

“HOW MUCH?” (or) “HAVE WE DONE ALL WE COULD?”

Pentecost 11, A 2011

Matthew 16:21-28

Emmanuel's – Bellevue

8/28/11

“HOW MUCH? HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

**-MOST OF US LEARN —‘EARLY ON’ ---IN LIFE TO ALWAYS
‘CHECK THE PRICE-TAG’ ---BEFORE WE BUY SOMETHING.**

**-LIKE THE OLD LATIN PROVERB WE LEARNED BACK IN HIGH-SCHOOL
SAYS:**

- “CAVEAT EMPTOR!” ----- “LET THE BUYER BEWARE.”-

**-WE ALWAYS NEED TO KNOW---HOW MUCH---ANYTHING IN LIFE
IS GOING TO COST US.**

**JUST AS WE LEARN ---EARLY IN LIFE---TO ‘ASK THE COST’---OF
‘THINGS’---BEFORE WE BUY THEM.**

**-SO ALSO---- DO WE LEARN IN LIFE THAT--- ‘RELATIONSHIPS’ TOO---
CARRY A PRICE-TAG.**

**-AND WITH RELATIONSHIPS---THAT ‘PRICE-TAG’—MAY NOT BE A
MONETARY ONE---BUT---THERE IS A PRICE, A COST—TO EVERY HUMAN
RELATIONSHIP.**

-IT IS SAID---OF MARRIAGE---THAT:

**- “CROSSING THE BRIDGE---FROM ‘ME’ TO ‘WE’---INVOLVES A COST”
AS ANY OF YOU WHO ARE MARRIED ---WELL KNOW.**

**-“THOSE WHO MARRY ---NOW HAVE TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION
THE WANTS, NEEDS, DESIRES AND PREFERENCES----OF SOMEONE ELSE
BESIDE THEMSELVES.”**

**IN TODAY’S GOSPEL (JUST READ) OUR LORD BEGAN TO SHOW
HIS DISCIPLES---THAT HE MUST GO TO JERUSALEM---UNDERGO
GREAT SUFFERING AND THEN---BE KILLED.**

**-AND -----HE LAYS DOWN FOR --- ‘THOSE DISCIPLES’----(AND FOR ‘US’) --
-THE ‘COST’---- OF ‘DISCIPLESHIP’ WITH HIM.**

**-THE MASTER SAID: “IF ANY WANT TO BECOME MY FOLLOWERS, LET
THEM DENY THEMSELVES, TAKE UP THEIR CROSS, AND FOLLOW ME.
FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO SAVE THEIR LIFE WILL LOSE IT, AND
THOSE WHO LOSE THEIR LIFE, FOR MY SAKE WILL FIND IT.”**

**THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN OUR COUNTRY---IS--- (QUITE
FRANKLY) DEPLORABLE. IT’S A MESS!**

**-ALL WE HEAR ABOUT THESE DAYS ---IS THE FEUDING BETWEEN
REPUBLICANS, DEMOCRATS AND ‘TEA-PARTY-PEOPLE’---AS THEY’RE
NOW CALLED.**

