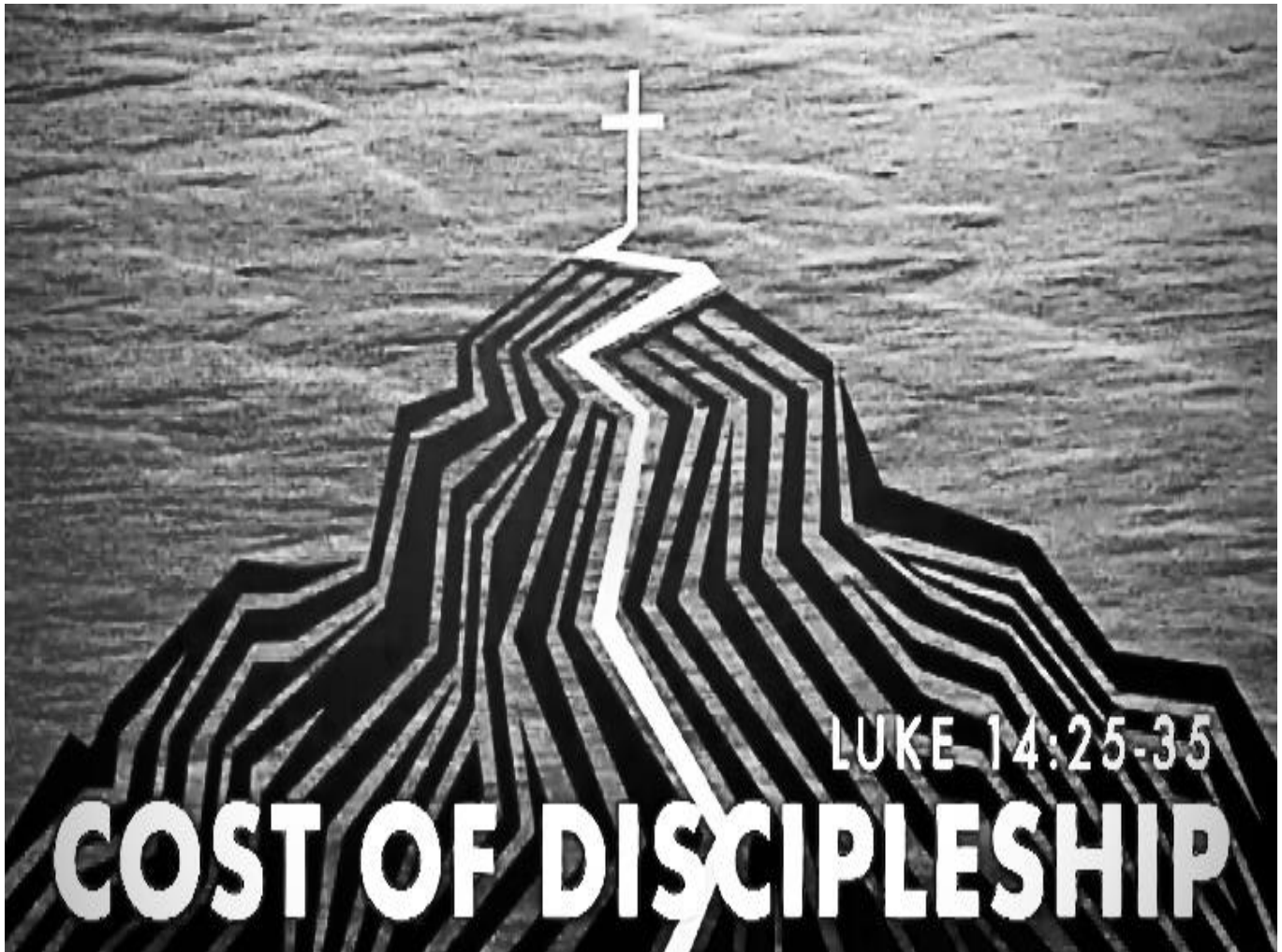


THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
September 4th, 2022



## CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

140 Russell Avenue  
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1  
Church: 905-685-8294  
[www.christlutheransc.ca](http://www.christlutheransc.ca)



