

15th Sunday after Pentecost C (9/5/10 – *To Be a Disciple of Christ*)

In the Name of JESUS. [Amen]

What does it take *To Be a Disciple of Christ*? In our *Old Testament Lesson* from DEUTERONOMY, the LORD God says that it means choosing life, obeying God's commandments, loving the LORD, and walking in His ways. *Behold, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in His ways, and by keeping His commandments and His statutes and His rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you.* [DEU 30.15-16] It means *loving the LORD your God, obeying His voice and holding fast to Him, for He is your life and length of days* [30.20]. Or ... to put it another way – the way the Son of God put it when He walked the earth in His flesh – *To Be a Disciple of Christ* means that *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself* [LK 10.27]. Faith toward God ... and fervent love toward one another – as we pray in the *Post-Communion Collect*: that is what is required *To Be a Disciple of Christ*.

Our *Holy Gospel* for this Sunday puts it a little differently. Here our Savior says that being one of His disciples involves self-sacrifice: taking up our crosses to follow after Christ [LK 14.26]. Discipleship requires self-discipline: counting of the cost [14.28] ... and a daily warring against the triumvirate of evil – the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh [14.31]. It calls for a single-minded allegiance to our Triune God above all else – including our families and absolutely everything we possess [14.26, 33]. To say it yet another way: *To Be a Disciple of Christ* demands 100% renunciation of the world and 100% fidelity to Christ as to His Person, His will, and His work. *So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be Christ's disciple* [14.33].

This 100% renunciation and 100% fidelity is easier said than done – as we know all too well. “A little compromise with the world won't hurt,” we

say to ourselves – or, rather, satan whispers in our ears. Just a little let-up in this single-mindedness ... a little rest from the constant battle against temptation. We let our guard down. Maybe we have counted the cost – but due to the weakness of our flesh, we are not quite so ready to pay it. We remain silent when the world – maybe our own family members – practically spits in God’s face and arrogantly refuses to follow God’s will. We neglect to stand up for those who cannot defend themselves – the elderly ... the handicapped ... the unborn. We give in so easily to sinful desires. I fail to steady myself against the onslaught of the devil. I run headlong into the ways of the world – so that I might get along ... and get ahead.

Even in the Church we are sorely tempted and fail to renounce all that we are by ourselves ... fail to be faithful. Sometimes ... too often ... the Church – at least individual congregations within the Church – seems unwilling to pay the cost of faithfulness. “Christ is being too harsh here,” some might say. Well, they probably would not actually say that; they would simply ignore this passage and point to something else ... like Paul’s words: ***I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.*** [1COR 9.22] “People today cannot tolerate religion if it is too demanding. This counting the cost and bearing the cross stuff is too much.” So becoming all things to all men means toning down the Church ... removing whatever might be offensive to the “pre-Christian” ... the new Christian ... or the “seeker.” It means skipping a passage like this one – maybe we can get to it later. After all, people have to feel good about themselves if we are going to keep them. But then, that is not counting the cost ... or bearing the cross, is it.

Repeatedly – daily ... every time we fall – we find that we have become like salt that has lost its saltiness. How shall we be restored? [LK 14.34]

We have to return to our *Holy Gospel* text and hear with ears pierced by the Law ... and now yearning and straining to hear a sweet, liberating Word from our Lord and Savior. Count the cost ... bear the cross ... fight the war. But there was one thing more Jesus spoke of. ***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. [LK 14.31-33]

Christ counted the cost – before He laid the foundations of the world. In love our Holy Triune God looked out over time and saw the Fall of mankind into sin ... the terrible entry of death ... the constant affront to His holiness and righteous justice ... and the eternal separation between Creator and creature due to sin. Christ counted the cost – He went down from His eternal throne and brought into Himself that weak, mortal flesh He had created in love to receive His love. As the Scripture says: *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons* [GAL 4.4-5]. Christ counted the cost – and was willing to receive the rejection ... indeed, the hatred, the persecution, the cruel and unjust crucifixion. Christ counted the cost ... and was able to complete the task of our eternal forgiveness, life, and salvation – declaring it so in His dying breath: *It is finished* [JN 19.30].

Christ bore His Cross – **all** our crosses – **for us** and **for our salvation**. For being faithful to the heavenly Father in all things, He carried **our** injustices in His body and bore them on the tree of death. Renouncing what was rightfully His – His glory, His power, and His might – Christ made Himself nothing ... made Himself to be sin for us [2COR 5.21]. And by His self-renunciation – His willingly humbling Himself to the point of death on the cross [PHI 2.8] – we receive in exchange all that is His: His righteousness ... His good ... His blessing ... His life ... all the treasures of heaven ... and a blessed seat at the eternal Wedding Banquet.

Christ our Lord and King sat down and deliberated whether He was able, as one Man, to encounter the multitude of our sins and the onslaught of the evil one and still win the battle. While He was *yet a great way off*, He determined to come **Himself** – as a delegation of One – to secure the *terms*

of peace between God and men. And, whereas *With might of ours can naught be done ... for us fights the valiant One ... Who holds the field forever* [LSB 656.2]. Christ our Savior and King has fought the war for us ... and is forever victorious ... **for us**. The whole field of the world – from beginning to end – has been won for God ... by God. We are forgiven. **You** are forgiven! Christ towers to heaven; and in Him – in His might ... through faith given and sustained by Him – each of you have been made **To Be a Disciple of Christ** ... and by God's grace, **you** ascend into the very heavens.

Our Savior has done it all. Christ has counted the cost. He has laid **the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the Cornerstone** [EPH 2.20]. He has built the tower of His forgiveness, life, and salvation – a tower that cannot be toppled. He has gone to battle ... waged the war ... and won the victory – thus securing for us peace with the Holy Triune God ... and with one another. Christ is the truly Good Salt Who did not lose His taste – Who restores us to be a well-pleasing savor to the Lord. The devil's temptations did not seduce Him. The world's lure could not entice Him. The curses of men would not deter Him. The snares of death could not hold Him.

The Lord Jesus has obeyed all the commandments of the LORD our God. He has walked in His ways – the way of sorrow ... the way of the Cross ... the way of salvation for all mankind. Jesus kept God's commandments and statutes and rules – every last one. Because of this, He lives forever as your Lord and Savior and King. The perfect life, death, and resurrection of this One is multiplied so that it is reckoned to everyone who is made **To Be a Disciple of Christ** through Baptism and faith – offspring of the heavenly Father. And the LORD God promises that all who are in His Son, Jesus Christ, shall live likewise ... eternally.

Christ has done it all **for us!** Christ has done it all **for you!** And for His sake **the LORD your God will bless you [forever] in the [heavenly] land you are entering** [DEU 30.16].

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]