything about us, anything we possess, and anything we desire must be pushed to the side if Jesus demands it.
- One of the things that we did not consider specifically because it is only found in Luke's account is what Jesus says in **v.26** about our families. He says that those who seek to come after Him must hate their families. Is it just me or does that sound a little extreme? Does Jesus really expect for me to hate my mom and dad and my sisters? I'm one who is of the belief that everything that is in the Bible is there for a purpose, and I believe that what Jesus is saying here...yeah, He meant it. But I think He meant it in this respect. I believe His point is that when it comes to who is our focus in life...who our love is reserved for... if our love and focus are all on Jesus then what is left for anyone else? The answer should be nothing. Our full love and focus ought to be on Jesus, and therefore it means that we hate everything else. We hate our families, we hate our possessions, and we even hate ourselves because we are willing to take up our crosses. True discipleship is a serious deal, and we would do well to understand the gravity of it.
- Yet, there will still be some who reject this teaching of Jesus, or at least the part about family. In their minds, they will see themselves as being committed to Jesus, but anytime the choice presents itself between following family or Him...they choose family every time. What these people don't realize is that they have set their families up as idols in their lives. They have allowed for their families to become something that they will choose over God. That's what idols are for us. Idols can be anything that we are willing to choose before God and His will for us. But why would we choose something over God? I'll suggest that we will do so because we see it as the most important thing in our lives. We see it as giving us purpose and completeness. For some, they see family as the most important thing, even above their faith in Jesus. They see themselves as being defined by their families and those relationships. For them, their god is their family.
- This morning, I would like to consider the idol of family and how it is that we need to be aware of the very real and very strong temptation put before us by Satan to choose our physical families over our God. This subject can be quite difficult because we love our families. I love my family. My mom, dad, sisters, in-laws, Katie, and Olivia mean the world to me and I would give my life for them, but I hope that I would be willing to do so not because they are idols in my life, but I hope I would be willing to do so because that is what my God first calls me to do. Idols can and will destroy our spiritual lives, so let's consider how we can avoid this dangerous one this morning.

I. Our physical families are good! As disciples, we are to do right by them.

- A. Our dedication to Jesus doesn't mean that we are to neglect our families. In fact, disciples of Jesus ought to be the best of family members.
 1. I really don't want anyone to get the thought in their heads that I am downplaying the good of our families or the value they add to our lives. As I said, I love my family and I would give a lot for them, but what I am saying this morning is that our priorities must begin with Jesus.
 2. With that said, let me suggest that part of putting Jesus first means that we do right by our families. This means that whatever role I play in my physical family, as a disciple, I fulfill that role well and to the best of my abilities by the strength that my God gives me. **(Philippians 4:13)** If I am a husband or a wife then I need to fulfill that role well as a husband by loving and leading and as a wife by respecting and following. **(Ephesians 5:22-33)** Parents are to raise their children to seek the Lord. **(Ephesians 6:4)** As a child, I am responsible for obeying and respecting my parents. **(Ephesians 6:1-3)**
 3. These things don't change when I become a disciple. In fact, I would argue that as disciples we are to be the best versions of ourselves in these roles that we can be. Disciples of Jesus should be the best husbands, wives, dads, mom, and children because He calls them to be so.

- B. Our families are blessings from God, and every blessing from God must be treated with appreciation.
1. God has always had our best interest in mind, and that is why He has designed this life to be as it is with family units. Husbands and wives are joined together and support one another through this life with the hopes of helping one another get to heaven. **(I Peter 3:7)** They show their appreciation to God through living well with and supporting one another as Jesus does with His church.
 2. Then as moms and dads we seek to lead our children to be God's children. If we recognize that our children are blessings from God then it makes sense that we seek to lead them to become children of God and put their faith in Him. Our families are wonderful blessings, but we must be aware of and avoid the dangers of getting things out of order.

