

December 18, 2016

I Want to Know Jesus

"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."

Philippians 3:10-11

"Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and not be able to..."

"...how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing..."

"I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet..."

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple..."

Luke 13:22-14:34

Since our trip to Haiti two years ago we have learned about a common perception in that country that says, "Give a Haitian something once and they will be grateful. Give them something twice and they will expect it. Give them something three times and they will demand it." This saying describes a pretty common thought process I think, and, if we are not careful, it even creeps into our saving relationship with our Savior.

As Jesus approaches the end of his time on earth he wants his disciples to understand the cost of discipleship. Like us, many of them were probably thinking that following Jesus was not all that hard, but he wants us to understand that it is. Thus, he talks about the narrow door and the failed banquet to drive home this concept.

Our context for today was initially addressed to the Jewish people who were listening to Jesus' teaching. Because they saw themselves as God's chosen people and Abraham's descendants they had come to almost believe that somehow the Creator owed them salvation. They believed that their status alone guaranteed their salvation.

We can, I think, get trapped into the same kind of thinking. We start to think that because we attend the 'right' church and do things in the 'right' ways that God owes us salvation. But, that is not how it works.

The Apostle Peter described it like this. ***"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come..."*** (II Peter 3:9-10) Jesus tells his listeners how he has longed to gather them to him, but he reminds them that they ***"...were not willing..."***

Jesus will not save us against our own will. Neither will he save us if we try to create our own road to heaven. As we have noted before, Jesus tells us that disciples will be those who learn to deny themselves, and beyond that, those who ***"take up their cross..."***

In our context for today Jesus makes it even clearer. If we do not ***"...hate..."*** all of our most essential relationship and even our own lives, we have no relationship with him. Our Master demands complete surrender. Our commitment and surrender cannot be half-hearted or only partial. We either surrender completely or we needn't bother.

Why would we surrender completely? Jesus concludes this portion of his lesson by encouraging us to count the cost of discipleship. We don't want to start down this road and not finish, but we always want to remember that "...*the day of the Lord will come.*"

