

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

I JUST DROPPED IN, TO SEE WHAT CONDITION MY
CONDITION WAS IN

Luke 14:25-33

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Analysis by Timothy J. Hoyer

25Now large crowds were traveling with him; and he turned and said to them, 26"Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. 27Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. 28For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? 29Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, 30saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' 31Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. 33So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

Author's Note: Luke 14:1-6, a healing on the Sabbath, is about people possessing the law and not liking having to give it up (hate it). Luke 14:7-11 is about people possessing their place of honor and not liking having to give it up. Luke 14:12-14 is

about people possessing favors others owed them and not liking having to give them up. Luke 14:15-24 is about people being invited to a great dinner but not wanting to give up their land, their oxen, their spouse-their possessions.

DIAGNOSIS: If You Do This, Then You Can Have What You Want

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *A Condition Is Demanded*

The people liked Jesus. Jesus could heal you and make you walk again. Jesus told stories about the “poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame” being invited to a great dinner (Luke 14:15-24), and told people to invite the “poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind” to their homes for lunch or dinner (Luke 14:12-14). Jesus spoke up for the “little guy.” But then he turns to the crowd and seems to say, “If you want to be with me, then you have to hate all your family and give up all your possessions.” That is pretty much a law statement because it is conditional. “If you do this, then you shall live.” A distinct characteristic of the law is conditionality. The law tells us to do something, then measures what we have done, and then judges our worth by how well we have measured up. If we have done it, then we are worth a lot. If we have not done it, then we are not worth anything. Think of job reviews and how they measure performance and then judge your worth for a raise in pay based on how well you performed. If you do this, then you get the raise.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *We Depend on Conditions*

We do live under the law. Life is full of conditions. If we have enough money, we can build a tower. If we have a big enough

army, then we can wage war. We laugh at those who cannot figure out how the conditions function. We depend upon the conditions working properly. And when we meet the conditions but don't get the reward, we are hurt, get mad, and say that life isn't fair. The conditions Jesus sets, the conditions to hate family and give up all our possessions, do not seem fair. In fact, to hate mother and father goes against "Thou shalt honor your father and mother."

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Our Condition Is In Deathly Condition*

The conditions are too much. We depend upon family to support us and they depend on us to support them. What would life be like without family or people to love and to love us? If we hate father and mother, we meet Jesus' conditions, but then we don't meet God's condition to honor our father and mother. We follow one condition and we fail the other. Whatever we do, we fail. We are lost. We cannot be Jesus' disciple. We have this life and we have this death. Death is the judgment on our life that shows us that we did not meet the conditions to receive life, a life that lasts. In death, we are the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. We are the sinner-those without life with God.

PROGNOSIS: Jesus Did It, So You Have Life

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Jesus Is Our New Condition*

Jesus welcomes sinners and eats with them (Luke 15:2). Jesus invites the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame to his "great dinner." He invites those who fail to meet the law's conditions. The conditions that we fail to keep, drive us to the place where Jesus welcomes us. How can he welcome those who fail to meet his own conditions? He failed to meet the conditions, for he was put on a cross as a criminal, as one who chose to honor his Father-not hate him. Yet his Father welcomed him from

death into life, not because of meeting conditions, but because of mercy. In other words, life depends on God's mercy, not on what we do or hate or give up.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (External Solution) : *We Depend on Jesus as Our Condition*

When life depends solely on God's mercy, then we can depend only on God's mercy, which is Jesus-crucified and risen for us. It's not if we depend on Jesus, then we get life. It's that Jesus gives us life because he is risen to life. We already are given life, we are promised life by Jesus. Jesus fills us with his Spirit who fills us with dependence on Jesus (faith in Jesus). We depend on him for the worth of our lives, and for the goodness of ourselves before God and one another.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Mercy Is Given*

Depending on Jesus for life, we do not depend on our father, mother, wife, husband, sister, or brother for life. Depending on Jesus for life, life no longer consists of the abundance of possessions (Luke 12:15). Life is no longer what we make of it. Life is what Jesus makes it-death and rising, the welcome of sinners, mercy, love, forgiveness, and being filled with his Spirit. We give welcome, mercy, love, and forgiveness to parents, siblings, spouse, people we work with and neighbors. The cross we are given (v. 27) is dependence only on Jesus and this giving of mercy and love and forgiveness in Jesus' name. We would rather set up conditions and measure people according to conditions ("I'll scratch your back if you'll scratch mine"; "I like you because you are nice to me"). To not judge, to give instead of demand ("Say you're sorry and then I'll forgive you") is not easy and goes against our very nature, our nature that can think only according to law's conditions and measurement and judgment. To give mercy as a gift-unconditionally? Only by depending on Jesus do we give such a gift. Good thing Jesus gives us that dependence (Step 5). To be given mercy when we are

troubled or condemned is a most wonderful gift. Such mercy fills one with love for the mercy-giver-which is what the Spirit does, so that we do not take advantage of the merciful person ("We do not sin that grace may abound") Every day we automatically depend on family, work, fun, to give us life. So every day we need mercy to turn us into people who depend on Jesus-the one who gives life without conditions.