

## Pentecost 21(B)

1. **“Take up your cross and follow me . . . those who want to save their lives will lose it, and those who lose their lives for the sake of the gospel, will find it”**
  - a. These words echo through the teachings of Jesus over the past few weeks.
  - b. And along the way, Jesus has taught some things that we might find surprising: that true peace with God does not depend on having our body and mind all intact; that our relationships with God and one another is to reflect the harmony and peace of creation; and to welcome the least among us is a sign of God’s reign and kingdom.
  - c. Life with Jesus will likely mean being in the company of unexpected people, including the disabled, the divorced, and the disenfranchised.
  - d. Who would want to sign up for this?
2. **Today we encounter someone who by most measures we would think is the ideal disciple**
  - a. He’s humble, pious, a good son, a faithful husband, a truth teller; in other words, a pillar of society and the synagogue.
  - b. Jesus sees through all of this. While Jesus’ disciples are readying the welcome card for this new bloke, Jesus pours rain on their parade.
  - c. You lack one thing, Jesus finally says. And the disciples complain, but we need him on the Parish Council, we need his youth, vigour, and money to attract new families. Who can be saved, they say with exasperation.
  - d. Unhelpfully, Jesus eventually responds: the first will be last and the last will be first.
  - e. Thanks for nothing Jesus!
3. **As it turns out, the ideal disciple needed poverty in his life.**
  - a. He needed, in other words, to learn dependence, to embrace what it looks like to need others, including God.
  - b. He needed to imitate God, who makes room for others to live and thrive, rather than building wealth to secure his own future.
  - c. We can aim at riches. We can think of human living as a matter of taking possession of more things. Or we can aim at poverty: we can think of human living as a matter of mutuality, of relying on one another, as risky as that sounds.
  - d. Aim at poverty, Jesus tells him. And the ideal disciple leaves shocked and sad because he would rather aim at riches.
4. **Once again, we are invited to see life with Jesus as an alternative to the status quo.**

- a. We might find ourselves asking the same question as the disciples: who can be saved, or, who can really take this seriously?
- b. We might sound like Job: God is making my heart faint.
- c. I wonder if we've ever thought that life without God is just easier.

**5. Conclusion: Journeying with Jesus can be bad for our bank accounts, as well as our prejudices and pieties.**

- a. Our hope for transformation, our acceptance into the unlikely bunch of pilgrims traveling with Jesus, is not – it turns out – a matter of our wisdom or righteousness, or wealth, it's a matter of the grace of God
- b. Who can be saved? Well, all of us can be, because God's grace, God's divine generosity, can include us all.
- c. The question is: will we recognize it; we will let go of what possesses us – from our wealth to our anger against our neighbour – and take that first step towards our healing and wholeness in God.