## **LMWL-C/MARY MARTHA:**

*This is such an exciting time to welcome back and extend an invitation to everyone for our new Fall/Winter program. Please mark your calendars so that you may be able to join us:*

**BAZAAR NOTES:** We are hoping to have a **regular Bazaar again this November** as in the past; however we plan to hold it in **2 parts** – **Saturday, September 17** & **the last Saturday of the month, Saturday, November 26th.**

**Saturday, September 17th – YARD SALE—Part 1: Bazaar** (*notes of explanation from Carole Pink*)



To keep more room for the lunch tables at the **Bazaar in November**, we want to sell as many of the items for the “**Nearly New Tables**” in **September as possible**. We have many boxes of things stored in the back room, plus you may bring in more if you have donations. Weather permitting we will hold the **YARD SALE** in the front of the church as we did with the fundraiser for Ukraine in June. The proceeds from this one though, will go towards our usual chosen Bazaar

Missions. Placing the Tables on the front lawn is more work but it catches people driving by or walking along the sidewalk. We hope to sell barbecued hot dogs and drinks (both hot & cold) too **and might anyone be interested in making some sweet treats to sell individually as well?**

**WE NEED HELP FROM AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE! How can you help????**

- 1. Volunteer** for one of the aforementioned things.
- 2.** Come to the church one of the days prior (Sept. 14-16) and help sort through, organize, and price the items.
- 3.** Come early on that Saturday morning to help carry things outside and set them on the tables. Especially men- we would sure appreciate your help carrying the tables and boxes.
- 4.** We will need many sellers - a couple at each table.
- 5.** Helpers to pack up and clean up afterwards
- 6. Very important right now** - mark your calendars, save the date. **HELP US ADVERTISE!!**  
--- Tell your friends and neighbours, spread the word as much as you can, put a notice in your apartment building, post about it on your Facebook page, any other way you can think of.



**Saturday, September 17th, 9 a.m. to start (earlier to set up)**

\*\*\*\*\*Please let Carole or any of our Mary/Martha LWML ladies know what you might be willing to help with. [carolepink121@gmail.com](mailto:carolepink121@gmail.com) \*\*\*\*\* Thank you in advance!!!

*(One extra note\*\*\*In this ever changing COVID climate that we've been in these last few years., if by any chance in November it is decided in conjunction with Pastor, Judy and council, that for health and safety reasons it is unwise to go back to the indoor portion of our Christmas Bazaar again as we are hoping to, we would make adjustments as necessary and continue with that in a similar manner to what we have done the last 2 years.)*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Tuesday, September 20th – 7 p.m.:** Pastor John will share a short Bible Study and talk about his trip to Greece to visit our family. Carole will give a short presentation on the Ontario District LWML-C Convention held at Grace Lutheran Church in June

**Sunday, October 2: LWML-C Sunday**

**Tuesday, October 18, 7 p.m.:** Speaker from Salem Chapel - Rochelle Bush (*underground railroad*)

**Tuesday, November 15, 7 p.m.** Assembly of **Warm Feet for the Streets** sock blessings.

**Saturday, November 26: BAZAAR**

**Tuesday, December 20, 5:30 p.m.:** **Advent/Christmas Dinner**

We look forward to seeing familiar faces at our meetings and welcoming new faces! If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to call Lorraine at 905 964 5837!

We look forward to seeing familiar faces at our meetings and welcoming new faces! If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to call Lorraine at 905 964 5837!

*<sup>14</sup> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Colossians 3: 14-16*



SATURDAY, SEPT. 17, 9 A.M.

***Come find a treasure!***

*have a bite to eat and support various Missions  
and Charities including:*

*Many Programs within our own Community such as  
“Out of the Cold” & “Niagara Mobile Closet”  
Canadian Lutheran World Relief  
Haiti Children’s Feeding Program*

***Hope to see you all there!!***

*We hope to sell barbecued hot dogs and drinks (both hot & cold), small baked treats (cookies, muffins, squares, cupcakes) too— if anyone might be interested in making some sweet treats to sell individually we would very much appreciate.*

## **Post It Brainstorming Session:**

Post-Covid we want to blow our doors open with activity.