II. However, we must be careful to not seek our purpose or completeness in our families.

- A. Some have this idea in their minds that our physical families are the end all and be all of this life.
1. To many, the pinnacle of human existence is to have a strong and healthy family. They would consider their lives as failures if they failed to get married and bring children into this world. To them, everything in this life revolves around their ability to have a family.
 2. Furthermore, every decision that is made is made first with family in mind. The motivating factor in everything decision comes down to whether or not this option will bring joy and happiness to the family. It doesn't matter whether or not God is please, but the only concern is on the well being and happiness of the physical family.
 3. Without family or without perhaps a happy family, some would feel as if their lives are meaningless and worthless. No higher goal can be achieved than that of having a strong and healthy family. Only in having this can purpose be realized and completeness be achieved.
- B. The truth is that our purpose in this life is found in Christ and only in Him can we be complete.
1. What about those who never marry? What about those who are not able to have children? Would those peoples' lives just be meaningless, pointless, and worthless. The Apostle Paul was a single man with no kids as far as we can tell. The same would be true for Jesus, but I don't think anyone would argue He lived a meaningless life.
 2. Again, I am not trying to disparage family in the slightest. I LOVE my family. I want what is best for my family. I want for my family to be happy and healthy. However, I must be able to find purpose in my life that is outside of my family. I must be able to find completeness in some other place because the truth is that my family might not always be happy and healthy. It very well might be that my family suffers tragedy as Job did. Yet, we see how Job responded, and his response teaches us where we ought to find our true purpose and completeness. **(Job 1:20-22)**
 3. Job's grief in losing his children was real. It was appropriate, and it showed his love for them, but notice that Job realized that there was still something greater in his life and that was his faith in God. We must realize this same truth and recognize that even without our families we have purpose and can find completeness. Paul speaks of his purpose and where he found completeness in **Colossians 1:28,29**. His purpose for his life was serving God and laboring in the Kingdom. Paul didn't have to have a family to be complete, he knew that he only need Christ.
 4. There are some people here this morning that are not married. There are some people here who have not brought children into this world. There are some here whose families have already passed on or they might not have great relationships with their families. Regardless, these individuals still serve a great purpose in this life, and that is to serve God. They still can find joy and completeness in knowing that they are a child of God. Our families are wonderful and blessings from God, but our lives consist of more than what family can offer.

III. If it comes down to a choice between our families and God...we must choose God.

- A. Ideally, our physical families are also a part of our spiritual families, but there might come a time where we are posed with a choice as to who we will seek to be closest to.
1. If our physical families are also disciples of Jesus then our goals, motivations, and ways of living this life should be similar if not the exact same. If this is the case, then I feel certain that our familiar relationships will not just grow, but they will thrive.

2. However, what happens if in our decision to follow Jesus that our families don't get on board? What if they are firmly against our discipleship, or what if they don't agree with insistence on keeping with the pattern of New Testament Christianity? What do we do if our family determines that happiness can only be obtained through doing that which is against God's will? What do we do then?
 3. I pose these questions as hypotheticals, but the sad reality is that many disciples find themselves in these exact circumstances when they come to faith in Jesus and strive to live according to His high standard. In fact, Jesus warned those who followed Him that professing faith in Him could very well cause family issues. (**Matthew 10:32-39**)
 4. Back in the first century, this problem was very real and pressing because association with this sect of troublemakers (the Christians) could bring real problems upon a household. Many people wouldn't want to have their family members to follow Jesus for the trouble that might bring.
 5. Then today we recognize that faith in Jesus makes a statement. Just as Noah condemned the world (**Hebrews 11:7**) through his living, preaching, and obedience to God...so too do we condemn every other way of living that is not a life dedicated to Jesus. There will be some... maybe even many who will chastise us for our dedication to God, but we must still insist on choosing God.
- B. In choosing God, we not only experience His glory, but we also gain a family that is focused on what we are focused on.
1. Again, in an ideal world our physical families are also part of our spiritual family. But in the sad case that this isn't true, can I suggest that there can still be comfort found in the fact that our dedication to God...while it might cause us to love relationships with our physical family...it will gain for us family beyond number that spans space and time.
 2. Our faith in Jesus creates fellowship with all of those who claim the same precious faith. (**1 John 1:1-7**) These individuals love us and care for us even as our physical families would, but so many can't or won't see that far when it comes to the decision to commit to Jesus. Many focus just on what is lost in the here and now and not what is gained past the point of faith and obedience to Jesus. Jesus talks about this to His disciples in **Mark 10:28-30**. They were telling Jesus of all that they had given up for Him, but He quickly reminds them that though they had given up some stuff, they had also gained much.
 3. What they might have lost in physical family, they gained in mass through their spiritual family. Back in **Matthew 12:46-50**, when Jesus is told that his family was outside waiting to speak to Him, He takes the opportunity to teach them about spiritual family. It is true that Jesus loved His physical family, but He knew that He had a larger and greater family through the Kingdom of God. Yes, we might have to part ways or dial back our relationships with our physical family because they don't approve of our faiths, but that loss is far overshadowed by the mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters that we gain in this family of God. We might lose some, but we gain so much more in God's family.

Satan will use even the greatest of blessings to tempt us to get off course from our faith in and dedication to God. Perhaps these are his most dangerous tactics against us. He will seek to turn that which is good into something that can cause us much trouble. May God help us to fight against the temptation to elevate our families to a place where they hinder our faith. May we keep first things first and remember that we are children of God who have been bought with a price, and it was God who paid that price...not our families. Our prayer should be that our families follow Jesus even as we do, but regardless may we stand strong in our faiths so that we might see heaven as our home in the next life.

PRAYER