

Luke 14:25-33 – Consumer detox week 5 ‘CROSS’ (Is 53:1-12) (6th April 2014)

Election time approaching (1 yr to go) – beauty parade

- Tories – Equivocal on Europe (keep UKIP and centre-right happy).
Economic policy to encourage a mini housing boom – like GB before him
- Labour – tuition fee reduction

Naked appeal to small proportion of middle class voters in swing seats which will decide election.

Hustings, promises, massaging of bad press etc – but what if...

‘If you elect me, house prices will fall dramatically so most of you will be in negative equity. Taxes will have to rise at least 10% for every taxpayer to pay off our huge debt. You should be warned that the changes we’ll have to make will put pressure on your families and jobs. All I can promise is 5 years of hardship and it’s going to cost you dearly.’

Who would vote for them? Which politician or leader would risk that?

What makes this passage so extraordinary, and perhaps so terrifying. Jesus on way to Jerusalem and being followed by large crowds – on a roll. He knows they want to make him king and begin a revolution to overthrow Romans – his response: READ v26-27

What are you doing Jesus? Seems calculated to put people off.

Not the first time either – repeated theme (always when large following):

- Matthew 8/Luke 9 – Sermon on Mount, word spreading – READ 9:57-60
- John 6 – after feeding 5,000 – READ v65-66
- Palm Sun – welcomed as king then leaves & next day cleanses temple

Haunting idea: we try to make following Jesus as appealing as possible, but Jesus seems to do exactly opposite. What’s going on?

Can't deny he says what he says but let's put some colour into our interpretation:

Two strands in gospels – two poles which sit in tension: to down and out and those excluded he seems to make it as easy as possible to come to him.

- Woman who comes and bathes his feet
- Parties with sinners and undesirables
- Prodigal son

But to those who choose to follow, he raises the bar and says 'are you serious?' Especially to those who thought they had this God thing sorted – the zealots, the Pharisees

'Comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable'

How easy is it to be or become a Christian? Absurdly easy and absurdly hard at same time: costs nothing and demands everything

Theme follows through NT: Paul – contrast Romans 10:10 (confess lips and believe on heart) with Romans 6:2,18 (died to sin, now slaves to righteousness)

Door is always open, and can walk in any time – but you are walking in to a new life. Surrender your right to run things your own way (return later).

Need to read this passage alongside others to get a balanced view – indeed Prodigal Son next. But don't ignore it (tend to focus on fluffy passages!)

Nature of Jesus' appeal – back to idea of politician's hustings speech: but Jesus not a politician. Two better parallels:

Churchill in 1940: 'I can offer nothing but blood, toil, tears and sweat.' When choose to follow Jesus we sign up for peace... and war. In a battle against a mortal enemy who wants us to give up and give in.

Like Churchill, Jesus knows that his followers must be fully resolved to pay the cost, or they won't stick it.

Not, of course, the war they were expecting. Context important – wanted Messiah to be a political/military rescuer. That's why so important to challenge large crowds. He's not that kind of rescuer or king. You want victory, glory? Be ready to pay the cost. It's not about glory in this life.

Expedition leader (Tom Wright) – READ p180

So what mean for us today?

Last in Lent series Consumer Detox – arguably should be first. Looked at money, rest, generosity – challenge to 'less stuff and more life'. But won't really do any of that unless we first decide that following Jesus really is worth everything. Heart of what Jesus is saying here. If you want to follow me, you've got to surrender all your rights to run your own life.

Not being literal about hating family – rather every love we have in this life comes second to Jesus. That's challenge isn't it? Also liberating – Alise and I both know that we are only each other's second favourite person. Favourite is Jesus. Can each of us say that?

In same way, *cross he calls us to may not be a literal one*. But can't escape idea that he may, just may, call us to pay a real cost for following him. History full of heroes of faith who did just that.

We'll only do that if first resolved where our first loyalties lie, who our first love is. That's what he means by v33: READ. We have to choose to surrender everything to Jesus. Only then will be prepared to consider other cost: READ v27.

It's the **principle** and the **price** – principle (all for Jesus) – then ready to pay the price (the cross).

- Story of David Watson and young man who asked to become a Christian
- Baptism services later – should make this passage part of service. This is what it really means. Would do a lot fewer baptisms
- Suffering church understands this passage – Open Doors, CSW, Barnabas – read stories. But true for us too.

Challenge today – weigh it up. READ v28. If never done that before, I urge you to do it today, this week. Jesus has got lots of distant followers. (Majority of this country.) But not many disciples – people who’ve weighed it up and are prepared to do whatever it takes to put Jesus first in every area of their lives. But it was the same then: ‘large crowds’ became just 120 people by the start of Acts 1 (after resurrection – significantly fewer stood by cross).

What sort of relationship with Jesus do you want? What sort of faith or life? Expedition leader is ready – he’s got a mountain to climb and the views from the top are breathtaking. But you’ll have to leave most of your baggage behind and trust it into his care. More than that, trust *yourself* into his care.

Are you coming?

Two weeks from Easter – next Sunday we’ll remember the cheering crowds who greet Jesus as he arrives in Jerusalem as their hoped-for king. 5 days later they’d all abandoned him. In the end, only those who resolve to surrender everything to Jesus lead the sort of prevailing, overcoming Christian life that most of us long for.

Will you use this week to reflect to on this passage – will you return next week ready to welcome the king, your king – only this time, for all eternity?