

## Twenty third Sunday in Ordinary Time year C 2016

1. Jesus sounds pretty tough today
  - a. If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple
  - b. Some of the severity of language can be reduced, form of Hebrew speech for preference
  - c. I love John and hate Peter is a way of saying I am closer to John than Peter
  - d. There is still a sense of choice and bottom line
2. Notice the context
  - a. Jesus is riding high in popularity
  - b. Any leader would love to have great crowds not just listening to talks but actually travelling along with Him
  - c. But Jesus wants more than popularity, He insists on being honest about his expectations
  - d. He wants a commitment from people, not popularity
  - e. So He makes some very challenging bottom line kinds of demands
3. How bottom line these expectations are, is expressed in the parables
  - a. Two images are about people considering their willingness to follow through on a life project
  - b. So if a man is going to build a tower, he will carefully consider whether he has the resources needed to finish the job
    - i. If he gets halfway through and cannot finish it, he will be the butt of many jokes by his neighbors
    - ii. They will tease him and mock him, making his life miserable
  - c. Or perhaps more seriously if a king is marching into battle with 10 thousand troops and realizes his foe has 20 thousand, he is going to seriously think this through
  - d. Does he have any chance or would it be wiser to make peace, while there is still room and time to negotiate
4. So when Jesus speaks to the crowd, He in effect is saying I am not interested in being popular for the sake of popularity
  - a. I am about something much more important, I need people committed to me
  - b. How committed do I want you to be
  - c. First, you have to be willing to give up even family ties for me, I must come first in your life
  - d. Second, you must be willing to carry your cross and follow in my steps
    - i. What this cross may be for any person or at any time may vary
    - ii. It could be accepting illness or suffering for the sake of Jesus
    - iii. Could even mean being ridiculed and mocked for trying to live a life of faith
    - iv. Jesus seems to be guaranteeing that following Him will not be a bed of roses
      1. It may instead be a bed of thorns
  - e. Third condition of following him is that we be willing to renounce our possessions
    - i. If anything gets in the way of following Jesus we must be willing to let go of it
    - ii. If there is some favorite toy, that prevents us from being attentive to God in prayer, it must go
    - iii. If owning a car or a house gets in the way of us living our faith, we must be willing to let it go

5. With these kinds of expectations and demands, we might wonder why does anybody follow Jesus
  - a. On a human level it seems like he is trying to drive everybody away from Him
  - b. Like we hear fairly often in the gospels, these are hard words
  - c. Yet Jesus remains attractive,
6. As the book of Wisdom says, who can understand God's counsels
  - a. Human ways are timid and unsure
  - b. On our own power Jesus demands seem way out of line
7. But Jesus tells us He sees greatness in us
  - a. What He is asking may be hard, but it is not impossible
8. Faith tells us that by following Jesus because of these challenges we will find life
  - a. Not just life after death
  - b. The more we give to Jesus, the more alive we will feel
9. This weekend Mother Teresa of Calcutta is being canonized, declared an official saint
  - a. Originally from Albania, she moved to India to serve the poor
  - b. Rather than depending on the support of the Religious community she had belonged to
  - c. She invited women to join her by giving up everything so they could serve the poor
  - d. Even in her prayer life she had been a mystic, someone who actually heard and felt God speaking to her and guiding her
  - e. In her prayer she offered Jesus anything she could give Him and He took away the mystic sense of feeling his presence
  - f. So her prayer moved from being a wonderful conversation with God, to being a darkness where she could no longer feel his presence
10. On a human level Mother Teresa could seem like a waste
  - a. She with her sisters took care of some poor and dying people in the streets of Calcutta
  - b. She did not really change anything, there were still lots of poor and dying people
  - c. Even the great consolation of feeling the presence of God was lost
11. Yet people recognized that there was something different about Mother Teresa
  - a. She attracted celebrities and even became a celebrity herself
  - b. Yet the only thing she did was invite women to join her sisters to serve the poorest of the poor
  - c. Mother Teresa is now honored for having a life beyond human understanding
  - d. She was great, yet there is no real reason for her greatness, other than being a faithful disciple of Jesus who gave up everything for Him
12. Jesus is challenging each one of us to discover the greatness He sees in us
  - a. The road to greatness is not easy
  - b. Promise we have is that he will give us whatever we need, as long as we are willing to let go of everything that gets in His way