We need YOUR input to provide “WHAT” activities.



Our goal is to:

1. Crack the door
2. Open a little wider
3. Blow the doors off!

What activities do you feel would engage members, families and friends?

Consider activities for different ages:

- ✓ babies / toddlers / children
- ✓ tweens / youth / young adults
- ✓ singles / married
- ✓ mid-life / seniors

**Sunday, September 11th  
& Sunday, Sunday 18th**

For more information contact:

Louise 905-329-8579 ([parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca))

or Kathy ([k.kuhl@gmx.com](mailto:k.kuhl@gmx.com))

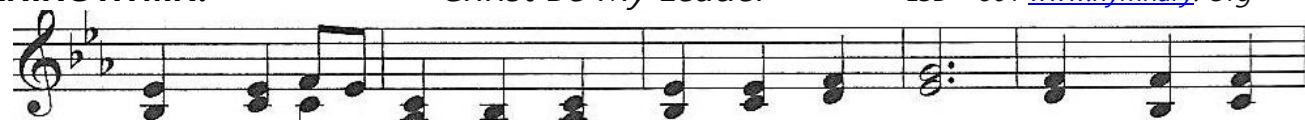
BREAD OF LIFE CREATIVE LUTHERAN SERVICE OF THE WORD

The 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
September 4, 2022 + 10 AM Worship

OPENING HYMN:

"Christ Be My Leader"

LSB # 861 [www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org)



1 Christ be my Lead - er by night as by day; Safe through the  
2 Christ be my Teach - er in age as in youth, Drift - ing or  
3 Christ be my Sav - ior in calm as in strife; Death can - not



dark - ness, for He is the way. Glad - ly I fol - low, my  
doubt - ing, for He is the truth. Grant me to trust Him; though  
hold me, for He is the life. Nor dark - ness nor doubt - ing nor



fu - ture His care, Dark - ness is day - light when Je - sus is there.  
shift - ing as sand, Doubt can - not daunt me; in Je - sus I stand.  
sin and its stain Can touch my sal - va - tion: with Je - sus I reign.

Text: Timothy Dudley-Smith, b. 1926  
Tune: Irish; setting: *Lutheran Service Book*, 2006  
Text: © 1964, renewed 1992 Hope Publishing Co.  
Tune: Public domain; setting: © 2006 Concordia Publishing House

SLANE  
Irregular meter  
John 8:12; John 1:4, 14, 17: 34#

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS:

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Almighty God, to Whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid;

**Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the blessed work of Your Holy Spirit,**

That we may perfectly love You,

**And worthily proclaim Your Holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Let us draw near to the altar of our God, to Him, Who is our joy and delight:

*[Brief prayerful silence]*

**Almighty God, merciful Father: I, a troubled and sorrowful sinner, confess to You all my sins and wrongdoing with which I have offended You and for which I justly deserve Your punishment. But I am sincerely sorry for them, and repent of them, and pray for Your boundless mercy. For the sake of the suffering and death of Your Son, Jesus Christ, be gracious and merciful to me, a poor sinful being; forgive my sins, give me Your Holy Spirit for the renewal and changing of my sinful life, and bring me to everlasting life. Amen.**

With mercy and compassion, our God blesses you. By the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, forgive you all of your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

## SPOKEN KYRIE

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy; hear us and give us Your peace. Amen.

## HYMN OF PRAISE:

(Tune: Hymn to Joy)



1 Glo-ry be to God in heav-en; peace, good-will to all the earth.

2 Glo-ry be to Christ for - ev - er, Lamb of God and Lord of love.

3 Ho - ly One we now ac-claim you; Lord a - lone, to you we call;



Might-y God of all cre - a - tion, Fa - ther of sur - pass - ing worth:

Son of God and gra-cious Sav - ior, you have come from heav'n a - bove;

Ho - ly One in faith we name you, God most high, yet near to all:



we ex - alt you, we a - dore you, we lift high our thanks and praise.

on the cross you died to save us; now you reign at God's right hand.

