

**St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA**

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Luke 14:25-33

***"All of You"***

Today's Holy Gospel can be kind of confusing. Jesus is instructing us to forsake our loved ones, and follow Him. If we are not prepared to do that, then we cannot be His disciple. These are His words, *"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."* (Luke 14:26) So, just what is it that He is asking of us? There has got to be more to this than meets the eye. Jesus goes on to say, *"Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."* (Luke 14:27) Jesus is not talking about a cross that you might be wearing around your neck with a chain. Jesus is telling us that He wants something very important from each of us.

So what kind of gift you could possibly give to God? And then, what would God possibly want us to give to Him? I want to suggest to you that Jesus wants our lives – He wants us. With that in mind, I want to suggest to you that contrary to popular belief, God does not have everything. And so with that in mind - ask yourself, what are some things that I can give to God that He doesn't have?

What we can give Him today is our worship. In Revelation 14:7 *"He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water."* How much of our lives has been about worship? Remember, it's more than just coming here once a week on a Sunday morning. Why is God concerned that you worship Him and Him alone. God is worshipped the most when we are greatly satisfied in Him, when we rest in Him. If you read throughout the entire Bible, especially in the Old Testament, you will see how God demands exclusive worship from His people and it is right in His Commandments. There are no other gods and He should be the sole object of our affection. He doesn't need it – but we should give it to Him. After all, He always was and will be, and His life does not depend on whether or not we get out of bed on a Sunday Morning, turn on the internet and follow Saint Andrew's Anglican Church on YouTube or Facebook, or to come here and worship Him. It should be our privilege and the joy, and our hearts to desire to worship Him above all.

Next, we can give to the needs of others! I can speak to the last almost eight years, that when a need arises, this parish is ready to rise and help to meet the needs of others. In Deuteronomy 15:7-8, 11 says, *"If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. Rather be openhanded and freely lend him whatever he needs. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land."* When we are giving to others we are actually giving to the Lord. In the words of Jesus from Matthew 25:31-46; that many of us call the 'Parable of the Sheep and the Goats,' Jesus gives a pretty clear picture of a person's final accounting. Those who He calls the 'sheep' are allowed in the Kingdom since they fed the Lord,

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gave Him water, and clothed Him. The King told these ‘sheep’, *“I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”* (Matthew 25:40)

Next, we can give Him our bodies. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12:1 *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.”* He is asking you to say – God I love you – I am yours! Give Him your heart! When you think of what God has done for you, is this too much to ask?

Your body is the place where God dwells. This means your whole person. Your hopes, your dreams, your service to Him – and even your healing. His agenda comes before yours. *“Here I am Lord, send me.”* Give Him your body as a commitment to purity but also give Him your body as a commitment for service. We can also give Him our best effort. The Apostle Paul wrote this in 1 Corinthians 10:31, *“so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”* We need to do our best, even when the pay-off is not what we expected. You know, before every service – we gather (the worship team) in the sacristy and we pray and ask God to help us to serve Him and worship Him with excellence. He deserves but the best! Not a half-hearted effort.

In today's Holy Gospel Jesus said in Luke 14:33, *“So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”* Jesus is talking about the cost of discipleship here and He gives some very clear and direct instruction. To follow Him means to follow Him wholeheartedly, not half-way.

I think you will agree that there are times when we like to give Him some stuff, but not all of it. As long as we are holding on to just one thing that is not pleasing to Him - it is going to affect our relationship with Him. Is there anything keeping you from going all out for Him? That is a rhetorical question that you can take home with you and work on.

These are not things you give Him so you can become a Christian, but these are things He won't force from you. I have often said that Jesus is a gentleman and He will never force Himself on you, or make you do anything. It has got to be from your free will. The seas and stars are His, and the rainbow belongs to Him also – although there are some who have tried to hi-jack it as their own. But it is His! Whether or not God owns you is up to you because that is your choice. The relationship you have with God, with Jesus, and with the Holy Spirit is in your very hands. He sacrificed Himself, and died on the cross, so that you can have life with Him.

What you do is up to you. What do you and I need to give God today? He is waiting with His arms wide open ready to receive whatever you bring to Him. Envision Jesus on the cross, are His arms wide open or not? They are wide open and nails cannot hold Him. I truly believe that if you were there and you walked up to Him, He would take those arms and wrap them around you, just as He will for all eternity. Is it your praise and your worship that you want to give to Him? Is it for you to commit your body to purity? Maybe it's to say to Him, “Lord I want to endure even though things have been tough?” Maybe there has been someone on your mind

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lately who God wants you to do something for or to pray for? Could it be that “alone time” that you keep meaning to have with Jesus but don’t get around to it? Whatever it is - God wants to accept your gift and make it special – for His sake.

Jesus said very clearly that it is what your heart gives that matters, “*So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.*” (Luke 14:33 ESV) And that means give Him all of you – don’t hold back!