-WITH ELECTIONS COMING UP THIS YEAR ---AND—A--- PRESIDENTIAL
 ELECTION-- NEXT YEAR, ----
 -NOT ONLY ARE WE SEEING A LOT OF--- ‘POSTURING’--- AMONG THE
 CANDIDATES---- A LOT OF ‘RECRIMINATION’ AND ‘FINGER-POINTING’---
 -BUT---INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH---WE’RE HEARING ABOUT -- HOW--
 SOME FAMOUS--- ‘FORMER’ PRESIDENTS----IN THE ‘TRYING TIMES’
 THEY FACED-----HANDLED THINGS.
 -ONE--- PRESIDENT-- FROM YEARS PAST (A FEW OF US CAN
 REMEMBER HIM)---WAS HARRY TRUMAN.-- ANY OF YOU REMEMBER
 HARRY TRUMAN?
 -IN ONE OF PRESIDENT TRUMAN’S BIOGRAPHIES---IT IS REPORTED
 THAT HE ONCE MADE A CAMPAIGN TRIP TO ‘TOMBSTONE, ARIZONA---
 -WHERE MANY FAMOUS AND INFAMOUS PERSONS ---FROM OLD ‘WILD-
 WEST-DAYS’ --LIVED, DIED AND ARE BURIED—PERSONS LIKE ‘WYATT
 EARP’ ‘DOC HOLIDAY.’ AND OTHERS.
 -WHILE IN TOMBSTONE, ARIZONA ---PRESIDENT TRUMAN VISITED THE
 LOCAL CEMETERY---- AND READ THE INSCRIPTIONS ON SOME OF THE
 TOMBSTONES THERE.
 -AFTER RETURNING TO WASHINGTON, --- IN ONE OF HIS SPEECHES----
 THE PRESIDENT REFERRED TO AN INSCRIPTION ON ONE OF THE
 TOMBSTONES IN THAT CEMETERY---
 -NOT THE INSCRIPTION ON THE TOMBSTONE OF SOME-- ‘FAMOUS’ OR
 ‘INFAMOUS’ PERSON---
 -BUT THE INSCRIPTION ON THE GRAVE OF AN UNKNOWN AND
 RELATIVELY ‘UNIMPORTANT’ PERSON.
 -THAT INSCRIPTION READ SIMPLY----- “HERE LIES JACK WILLIAMS,
 HE DONE ALL HE COULD!(2)”
 -PRESIDENT TRUMAN WAS IMPRESSED WITH THAT SIMPLE
 STATEMENT --- “HE DONE ALL HE COULD!”-----
 -AND WENT ON TO SAY IN HIS ADDRESS TO THE NATION ---THAT
 HE HOPED --HE---AS PRESIDENT,-- COULD BE REMEMBERED IN THE
 SAME WAY.
 - “HE DONE ALL HE COULD!”

THE QUESTION THAT COMES TO US THIS MORNING---ABOUT OUR
 RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST-----AND HIS CHURCH---
 -IS SIMPLY----- “HAVE WE,---‘DONE’ ALL
 WE COULD”-- FOR HIM---AND FOR HIS CHURCH?”
 -“ARE WE – ‘DOING’---AS MUCH AS WE CAN---FOR OUR LORD AND
 FOR HIS CHURCH?”

AS LUTHERANS, WE ALL KNOW WHAT ‘COMMITMENT CARDS’ ARE,
 RIGHT?
 -IN MANY CONGREGATIONS, IN THE FALL, MEMBERS ARE ASKED

TO FILL OUT A ‘COMMITMENT CARD’-- INDICATING WHAT THEIR FINANCIAL GIFTS TO THE CONGREGATION IN THE COMING YEAR, WILL BE.

-IN ONE CONGREGATION--- IN ADDITION TO THE FINANCIAL SECTION OF THE COMMITMENT CARD---

-ANOTHER QUESTION WAS ASKED: “HOW MANY SUNDAYS DO YOU PLAN TO COME TO CHURCH TO WORSHIP GOD?”

-AND PEOPLE WERE ASKED TO ‘CHECK THE APPROPRIATE GRID OF NUMBERS’ OFFERED THERE: -52, 45, 35 ---ETC. AND THEN, DOWN AT THE BOTTOM----IT LISTED ---“NO SUNDAYS.”

WHEN THE STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN IN THAT CONGREGATION WAS OVER—AND ALL THE CARDS WERE IN---- IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT “NO SUNDAYS” HAD ONLY BEEN CHECKED BY ONE FAMILY.

-AND NEXT TO THAT CHECK (NO SUNDAYS) WAS PENCILED IN THE WORDS---- “WE’LL COME WHEN IT’S CONVENIENT(2)!”

SOMEHOW THAT RESPONSE DOESN’T SOUND VERY MUCH LIKE WHAT OUR LORD JESUS HAD IN MIND, WHEN HE SPEAKS IN TODAY’S GOSPEL ABOUT --- WHAT A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM--INVOLVES.