Je - sus Christ, with God the Spir - it, in the Fa - ther's splen - dor bright.



Saints and an - gels bow be - fore you; here on earth our songs we raise.

Hear our prayer; re - store, for - give us; in your prom - ise firm we stand.

For the peace that we in - her - it, glo - ry be to God on high!

## PRAYER OF THE DAY:

We pray: Direct us, O Lord God, in all of our doings with Your continual help, that in all our works, begun, continued and ended in You, we may glorify Your name; and finally, by Your mercy, bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## THE SCRIPTURES

**The Old Testament:** *Deuteronomy 30: 15-20*

"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart

turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you, life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**The Epistle:** *Philemon 1-21*

Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved fellow worker and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:**

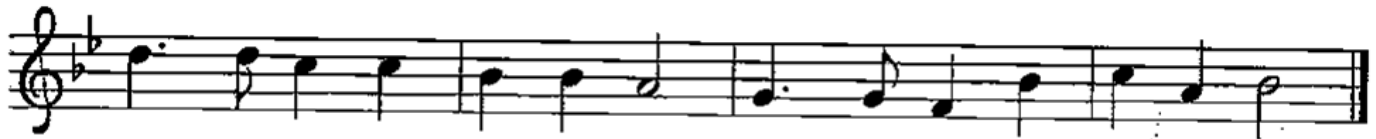
*Tune: "Open Now Thy Gates"*



Al - le - lu - ia! Lord and Sav - ior: o - pen now your sav - ing word.



Let it burn like fire with - in us; speak un - til our hearts are stirred.



Al - le - lu - ia! Lord, we sing for the good news that you bring.

**The Holy Gospel:** *St. Luke 14: 25-35*

The Holy Gospel, according to St. Luke, the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter: **Glory to You, O Lord.**

Now great crowds accompanied [Jesus], and he turned and said to them, "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. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. "Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to You, O Christ.**

**THE APOSTLES' CREED:**

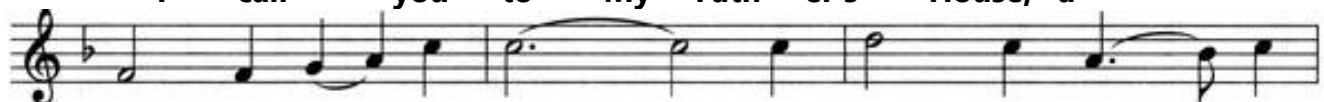
**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the + life everlasting. Amen.**

**SERMON HYMN:** *"I Call You To My Father's House"*

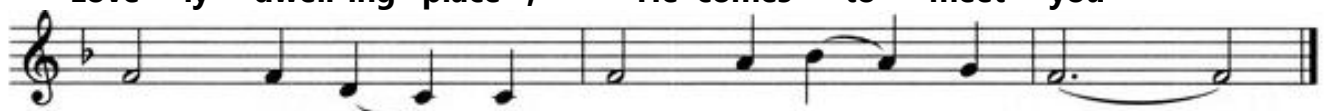
*D. Duffner © 2003*



I call you to My Fath -- er's House, a



Love -- ly dwell-ing place--; He comes to meet you



on the road, arms read -- y to em - brace---.



Lay down your sorrow, calm your fear, the Father bids you come;  
With open arms He welcomes you, to your eternal home.

Although the way be hard and long, into the Promised Land;  
Be not afraid to walk with Christ, He holds you in His Hand.

As salt and light, you travel on, reflecting Jesus' face;  
Its why I've called you in His name and share His dwelling place.

