

## Proper 18

*Sunday between 4 and 10 September inclusive • (OT 23)*

### Principal Service readings

Deuteronomy 30.15-20	The two ways – to life, and to death
Psalm 1	The path of the upright, and the way of the wicked
Philemon 1-21	Thanksgiving, prayer, and request
Luke 14.25-33	Carrying one's cross and renouncing possessions

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

### Gospel Reading

#### *Carrying one's cross and renouncing possessions*

<sup>25</sup>Large crowds were travelling with Jesus; and he turned and said to them,  
<sup>26</sup>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.  
<sup>27</sup>Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup>For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup>Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, <sup>30</sup>saying, "This fellow began to build and was not able to finish."  
<sup>31</sup>Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup>If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. <sup>33</sup>So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.'

Luke 14.25-33 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

## Comments and Questions

The crowds now are 'large' (14.25) as Jesus journeys towards Jerusalem. We have just had a threefold set of excuses and threefold invitations (14.16-24). The lesson of each is that you shouldn't start what you are not able to finish. The mention of the crowds indicates that the next section is spoken to a different audience. However, the message of the early part of the chapter is repeated in the parables of the building and the war (14.28-32).

Luke uses the strong language of 'hate', the opposite of 'love' (14.26). The point is not really about attitudes to family but what happens when there is a choice about the kingdom, in other words, he is highlighting the demands of discipleship (see also 9.59-62).

Luke uses the term 'carry' (or 'bear') the cross (14.27), where Matthew uses the term 'accept', as Luke wants to emphasise the continuing character of discipleship. It is obvious that Jesus is not facing reluctance but enthusiasm. He points out the challenge of discipleship.

## Quotations

### 1

If there is no element of asceticism in our lives, if we give free rein to the desires of the flesh (taking care of course to keep within the limits of what seems permissible to the world), we shall find it hard to train for the service of Christ. When the flesh is satisfied it is hard to pray with cheerfulness or to devote oneself to a life of service which calls for much self-renunciation.

*The cost of discipleship* / Dietrich Bonhoeffer. 1937

### 2

Believers are also trained in obedience by means of the cross. For thus they are taught to live according to God's will rather than their own. If everything went according to their own plans, they would never know what it means to follow God.

*Golden booklet of the Christian life* / John Calvin. 1550

## 3

The best measure of a spiritual life is not its ecstasies but its obedience.  
Oswald Chambers, 1874–1917

## Related topics

*For further study:*

Discipleship; asceticism

## Closing Prayer

Christ, our only surety,  
through your inspiration  
we dare to call ourselves your disciples.  
By your grace enable us  
to carry the cross and follow you,  
and in our struggle to persevere  
let the Holy Spirit supply us freely  
from the wellspring of eternal life.  
We ask this of your faithful love,  
both now and for ever and ever.

*Celebrating the Christian Year* · Proper 18, Year C<sup>2</sup>

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2 *Celebrating the Christian year : prayers and resources for Sundays, holy days and festivals, years A, B and C* / compiled by Alan Griffiths. – 3 vols. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 2004-5.