



Sunday, Sept 7, 2025

13th Sunday after Pentecost

Now, some of you might recall last week we talked about Labor Day and God's vision of work for the human being in the garden. And how the human struggle was there to work for an equitable world, a world that had access to all the necessities of life. Meaningful work, healthcare, good food and drink. A world healed of the painful imbalances because of the human being. And imbalances between rich and poor. Remember we had that conversation last week. And now as we enter the month of September, we embrace the season of creation. A time when Christians worldwide participate in prayer and reflection and action to prevent to protect God's creation, focusing on the theme of building just relationships with God with each other and with the earth. And our scriptures this month are going to lead us to reflect on what we might call the kingdom economy. Biblical teachings which lay out for us a vision of harmony and justice, which is God's open dream for us.

Now today's scripture would have us begin this task by making discipleship to Jesus the cornerstone to this kingdom economy. This means understanding what it really takes to follow Jesus.



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It's not just about saying you what you believe are going to church every once in a while. No, the what we're being taught is that following Jesus is a serious decision. It's a 24/7 commitment and it comes with its challenges and sacrifices does it not.

We look at two passages from the Bible today that help us to get at this idea. The first is from Luke where Jesus talks about what it means to be his disciple in the second from Deuteronomy where God tells is gives the Israelites this choice between life and death, blessing and curse.

Will they follow the ordinance ordinances of God or will they go their own way? Now first look and look, Jesus says that anyone wants to follow me. They must hate their own family and even their own life. That sounds kind of harsh, doesn't it?

What does Jesus mean by this? He isn't telling us literally we must hate our families. He's using strong language and he's speaking in hyperbole only because that was common in Jesus's day because he wanted to show that following him must be the most important thing in our life.



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Even closer than our closest of relationships. We have to be willing to put Jesus and his teachings first and foremost the center of our lives even if we find that hard.

And Jesus describes this discipleship that we must embrace as carrying a cross. Now we all know in those days a cross was a symbol of suffering and death.

So, following Jesus means that we might face opposition or suffering our hard choices in our lives and Jesus wants us to understand that being his disciple is not going to be an easy thing.

It requires total commitment and often sacrifices. How many people here like to garden or at least appreciate when you see a garden, it's beautiful, huh? Yeah, a gardener does not simply throw seeds on the ground and walk away, right? No, they repeatedly care for the plants, watering, weeding, protecting them from pests because life like that needs attention and nurturing to flourish.

Now my husband likes to do his version of gardening, tending the ground, creating mulch from leftovers, planting and weeding, puttering around the yard here and there.



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But the end result is we have this beautiful crop of miracles in our front yard from the hours that he has spent poking and prodding the earth. He's got the green thumb that I hadn't, but it hadn't developed overnight. It took hours, hours of commitment, learning what to do and a willingness to get his hands dirty. But the payoff has been glorious flowers appropriate to every season. The discipleship is like that. It's like gardening because Jesus calls us to follow him with intentional love and intentional care, both for our own spiritual growth and for the flourishing of creation around us.

The kingdom economy that Jesus invites us into thrives when people choose discipleship, choose to nurture our relationship with Jesus and with each other and with the world, with attention and care.

So, as we go through this season of creation this month, we remember that caring for the environment is a critical part of how we live out our discipleship. And we talked about this last week, how God put humans in the garden of Eden to tell the earth to nurture it, to be good stewards over all living things.



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Jesus says in his parable that a wise man who counts the cost when they're going to build a tower, and he says, imagine a group of workers building this tall tower, but they get into the construction and they realize they didn't calculate the cost.

Now there are probably a lot of contractors out there that kind of do the same thing, huh? But they realize that halfway through the job they didn't have enough materials to finish and the structure is not safe, it's useless.

They have to start over doubling, tripling the cost and they become the laughing stock of the community around them. And discipleship is like counting the cost like that builders has to when they plan in life, following Jesus requires putting him first, laying him as the cornerstone of our lives to guide how we invest our time, our money and our relationship. And that kingdom economy absolutely depends on this firm foundation of faithfulness and care for others, including creation.

Now look at the passage from Deuteronomy. God is speaking to the Israelites telling them they have two choices, either life or death, blessing or curse. And God tells them, please choose life by loving him, obeying him and holding fast to him.



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So, this passage reminds us that in life we face choices every day. Some of these choices lead to life, meaning happiness and peace and blessing.

Other choices do not. They lead to death, meaning pain and trouble and suffering because sometimes we've turned away from God's ways. The amazing thing is that God gives us the freedom to choose. He doesn't force us to follow him invites us into life. The kingdom economy that Jesus calls us in our life of discipleship isn't measured by the abundance of what we have, but by the faithful sacrificial commitment to God's call, whether that means sharing our time, our resources or how we care for the world around us. The discipleship asks us to prioritize God above everything else, including our own personal convenience or comfort. When we live with the sacrificial spirit, and as Jesus says, giving up our possessions, those things we cling to, in doing so, we contribute to a just world where those who are poor or vulnerable, whether people or the earth itself are cared for as deeply as is reflected in God's heart.

This is the life God wants for us. Following Jesus leads to blessings and true life, even if it costs us something now.



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It is the foundation we are called to build in our lives, our churches, our very world. So, the scriptures ask us each today, are we ready to count the cost and follow Jesus no matter what. What might we need to reprioritize? And how can we choose life in choosing God every day? Are we living the kingdom economy, an economy that takes an account everyone's needs, not just those of a few? So God loves us. And once the very best for us, God wants us to build and live in a healthy world with proper stewardship.

And that choice is ours. We can make that, and we must make it every day. So, God says, choose life. So, let us work to create God's kingdom here on earth and let us start right now today by choosing Jesus. Amen.