Delores Duffner, b. 1939 © 2003 GIA Publications [www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org)

## MESSAGE

THE OFFERINGS *are gathered.*

OFFERING SONG

*"My Worth Is Not In What I Own"*



1. My worth is not in what I own; not  
(2. My) worth is not in skill or name; in



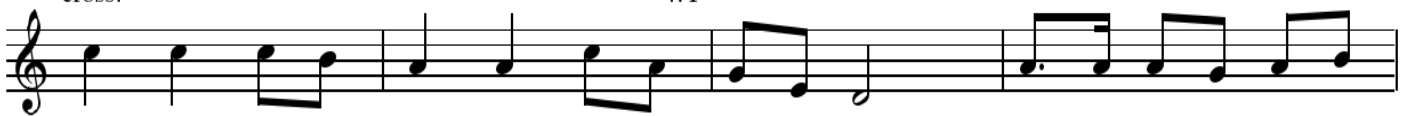
in the strength of flesh and bone. But in the cost - ly wounds of love at the  
win or lose, in pride or shame. But in the blood of Christ that flowed at the



cross.  
cross.

2. My  
4. I

I re-joyce in my Re -



-deem - er. Great - est treas - ure, well-spring of my soul. I will trust in Him, no



oth - er; my soul is sat - is - fied in Him a - lone.

## PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people as they have needs: For the faithful preaching and teaching of the Gospel, that we may never depart from the eternal truth of Christ crucified, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For Christ's Holy Church here and throughout the world, for all who hear the Word of God and are brought to renewal and faith, and for grace that God's people may be sustained in His Word, drawing strength in times of persecution, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For this congregation; for the work of God's kingdom that goes forth from this baptismal font, altar and pulpit; and for those who serve us in Christ's name here and throughout the world, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For a faithful and fruitful life of prayer, praying not only for our needs but praying His promises that our hearts may rest in His perfect peace, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the government of our land, for leaders of our nation, for godly lives as citizens, and for those who protect and defend our country both here and abroad, and for good government and secure people everywhere: let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For honest labor, for all worthy occupations, and for the culture and enrichment of the arts in service to God, that He may prosper them for our benefit and allow us to share of their fruits, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For those in any need, especially that the sick may be healed, the grieving comforted and the dying consoled, [*and especially for \_\_\_\_\_*], and that God may give them all things good and necessary to them in their time of need, let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the faithful who have gone before us with the sign of faith and now rest from their labors, that we may be brought with them to the grace of everlasting life. And finally gracious God, bring us at last through all trials and deliver us into Your Kingdom without end; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**Amen.**

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in Your Kingdom, and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come...**

**CLOSING PRAYER:** *(spoken together)*

**Lord Jesus Christ, our Guide and our Goal, keep our eyes fixed on You. Encourage us to persevere in running the race that You have set before us, and strengthen us to overcome all obstacles. For You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

## BLESSING & BENEDICTION:

Let us praise the Lord: **Thanks be to God.**

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favour and + give you peace. **Amen**

**SENDING HYMN:**

*"Jesus Is Lord Of All"*

*Gaither*



1. All my to - mor - rows, all my past, Je - sus is Lord \_ of  
 2. All of my con - flicts, all my thoughts, Je - sus is Lord \_ of  
 3. All of my long - ings, all my dreams, Je - sus is Lord \_ of



all. \_\_\_\_\_ I've quit my strug - gles, con - tent - ment at last,  
 all. \_\_\_\_\_ His love wins the bat - tles I could not have fought,  
 all. \_\_\_\_\_ All \_\_\_\_\_ my fail - ures His pow - er re - deems,

**CHORUS**



Je - sus is Lord \_ of all. \_\_\_\_\_ King of kings, Lord of  
 Je - sus is Lord \_ of all. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Je - sus is Lord \_ of all. \_\_\_\_\_



lords, Je - sus is Lord \_ of all; \_\_\_\_\_ All my pos -



-ses-sions and all my life, Je - sus is Lord \_ of all. \_\_\_\_\_

**REV. TODD HOEFFS**  
**PENTECOST 13 (series C)**  
**Scripture: St. Luke 14:25-35**  
**Title: "Holy Hate"**  
**September 4, 2022 + 10 AM**

