

Sermon Series: Spring Cleaning: What do we value?

Cell Notes 04 September 2016 Theme: Counting the Cost-what is worth losing?

Key words: the cross, discipleship, cost, choices, resurrection, the kingdom of God etc.

Note to the group: Read the scripture reading and the notes attached before the meeting.

Welcome

- Have you ever started a 'project' but failed to finish it (cf. Lk. 28-33)? Share stories.
- How is it with your soul?

Worship

Psalm 1: A blessing for those who delight in scripture.

*They are like trees
planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
and their leaves do not wither.
In all that they do, they prosper. (Ps. 1: 3)*

Sing a song of praise/ spend a few minutes reflecting on the image given in Ps. 1: 3.

Pray

Word

Luke 14:25-35

- What struck you during worship this past Sunday?
- What is Luke 14: 25-35 about?
- How would you describe the crowds with Jesus in v. 25?
- How would you describe Jesus in the passage?
- What does it mean to "carry the cross"? Share stories.
- If we have died with Christ, has anyone experienced/witnessed resurrection?

Works

- How can we apply v. 33ff as individuals, DMC, SA etc?
- What is God's word for you this week in the text?

Next Sunday's Lectionary readings:

Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28 or Exodus
32:7-14

Psalm 14 or Psalm 51:1-10

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Luke 15:1-10

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The Cost of Discipleship

The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. *When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.* It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow him, or it may be a death like Luther's, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world. But it is the same death every time—death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call. (*The Cost of Discipleship*, 99. Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

The Resurrection Process

He penetrates the entire cosmos,
pervades the whole world,
and makes his presence felt in every human being.
The resurrection is a process that began with Jesus
and that will go on until it embraces all creation.
Wherever an authentically human life is growing in the world,
wherever justice is triumphing over the instincts of domination,
wherever grace is winning out over the power of sin,
wherever human beings are creating more
fraternal mediations in the social life together,
wherever love is getting the better of selfish interests,
and wherever hope is resisting the lure of cynicism or despair,
there the process of resurrection
is being turned into a reality.

[Leonardo Boff](#)

The Crisis of the Son of Man

The theological interpretation of Jesus' death on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins makes us forget too hastily the real historical motives that brought us to the political and religious tribunal and finally to the assassination on the cross. Christ was not just a sweet gentle figure from Nazareth. He was someone who used harsh words, who did not run away from debates, and who even used physical violence to defend the sacredness of the temple. The context of His life — as recent research has shown — was similar to that of the Mediterranean peasants and craftsmen who lived in radical but nonviolent resistance to the urban development of Herod Antipas and the rural commercialism of Rome that was imposed on lower Galilee — Jesus' land — and impoverished the whole population. He preached a message that signified a

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radical crisis for the political and religious situation of the times. He announced the Reign of God as opposed to the reign of Caesar, and of love instead of the law.

The Reign of God has two dimensions — one political, the other religious. The political one opposed the reign in Rome of Caesar, who thought of himself as "Son of God", "God" and "God from God" — the same titles Christians would later attribute to Jesus. Such attribution to Jesus was intolerable for a pious Jew and a crime of lèse majesté for a Roman. The other dimension — the religious one — was called apocalyptic and meant that amid the evils of the world, the intervention of God and the inauguration of a Kingdom of justice and peace were anticipated. Jesus was affiliated with this current...with only one difference: The Kingdom is a process that has barely begun and it comes about as people change their minds and hearts. Only at the end of history will the great change occur, with a new heaven and a new earth. That eutopia (positive situation) — and not the Church — is the basic plan of Jesus. He sees Himself as someone who will speed up a similar process in the name of God.

This concept of the Kingdom put the various social actors — the publicans and the Sadducees, allied with the Romans, the priestly class, the Zealot guerrillas and, in particular, the Pharisees — into crisis. These are the main opponents of the Son of Man since they preached the rigidity of the law instead of love, and a stern Judge instead of a kindly God, "Papa" (Abba). For Jesus, God is a Father with the characteristics of a merciful mother.

Jesus makes this concept the core of his message. He sees all power as merely service. He rejects hierarchy because we are all brothers and sisters, without masters or fathers. The crisis He stirred up led to the decree of His death on the cross. Jesus entered into an acute personal crisis that scholars have called "the Galilean crisis." He feels abandoned by His followers and on the horizon He glimpses a violent death, like that of the prophets. The temptation on the hill of Gethsemane reaches the paroxysm: "Father, take this cup away from me." But also the determination to bear it all and carry out His commitment to the end. On the cross He cries out almost desperately: "My God, why have you abandoned me?" And, even there, He continues to call Him "My God". The Letter to the Hebrews states: "...with tears and cries [he] prayed to Him who could save him from death." (Heb. 5:7-8) Some critical older versions say "and he was not heeded...even though he was the Son of God he had to learn obedience through suffering."

His last words were "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" — the supreme expression of limitless trust. In fact, Jesus is presented as the prototype of the human being who bore to the end the failure of his life's project, believing in a radical way even within existential absurdity. The resurrection shows the wisdom of such an attitude. It was the basis for His later proclamation as Son of God and God Incarnate (*The Crisis of the Son of Man*, Leonardo Boff).