-RATHER, IT SOUNDS LIKE-- THE – ‘RESPONDEES’---TO THAT QUESTION-

-WHO SAID-- “WE’LL COME TO WORSHIP WHEN IT’S CONVENIENT“--- WE’LL COME WHEN WE HAVE TIME” –OR WHEN WE ‘FEEL LIKE IT.”

-SO MANY PEOPLE TODAY ---HAVE NO IDEA

WHAT ‘THE COST’ OF DISCIPLESHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST REALLY IS.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER IS A NAME SOME OF YOU KNOW. HE WAS A GERMAN LUTHERAN PASTOR---AND--A ‘MODERN-DAY-MARTYR’ TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH---WHO DIED AT THE HANDS OF THE GESTAPO NEAR THE END OF W.W. II.

-IN HIS BOOK “THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP”---BONHOEFFER SAYS THAT “THE AVERAGE CHRISTIAN TODAY HAS LITTLE CONCEPT OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST.”

-MOST CHURCHES TODAY---DO NOT MAKE ‘DISCIPLESHIP’ WITH JESUS CHRIST----A ‘CONDITION FOR MEMBERSHIP.’

-ALL YOU HAVE TO DO--- TO JOIN MOST CHURCHES ----IS HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED ---CONFIRMED (POSSIBLY—BUT CONFIRMATION IS NO NO LONGER A REQUIREMENT)

-AND EXPRESS A WILLINGNESS TO JOIN.

-HOW MANY PASTORS TODAY---ASK PERSONS WHO WANT TO JOIN THE CHURCH----“HAVE YOU COMMITTED YOUR LIFE TO CHRIST?”

“IS HE THE ‘PRIMARY FOCUS’---IN YOUR LIFE?”

-“ARE YOU SEEKING TO SERVE HIM IN ALL YOU DO AND SAY?”

-“DO YOU INTEND TO WORSHIP HIM REGULARLY AND FAITHFULLY— IN OBEDIENCE TO HIS COMMAND---PRAY TO HIM DAILY---AND

MAKE A COMMITMENT OF YOURSELF, YOUR TIME AND YOUR POSSESSIONS FOR THE WORK OF HIS CHURCH?"

THERE'S A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST---AND SIMPLY BEING A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH!

-SO MANY TODAY WANT WHAT OUR LORD OFFERS US ALL THROUGH HIS CHURCH—FORGIVENESS, LIFE AND SALVATION.

-WE ALL WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN WHEN WE DIE.

-BUT---THERE'S A LOT MORE INVOLVED IN---'BEING A DISCIPLE OF' ---AND ---'IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST'---THAN JUST GOING TO CHURCH ON OCCASION.

-A FAMOUS EUROPEAN COLLEGE PROFESSOR ----HAD A YOUNG MEMBER OF THE ROYAL FAMILY, IN ONE OF HIS CLASSES.

-A FRIEND SAID TO THAT PROFESSOR-----“IS IT TRUE THAT THE CROWN PRINCE IS ONE OF YOUR STUDENTS?”

-AND THE PROFESSOR IS SAID TO HAVE REPLIED, SADLY----- “YES, THE PRINCE ATTENDS MY CLASS, BUT HE'S NOT ONE OF MY STUDENTS.”

-A LOT OF FOLKS THINK THAT JUST BECAUSE THEY ATTEND CHURCH ON OCCASION---MAKES THEM A CHRISTIAN.

-THAT'S LIKE SAYING “JUST BECAUSE I SPEND AN HOUR IN MY GARAGE OCCASIONALLY ----MAKES ME A CAR.”

BEING ---‘A DISCIPLE OF’ ---AND-- ‘IN RELATIONSHIP WITH’—JESUS CHRIST INVOLVES FAR MORE THAN JUST CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.

