



Give up all your own ...

Martins Church, Copenhagen, June 29, 2014, LGJ

Hymns: 674, 226, 384, 339, 531, 430, 510. 40v5

Luke 14:25-35 ²⁵ ¶ Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, ²⁶ "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷ "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. ²⁸ "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' ³¹ "Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² "Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³ "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. ³⁴ ¶ "Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? ³⁵ "It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

The key-sentence is "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own." And the secret behind is that He himself gave up all His own possessions to become Christ in order to be our Saviour. He gave up all His own.

I

Jesus speaks of the disciples - their lives - what to do - what to forsake. He talks about their relationship with their father and mother, their wife and children, brothers and sisters - yes even their own lives. - He says that if one does not hate them, that person can't be Jesus' disciple. In the same texts in Mark and Matthew Jesus says: He who loves father and mother more than me can not be my disciple. It helps us a little to understand, what he means.

But it is still difficult to understand. So it appears that you lose everything when you become a Christian! No wonder if many declines. For all personal relationships suffer. And what is then left of life? Imagine that you renounce family and even yourself - everything is gone. That is a radical utterance! Is not it too much? Does he really mean it?

Before we cast away his words - or explain them away those, let's examine:

a) To whom is Jesus talking? To large crowds that follow him. It might seem that he wants them to leave him as supporters! For who can possibly wish to follow a master that requires these impossible things?.

b) We also need to know what they were used to hearing from their teachers: they were used to listening to Scribes and Pharisees teaching human beings are able to do God's will if they really wish to do it. The Jews denied that the fall had made it impossible for man to save himself. They thought that they could be saved and justified if they listened carefully to the law. When you became an disciple of Law you began fulfilling God's will. Think of the Pharisee in the temple, who thanked God for his success: "I thank you, God, that I am not as rubbers, unjust and adulterers. Or, as the publican there." (Luke 18). Therefore, he did not give up on himself. For why should he? He was about to fulfil the holy Law and to be justified before God by his own good works. He was almost perfect.

Jesus' teaching was totally different! He highlighted a publican, which was justified in the midst of his guilt and sins which he confessed. He told of a prodigal son, which was accepted - undeserved. And in the Gospel today, he gives us two examples that we have to give up, and that we will not succeed in discipleship by our own strength or will, just like people would like it to be successful:

- One example is a man who will build something that nobody else would dare to do begin on his own: to build a tower. - Does he mean to say that the task of a disciple is impossible to overcome? If yes, so what is the solution?
- The second example: And a king who goes to war, but faces a king with an army twice as large. - Does Jesus mean to say: When you want to be my disciple, then you should know that you are up against a superior force that you can not conquer? So what is the solution?

The solution is the same as he said at the beginning: "In this way none of you can be my disciple without giving up all his own." It sounds scary. Being a Christian means that we must give up everything.

II

And here the gospel enters the scene. Here comes our salvation. Now we see that it is a great blessing that discipleship can be explained by "coming after Jesus". Not performance but to follow Jesus. Not that you take the lead and do what must be done, but that you go behind him who does it for you. If you give up all your own you are with Jesus Christ. He is with you and you are walking in his footsteps. For this sentence "*Thus, no be my disciple if he does not renounce all his own*" - is spoken in this context: that they are with Jesus, and he walks ahead of us.

And at the same time we realize that Jesus himself makes this sentence true. He is the Christ "*who gives away all his own.*" He gave up all his own. This is how we recognize that his is Messiah, the Christ. This is how Christ reveals himself to us. He gives up everything for us. We see this in the way he was born: he became poor. He was a refugee. He was accused. He was crucified as a sinner, he died and he was buried although he was righteous, holy, loving, merciful and good in heart, soul and mind - in word and deed - from cradle to grave. It is described stunningly in the apostles' letters: *Philippians 2:6-9: Although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.* And in 2 Corinthians 8:9: *You know our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sake he became poor although he was rich, so that you could become rich by his poverty.*" And in the same letter, chapter 5:21: *God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* "

Jesus became Christ, by renouncing all his own in order to give it to us. It is the Gospel's main clause. And if Jesus shall be our Saviour, it must dawn on us that we can't save ourselves. We live in the world of death. We are sinners. How shall we be able to pull ourselves together and build something up, which will remain on judgement day? Don't you see, Jesus says, that the way of the Pharisees to heaven is not navigable. You will never make it that way. It will be like the man who thinks he can build a tower, but can not, or the king who believes he can win a war, but can not. Remember: not the Pharisee, but the Publican was justified and saved! (Luke 18).

III

So what? Shall we then give up? No, do not give up, but giving up all our own. And pass over our whole life project to Jesus Christ. In that way we walk in his footsteps. That is not achievement, but living by grace believing in him who gave his life for us. And it does not lead to inaction. Rather we believe that it is good to work for Jesus! For it is written in Scripture: *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹ to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus (Eph 3:20-21).* And: *God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; (2 Kor 9:8).*

So all hope is not gone when we give up all our own. On the contrary. Now we have hope. For Christ gave up everything for our sake. Therefore, the best that can ever happen is when we humans surrender and trust in Jesus Christ and walk with him and trust in him. Here we are shaped by Jesus himself and become a blessing to each other. And here we find parents, sisters and brothers and spouses, as God in His goodness gives us them. And then we can share with them the forgiveness, salvation and the hope that Jesus Christ gives us when life seems easy and when life is hard and difficult. PEACE AND HOPE be with you. Amen.