

### **From Our Theologian-in-Residence, Michael Craighead - Luke 14:25-43**

This is a passage of hard sayings. Not hard as in the wording is too difficult, but the statements made are too difficult for us. 'Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple.' And, 'None of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.' Did Jesus really say this? Didn't he say the second greatest commandment was to love your neighbor as yourself? And what about the 5th Commandment, 'Honor your father and mother.'? Is Jesus saying that doesn't apply? And didn't Jesus have dinner with Zacchaeus the rich Tax Collector in Luke 19:8, and commended him when Zacchaeus was going to give away half of what he owned? So what's going on?

Well, first, when Jesus talks about hating family members and even yourself, he is employing a literary device of the time in which if you had two things and choose one, you would love that one, and the one you did not choose you would hate. So, here's, say, an apple pie and a chocolate pie. Both those things are very good. But during the period Luke was writing if you said 'I love the apple pie and hate the chocolate pie', you are merely saying in a comparison of the two you prefer the apple, not that you actually hated the other. Of course, that softens what Jesus says but does not make it a great deal easier to take. The meaning of the sentences does not completely change. You have to choose God over family and your own life to be a disciple, is what Jesus says. But I love my family, and so do you.

As to possessions I really love my books and my many things and want to keep them, so I try to squirm my way out. If you look at the CEB (Common English Bible) version, the Greek could be translated, 'If you are not willing to give up...' This makes it much easier for us to take. But most Bible versions don't say that. They say what the NRSV says, which is the version we use in our readings.

Historically, this passage is one which emboldened the martyrs and strengthened the Desert Father and Mothers and started the monastic movements. They took the words literally. So this is by no means a passage we can finesse our way around. We can decide that Jesus didn't say that, or his meaning has been distorted, or something that distances ourselves. But those are the words Luke says Jesus said. And ultimately, we have to sit with those words and let them inform us, just like we let the Sermon on the Mount inform us, and we like those words, don't we? So we are presented a challenge. You want to be a disciple of Jesus, but it's very hard. So sit with these words, don't try to dismiss them, and find out what they are saying to you, to you right now. Remember though, Jesus says so much about Love. Be sure that is added to the words as you sit and pray over them.