

Good Call!

Called to be Centered

September 4, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – The Year of the Lord’s Favor (Luke 4:19)

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point:

As the world awakens from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming “*the year of the Lord’s favor*” is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the ‘year of jubilee’ of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new possibilities with God this year and always.

Reflect on this Scripture: Luke 14:25-33 (NIV)

²⁵ Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.²⁸ “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, ³⁰ saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’ ³¹ “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. ³³ In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

Commentary:

In this passage, Luke returns to the journey motif, leaving behind the meal setting. Because Jesus faces martyrdom in Jerusalem, his followers must be prepared to leave everything behind and make their commitment to Jesus as complete and all-consuming as Jesus’ own devotion to his mission.

These sayings are addressed to the large crowds following Jesus. Their intent is to urge persons who are seeking to be disciples to consider first the demands of discipleship. Rather than trying to lure the unsuspecting into unconsidered commitments, Jesus warns the crowd in advance that the way of discipleship will not be easy.

Because Jesus' ethic of love makes it unthinkable that one should hate his or her own family, verse 26 has always been a difficult saying. Two factors help put it into context. First, it is a Semitic hyperbole that exaggerates a contrast so that it can be seen more clearly. Hate does not mean anger or hostility. It indicates that if there is a conflict, one's response to the demands of discipleship must take precedent over even the most sacred of human relationships.

- The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, Vol IX, p. 292

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. In this passage Jesus was at the peak of his popularity. Why would he have chosen this occasion for this particular message?
2. While it is clear from the overall context that Jesus didn't call his followers to literally hate, why do you think he used such provocative language?
3. Why would centering one's life in temporary things be an impediment to discipleship? Why would Jesus call for such an unrivaled, exclusive commitment?
4. What temporal 'love' tends to get in the way of your being centered in Christ's eternal love? What helps you to be more centered in Christ?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Luke 14:27 NRSV ²⁷ *And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*