-HAVING BEEN BAPTIZED AND CONFIRMED,-- HAVING BEEN RAISED IN A CHRISTIAN HOME---BY CHRISTIAN PARENTS---OR--

-BY TRYING TO LEAD A GOOD LIFE, BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR AND ‘SHOWING SOME GOOD-WILL’ TO THOSE AROUND US.

-BEING A CHRISTIAN ----AND-- IN RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST--- INVOLVES ‘TYING OUR LIVES UP SO COMPLETELY WITH HIM, THAT HE COMES FIRST----IN ANY AND ALL CIRCUMSTANCES.’

-THAT'S NOT EASY ---- (DON'T ASK ME HOW I KNOW).

NOWHERE IN ALL OF HOLY SCRIPTURE----DOES IT EVER SAY THAT--- BEING A FOLLOWER OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST----IS GOING TO BE EASY.

-BEING A FOLLOWER, A DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST---IS A MATTER OF OUR CONSTANTLY---

-TRYING --- ‘TO MATCH’—OUR PRIORITIES IN LIFE –WITH HIS—

-OF MATCHING OUR VALUES IN LIFE WITH HIS—

-AND CONSTANTLY CHECKING OUR CHOICES IN LIFE AGAINST THE STANDARD—OF WHAT HE –WOULD—OR WOULD NOT---HAVE US DO OR SAY.

THOSE OF US WHO ARE A LITTLE OLDER---CAN REMEMBER ‘THE OLD RED HYMNAL.’
-WE LUTHERANS, YOU KNOW, ARE-- ‘COLOR CO-ORDINATED’---IN OUR HYMNALS---AND WORSHIP BOOKS—THEY ARE ALWAYS SHADES OF RED OR BLUE--- (IT USED TO BE BLACK).
-I’LL ADMIT I’M ‘SHOWING MY AGE HERE’----BUT---
-I ALWAYS LOVED THE ‘MARRIAGE SERVICE---’ IN THE OLD, RED HYMNAL.

REMEMBER HOW IT GOES---ANY OF YOU?

“DEARLY BELOVED-- (I KNOW THAT SOUNDS OLD-FASHIONED----

“DEARLY BELOVED”--- BUT THAT ‘S HOW IT BEGAN)----

“DEARLY BELOVED---FOR AS MUCH AS MARRIAGE IS A HOLY ESTATE, ORDAINED BY GOD AND TO BE HELD IN HONOR BY ALL, IT BECOMES THOSE WHO ENTER THEREIN—TO WEIGH WITH REVERENT MINDS WHAT THE WORD OF GOD TEACHES CONCERNING IT.”

I’VE ALWAYS LIKED THOSE WORDS ABOUT MARRIAGE--- “TO WEIGH WITH REVERENT MINDS WHAT THE WORD OF GOD TEACHES CONCERNING IT.”

-(IF YOU’LL PERMIT AN ASIDE-----IF MORE PEOPLE BEING MARRIED TODAY—WOULD DO JUST THAT-- BEFORE THEY GET MARRIED-----
‘WEIGH WITH REVERENT MINDS WHAT GOD’S WORD TEACHES CONCERNING THAT RELATIONSHIP –INTO WHICH THEY ARE ENTERING—THERE WOULD BE FAR FEWER DIVORCES.
-ENTERING ANY RELATIONSHIP (INCLUDING MARRIAGE) --IS ‘NOT’ SOME THING ONE ---‘DOES LIGHTLY’—WITHOUT ‘COUNTING THE COST.’

ENTERING A RELATIONSHIP OF LOVE, TRUST, OBEDIENCE AND DISCIPLESHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST----

-WITH ALL ITS COMMITMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES-----

-IS SOMETHING WE ALL NEED TO CONSIDER CAREFULLY----AND NEVER TAKE LIGHTLY.

-BUT (AS THE OLD RED HYMNAL SAYS OF MARRIAGE)---

WE SHOULD ‘WEIGH WITH REVERENT MINDS’ –OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST---AND CONSTANTLY CONSIDER THE ‘TOTAL DIMENSIONS’ –OF THAT RELATIONSHIP.