

Our text for meditation... as follows in Jesus' name:

Now great crowds accompanied [Jesus], and He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be My disciple.

"Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear." (ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Dearly beloved by the Lord, what a text for Father's Day!?!

If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father ... and wife and children... he cannot be My disciple.

That doesn't sound like how we normally hear Jesus talking, does it?

In fact, it sounds like the very opposite of everything else in Scripture,

like where the Lord says, "**Love your neighbor...**" & "**Honor your father and your mother...**"

And didn't we just hear from the Epistle that **Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer?** ^{1 John 3}
So what's going on here?

First, realize that the hatred He speaks of here is not animosity or loathing of another soul, but instead a contrast with the love that we are to have for our Lord, Master, and Teacher.

Perhaps this is best illustrated with a young saint named Perpetua.

She is a prime example of one who "**hated**" her **father** and her **son** and even her **own life**.

1800 year age, this noblewoman, a young mother, was caught and jailed for her confession of Christ.

Her "father visited her in the jail to beg her to recant so that he would not be deprived

of a dear daughter or his grandchild of a mother." (Weadon, "*Celebrating the Saints.*" p. 50)

We see her love for her son in that before she was scourged by gladiators, mauled by beasts, and finally cut down with the sword, she had provided for his future care.

And we see her love for her pagan father in that she refused to deny her Lord and Savior... and his.

But this is exactly what Jesus meant by "hating" her father and son and her own life.

Her love for the Lord was so great, that in comparison it appeared she hated all else.

In fact, she was willing to give them up completely to remain faithful to the One who had given up everything for her. Here is a true disciple.

One who is not willing to do this, as Jesus said, "**cannot be My disciple.**"

Do you hate your father, mother, spouse, children, brothers, sisters, even your own life in such a way?
Are you prepared to leave them all behind here in the confession of Jesus' name?

It's a hard question to honestly answer, and perhaps the only real way to know is when it happens. Otherwise, we might be like Peter: willing even to die with Jesus, only to deny Him 3 times. Or we might consider ourselves too weak in the faith right now, and so give up trying to be His disciple.

But there's more: Coupled with this pronouncement, Jesus also said,

Any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be My disciple.

Where before Jesus keyed into our relationships, with this statement, He emphasizes one's willingness to lose one's possessions, all that he has acquired, all that the Lord has blessed him with.

What a timely text for us to consider.

We are a very prosperous society. Our poor are richer than many middle class around the world. And while this means that the Lord has very richly blessed us, it also means we have more to lose.

Jesus once warned, "**No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.**

You cannot serve God and money." Luke 16:13

Are you ready and willing to renounce all that you have to be and be known as Jesus' disciple?

But there was a third such statement as well: **Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.**

It is very clear what Jesus' cross was.

It was an actual cross upon which He hung while bearing the sins of the world.

His cross was given to Him by the Father, Jesus did not choose it,

but He willingly took it upon Himself for the love that He had for His Father and for you.

But Jesus had other crosses throughout His life, too.

Consider His many tough conversations with the vehement religious leaders of His day.

Jesus stood up to them and would not allow their false doctrine to stand.

He opposed them to protect the name and reputation of His heavenly Father, even when it led to His crucifixion.

In Scripture, the cross is often used as a way to speak about the mortification of our sinful flesh, or to say it another way, the killing or drowning of the old sinful nature, so that the new man *may daily come forth and arise and live before God in righteousness/purity*. The cross is something that is laid upon you that causes you some kind of suffering for Christ's sake.

In a sense, these crosses are little practice sessions for more trying times.

It may not be that the Lord will lay on you the cross of martyrdom, as He did Perpetua,

with a father pleading for you to give up Christ for the sake of your child,

but are there instances in your life now where your family asks you to give up part of your confession in order to maintain peace with them?

Or do you show true love to your family by neglecting the Divine Service when they're in town, rather than confessing, by your absence from them for an hour or two,

your need to receive Christ's forgiveness and His blessings?

These may seem minor, but are they?

After becoming so used to these responses, doesn't that train you to soften your confession?

If you never speak of sin, does it help your loved one to recognize his sin and to turn to Jesus in repentance for forgiveness?

What if a time came when your employer threatened your job because you refused to speak a lie?
Because you would not call a man a woman or a woman a man?
It might seem like a small thing in your mind, but when it nags at your conscience, you know it isn't.
Or are you concerned about even just being labeled as a "hater" or other such titles
if your co-workers found out that you are a Christian?

Christians in Perpetua's day had the same "small" crosses.

All they had to do was burn a little incense to the emperor, a seemingly insignificant act,
yet it was an act of worship, acknowledging the emperor as a god, a lie.

To refuse to burn the incense labeled you "unpatriotic" and could mean not just a pink slip,
not just the confiscation of your home and property, but possibly also a round in the Colosseum.

Jesus knew that being His disciple in this wicked world would not be easy.

This's why He taught us the two parables about counting the cost
before building the tower and going to war.

And of anyone, He knew what He was talking about... He had already counted the cost.

To build the Church of God, He left His perfect heavenly dwelling and lived among our wickedness.

He was the stone rejected by the builders — crucified by those He came to save —

but that became the cornerstone, the foundation upon which the Church is solidly built.

He counted the cost, and **for the joy** [of your salvation] **that was set before Him**

[He] **endured the cross, despising the shame.** Hebrews 12:2

He deliberated coming the war, whether He could with 1 frail human body

go up against the legions of demons and the host of wicked men,

and still He marched out, leaving the protection of the heavenly gates and His Father's love,

to endure the temptations, the hunger and thirst, and the wrath and forsakenness of God.

He sued for no peace with the devil, but took him head on... and won.

All this Jesus did, counting the cost of your soul and the forgiveness of your sins,
and considering His suffering and death absolutely worth it.

He desired your peace of mind, your clear conscience, your eternal salvation

and would stop at nothing to make you a **living stone** to be **built up as a spiritual house.** 1 Peter 2:5

All this He did so that you could be His disciple, and though not necessarily an easy life here and now,
it is a great and perfect life that He gives to you for all eternity.

But how can we, who are weak and fail and do not know what temptations lie ahead for us,

how can we count the cost of discipleship rightly?

How can we endure whatever the world, the devil, and even our own sinful nature throw at us?

How can you hate your family, even your life, renounce all your possessions, and bear your cross?

In truth, it is not naturally in you, but it is through Christ.

Look to Him and what He has already done for you.

Look to Him and where He is... where He promises He will take you as well.

Look to Him and keep your ears focused on Jesus, so that you may hear His forgiveness regularly.

Receive Him frequently in His crucified and risen body and blood in the Lord's Supper.

Then, as His disciple, pick up your cross and follow Him.

He will bless and keep you.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria