Repent and Repair and Restore

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Text:  
 Luke 14:25-33  
 Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Here is the link to the zoom recording for Meade’s teaching. The video is not particularly good. The audio cuts out approximately the 10th minute and doesn't come back in again until the 12th minute.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/LmD586VAqF_HasxsQy-oQFHEqGQqmiHsKt4bzr0MXpZRDy4Ra4Kuei8Tl08k1Xc3.FolqYxi-UXWeYFOE?startTime=1662301681000>

For the last two Sundays, Jesus was under the scrutiny of the Pharisees. He healed the woman on the Sabbath. When criticized That he was doing “work,” he “schooled” them how the Sabbath rest meant freedom from oppressive work for even the ox and horse so, of course, Sabbath rest meant freedom from an oppressive health condition for a woman.

Last Sunday, Jesus suggested to the Pharisees that it is good to humble ourselves and invite the “lowly” of our society into our homes and to our holy tables of worship and midrash. He is again “schooling” the Pharisees that God’s table is meant for freeing our world from the oppression of hierarchy itself. Free to have no place different than right beside the stranger or the foreigner.

Today the gospel in Luke is about the cost of discipleship. Jesus has left the Pharisees and now has huge crowds of wide-eyed followers day and night, waiting to hear more words of inspiration, possibly revolution. So Jesus turns around and explains to those following him and to us, how much following him will change our whole world. He wants us to know how costly it is to join his revolution.

We travel to see speakers far and wide. To Holden Village, to Chautauqua, to South Dakota. Who might our Jesus be these days? A favorite psychologist, Brene Brown? The economist, Muhammed Yunnus? Ex-offender and Lutheran minister, Lenny Duncan? Somatic Abolitionist, Resma Menakem?

Going back to the scripture, Jesus tells us that following him will costs us family, social status, and all that we possess.

**Luke 14:26:**“Whoever does not hate their father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, even life itself, cannot be my disciple”

John Shea writes in his commentary

If previously we have found identity and refuge by clinging to family or family of choice, we must forsake that identity and refuge. … Jesus is our center and there is no room for competing loyalties.

Jesus does not ask for us to renounce our family or to not have families here but to know that when we follow Christ, we may be in a true soul conflict with our families. When it comes down to choices to follow Christ or avoid differing or offending family, Christ will want us to differ and offend in love.

**Luke 14:27:** “Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” This has nothing to do with our own personal challenges like painful physical conditions or trying relationships,

It is instead the sacrifice and exposure to risk and ridicule that comes through following our commitment to Jesus Christ. Dietrich Bonhoffer writes that carrying our cross is “the dying of the old nature.” God, help us to die to our old nature of white supremacy. John Shea writes

Jesus is our center and the cross is the way. The cross is the symbol of leading a persistent and peaceful life in a violent world. … Carrying the cross means taking on the healing of the earth in the most radical way.

**Luke 14: 33** “So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.” Here Jesus does ask us to “renounce,” to say farewell to, to take leave of our possessions. Many of the communities of that time were pooling their personal possessions in common and sharing the commonwealth to serve the needs of the community as a whole.

John Shea goes further

Possessions are whatever we hold onto that competes with our communion with Jesus and cooperation with his mission. It *is* a matter of freeing ourselves from material holding or social positions — an outer-world dispossession — *and* It is a matter of purging our mind of its security fantasies and its habits of violent domination — an inner-world dispossession. An essential step of discipleship is selling what we have that keeps us from integrating the mind and actions of Christ into our minds and actions.

Jesus calls us to give up our possession of power when it dominates violently. Our personal power exists to serve God and God’s creation and creatures first and foremost, not to dominate others because we have our own idea of how to manage life and society and its problems as we see them — “Hey God, I’ll take it from here, I’ve got my own ideas”

In my mind, shedding my possession of dominating power is the same as dismantling white supremacy.

When Jesus lays out the *costs* of discipleship here, there is an implication or understanding that we have a choice to follow Christ or not. Those who feel that choice, may turn to leave once the costs are presented. Beautreau talks about “choice freedom” like this — literally the freedom to choose. The freedom that money, privilege, and sanity buys us. A freedom upon which we have founded this country. This freedom is rooted in our behavior, and it is the power to move in many different directions in society. She also speaks of “creative freedom” — a freedom that does not start at choice but with how our mind and heart are grounded in God. “Coming to Jesus means leaving behind the normal world of choice freedom and stepping into the rare air of creative freedom.”

Choosing to be a *disciple* of Christ is *not* a “choice freedom” but a “creative freedom” — a freedom found when we realize we have no choice *but* to follow Christ as our soul belongs to God in the first place. The crowd following Jesus probably felt a little of that and Jesus tested it to see if those following him still felt that they had a choice. God invites us to a greater “creative freedom,” a freedom realized when we struggle, suffer, begin to accept our limitations, grieve and choose to accompany those who grieve. Within us our world shifts.

In the Church of the Saviour, we talk about finding our “calling” as individuals, like we can choose this calling. In contrast and earlier in my formation, I was in NOLA and studying with the Jesuits at Loyola, who introduced me to the idea of the three original sins of America:

* Native American genocide
* African American slavery and racism
* unchecked greed for the resources of Creation

When you start by being born into these original sins, there is no choice *not* to repent and repair for these original sins, to know and be united to our Creator God like Christ calls us to every day.

Yes, I am blatantly stating that we cannot be a Christian and *not* be involved in the work of dismantling white supremacy. Last Thursday, Joe Biden implied that there is no place for violence in our democracy. I could not help but remember that our democracy was built on the violence of protecting slavery and cheap labor through racial apartheid lives on in our police structures, that has not left our DNA and unconscious minds yet.

I believe each and every one of you is already doing something in your lives in response to this original violent domination in the US. Marcia turned me on to ex-offender and Lutheran minister, Lenny Duncan’s *Dear Church* and Rebecca turned us all onto Robert Jones’s *White Too Long*. Just last night I told the clinicians at work about Gail’s work at OAR and how the owner of Ray’s the Steaks in the DMV area was a returning citizen. Even if it just holding a longing for a world restored in your heart. I long to hear what is in your heart. As 8th Day Faith Community, we have invited the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) members to a safe space of their own to reflect. Listening and centering the personal power and agency of our BIPOC members helps shed 8th Day’s possession of white power. Mindfully giving away our possession of Eighth Day money to BIPOC-led organizations is also a move to give the possessions of money and power to BIPOC leaders and minds — dismantling our old power structures and allowing for new ideas to flourish, new ideas born out of the creative freedom of struggling under white supremacy.

If we do not engage in these activities — both checking ourselves inwardly regarding our relational power and outward engaging in acts of reparations — 50 -100 years from now Christians are going to say, how did the church miss *that*!?!

Many in our church talk about reconciliation, racial reconciliation. Being raised by a Civil Rights leader, I attuned myself to be racially reconciling beginning in first grade at public school in Memphis, TN. Reconciliation was a big focus in my Southeast chapters of Intervaristy Christian Fellowship (ICCF). (But as a deacon at a black Baptist church, reconciliation fell apart.) It was not until graduate school that I understood more explicitly that reconciliation would never be authentic without a longing for repair and restoration of the original sins.

In *Dear White Christians*, Dr Jennifer Harvey recalls how the church has made efforts toward “reconciliation,” efforts to “make nice” in recent decades, but how dependency on the system we have created to make our lives comfortable and safe continues to *not* make the lives of people of color safe or comfortable. I experienced reconciliation “not working” at ICCF: Even when I moved to the crack neighborhood to be with those of color and accompany them, I still had the choice to leave and everyone knew I had that “choice freedom.” Relational reconciliation was not enough. Dr Harvey proposes that Reparation is the only way. *True* reparations, in my mind, are our cross to bear today. Restoration and reparations mean we have to seek the truth of our past to truly understand its insidious destructive and unconscious power. This *truth* will set us free — it will give us a creative freedom — even when we are stuck in some mutation of it original form.

Okay! This is costly and requires work! But we are still here. Like those people that continued to follow Christ on his extensive camping tour, we are still here, even after the twenty miles of walking or the angry partner at home, there is something at my core that won’t let me out of this journey. Though my family, my place in society and my possessions pull on me, my heart will truly not rest until I have rested in the heart of God. This journey of repent-and-repair-and-restore is my only true rest, my only true sabbath.

Dismantling our habits of violent domination is what we are truly made for at this time in our history. There are no other real options. John Shea writes of the crowds following Jesus’s that

Traveling with Jesus but not following him was a real option … however, the raw stuff of disciples consists of an Archimedean hunger for a place to stand in order to move the world. Disciples desire to change what they see more than they want to live. Jesus will get up to go to Jerusalem the next day and they will fall in behind him, forgetting to say goodbye to a normal life.