

## **He did**

Luke 14:25-33

March 24, 2013

*None of you can be my disciple unless you give up everything you have.*

He did.

We have been talking these last five Sundays about the things we really need to give up for Lent: not chocolate or caffeine or TV or Facebook. Giving up any one of these for Lent would certainly be an appropriate spiritual discipline. Like fasting, it would be a matter of clearing space, of refocusing attention, of reinforcing our commitment to pray and to meditate. But like fasting, any of these disciplines are temporary. We do go back to eating, and I am sure you will go back to chocolate and to Facebook!

No, we have been talking about the things we really need to give up for Lent, and for ever!

We need to give up control. Your life is not your own, or, more accurately, your life will not be your own until you give it away. You will never be truly free until you can say, "Not my will, but thy will be done."

We need to give up our fear of rejection, our need to be liked. "A church that suffers no persecution but enjoys the privileges and support of the things of the earth -- beware! -- is not the true church of Jesus Christ."

We need to give up our need to justify ourselves, to justify ourselves, to excuse ourselves, by making distinctions, by differentiating between those who deserve our attention and help and love and those who do not.

We need to give up jealousy, give up being so protective of our own turf, our own prerogatives, our own reputations, give up holding on so tightly to what we are afraid of losing, forgetting that all we have and all we are is God's gift, the gifts of a God who gives freely to all.

We need to give up pride, pride that gets in the way of hearing the truth, pride that gets in the way of the change that brings life, pride that gets in the way of the healing we need and the healing our world needs.

And today, as we near the end of our journey through Lent, walking with Jesus as he makes his way toward Jerusalem, he asks us to give up one more thing ... everything!

*None of you can be my disciple unless you give up everything you have.*

What do you think?

This is what Jesus said ...

There was a large crowd of people following Jesus -- large crowds of people! And Jesus turned around to face them, and did his very best to drive them away!

*You cannot be my disciples unless you love me more than you love your father and mother, your wife and your children, your brothers and your sisters, and your self as well.*

I love my wife. I love my mother and my father. I love my children and my grandchildren. I love you. And, yes, I do love myself. But I do like to think that I love Jesus more.

I want to put Jesus first in my life, but I don't know. Day to day, situation by situation, moment by moment, am I choosing, acting, being out of my love for him, or love for something else, love for myself?

But he did. Jesus did. He loved God, before everything else, above everything else.

*You cannot be my disciples unless you carry your own cross and come after me.*

Carry my own cross? Let my life be taken from me, unjustly, prematurely, for the sake of obeying God, for the sake of speaking the truth? Like Oscar Romero did? Like Dietrich Bonhoeffer did? I don't think I'm ready to do that. Are you?

But he did. Jesus carried his cross and was obedient to God his Father all the way, all the way to his death on the cross.

*You cannot be my disciples unless you give up everything you have.*

I haven't done that. I can't do that! Or maybe I should say, I won't do it. I'm not ready to do it.

But he did. Jesus gave up everything -- for you, for me.

I am not going to ask you to give up everything. I can in good conscience ask you to give up control and fear and self-justification and jealousy and pride, because, although I am struggling to give up each of these things, I am struggling. I am doing what I can do, by the grace of God, to rid my life of these encumbrances.

But I am not going to ask you to give up everything. I can't. In good conscience, I can't, because I am not ready to give up everything.

I am not going to ask you to give up everything. Jesus is.

But I am going to ask you to consider the alternative. If you, if I, if we, are not ready to give up everything to follow Jesus, what is it exactly that we want to hold on to?

I do want to follow you, Jesus, but I am not going to give up my money. My money is too important to me, too necessary to me. My money is more important to me ... than you?

I will follow you, Jesus, but let me keep my possessions. They are precious to me, more precious ... than you?

I do love you, Jesus, but I love my family, too, and I will not give them up for you. I will not give them up to you. I want, I need, to hold onto them myself. I need to take care of them myself.

I love you, Jesus, but not more than my own life. If it came to dying for you, I would rather live ... without you?

*None of you can be my disciple unless you give up everything you have.*

He did. He did! Wonder of wonders, the most undeserved and most astonishing of all gifts, thanks be to God, he did!

And that's the point. That's the good news. That's the gospel. He did. Jesus gave up everything ... for you, for me, for each man and woman and child in this world.

In the end -- literally, in the end! -- it will not be about what you or I or anyone else was able or not able to do. It will be about, it is about, what he did!