

September 4, 2022

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 14:25-33

This is a very difficult passage to hear and to listen to. Only because of the choice of words that Luke uses in the beginning. That word being HATE. This is a very sharp and cutting word. One that is hard to imagine tripping off the tongue of Our Lord!

As I often say, and you are probably getting tired of it now, context is everything. This situation and the use of the word hate is no different. We need to remember that Luke is a Greek gentile and not a Jew as Mathew is. This will be helpful. The Greek word for hate is Mesei. It can be translated to mean; hate, disregard or to be indifferent to. In the exact same telling of this story, Mathew does not use the word hate. Mathew 10-37, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." This is a much better translation than using the word hate. Both writers are trying to get the message across that you

have to love family just a little less than you love Jesus or God. Mathew does it much better than Luke. The omission of the word hate in Mathew is a Jewish thing.

Jewish people are very cautious about using the word hate. Mostly because of the things it implies and what God has said about hate to them. In the Torah, God prohibits hatred of one's fellow in the verse, "Thou shall not hate thy brother in thine heart." Lev 19-17. I am sure that brother here means all of humanity. Hatred is understood by the rabbis as essentially a matter of mental disposition. It starts in your head and gets expressed through your attitude. There is open and secret hate. A person can defend themselves against open hatred. Secret hate is more vicious and much harder to defend against.

The Jewish Talmud is emphatic in its denunciation of hatred. The Jewish commentator Hillel taught that the entire essence of the Torah or Jewish Bible is, "What is hateful to you, do not do to others." Here is some more wisdom about hatred. "Hatred of one's fellow creature, drives a man out of this world. One who hates his fellow man is considered a murderer." Those are some good quotes to make you stop and think.

Understanding the Jewish concept of hatred, we can better understand why Luke used the word. He is writing for a Greek and gentile audience. So the use of the word hate would be okay for them. That is why when Mathew remembered this story he omitted the word hate

for his Jewish audience. Both are trying to fit what Jesus said into the context of their readers. This helps to explain the difference in how Luke and Mathew tell the story. It also helps to explain some differences in the scriptures. Back to my question, do you think Jesus would have used the word hate, when He told this story?

The more I read the Jewish understanding of hate, the more I was able to see it around myself. There seems to be a lot of hate still in our world. Some of it is open and easier to identify and deal with. Yet there is a lot of secret hate. This is the difficult stuff to identify and overcome. The rabbis stress our obligation to love all people. The act of hate is what we are called to deal with. Love the sinner but hate the action.

Just a recap. Mathew and Luke tell this morning's story differently. Luke uses the word hate and Mathew does not. This was done because of the audience they are writing to. God had spoken with the Jews about hate and that has shaped how they understand the word. It is a good thing to avoid. There is still much hate in our world. As Christians, it is our duty to deal with it in a loving and positive way. Love the person and dislike the hateful act.

Next Sunday we are at Greenwald Cemetery. God bless and take care,
Pastor D