We've all grown up with hearing "GOD IS LOVE". Today's Gospel sounds more like "God is hate"? Hate is hard to hear. Hate has a whole new revived place in our world today, too. It's in politics, entertainment, news, almost every corner of life. We have laws against speaking or writing "hate speech". Unfortunately, outlawing hate, as admirable as it might seem, won't ever stop hatred. Not in this lifetime. Jesus in His wisdom shows us how to love....and how to hate. Yes. How to hate. The crowds around Jesus are still too much in love with what He produces for them. They like His celebrity status. Jesus' disciples (& us) see & hear this so He must set everyone straight. Following Him around will end up in suffering. We all must prepare for some measure of suffering. So...Hate family? Hate parents? Hate our spouse? Hate our kids? Hate what we love most dearly to follow Jesus? Doesn't Jesus love the human family? Hate your own life? I thought we're supposed to love ourselves like we love our neighbour? Hating today in our world involves a passionate detest and a strong dislike for someone or something. Even wishing someone dead. Eradicating anything apprehensible & evil from our lives. But in the ancient world...hating one's family means something different. Hating family means injuring them by causing them public disgrace. In a world where name and reputation mean everything, public embarrassment is a death sentence. Life is family centered, and the honour of the family is of prime importance. Honour must be held as sacred by every family member. Kinda like what we all see in those old Godfather mafia movies. Family Loyalty. If some members of a family join a strange movement like Jesus is talking about, and abandon their home, this brings disgrace on the family. New religious movements rose up constantly and disrupted, even divided families. Letters survive to this day of some Roman families complaining that their son or daughter ran off and joined some group called the "Christians." Jesus' saying is still hard and all-encompassing. No other loyalties are to have precedence over journeying with Jesus "on the way" of discipleship. Hating one's own self means that the person disconnects from everything that has defined that person. So a person's past no longer defines who they are. One's identity is no longer formed by one's former allegiances, nor one's experiences in life, nor even one's human origin. These are part of the old world giving way to the new world of God's Kingdom in Jesus. His disciple must not be defined by the past, but by their work in the present and their future hope. And so, if we sit down reasonably and tally the costs—as Jesus himself suggests that we do—the only *reasonable* decision is to choose *not* to follow Christ. At least from an economic and cultural standpoint. But that is where the economics fail. Being a follower of Christ is not a numbers game.

It's not a question of giving up ONE THING (family, friends, possessions) in order to get SOMETHING FROM GOD in return. No, Jesus has something quite different in mind. A cross. Bear the cross, go after Jesus the way He calls us to follow and you're His disciple. Crosses kill. They torture criminals to death. To take up your cross is to take up your death. You can't follow Jesus without a cross. His way is the way of death before any hope of resurrected new life. That didn't even enter any minds yet.

It's hard getting past the death part. It stands to reason that if you can't die, you can't rise, and if you can't rise, well, you're kind of stuck in your unredeemable mess. Following Jesus now sounds dangerous, deadly even. But we don't want to misunderstand hating one's life and family. Its sounds like a choosing one over the other, but it isn't. It's re-arranging priorities and loyalties. Humanly speaking, we WANT to love our possession and the people in our lives because we get something out of it. Life in God's eyes isn't supposed to be transactional. That's not how He made us, and that's

not truly LOVE. SO hate them only to love them better, more, freely. Hate your sinful life so that you can love Christ & desire what He desires which always begins and ends with loving God 1st! We can only truly love our families and ourselves when we 1st love God and Jesus Christ, His Son. When you realize this life we live while it is a blessing and a joy it is but a dim shadow compared to the life that we have in Jesus and the life waiting for us in His Heavenly Kingdom.

This doesn't mean we take vows of poverty in this life to gain wealth in the next life. Jesus doesn't even say that His disciples will receive *different* or *better* families in return—He says they'll receive *more*—Jesus' way is of abundance, not scarcity. By leaving behind their families and their possessions, It's not an exchange for something better, but a prelude to something bigger—to the Kingdom to which Jesus promises those very same families are actually invited to be part of. Families and possessions get cared for best when they revolve around God. So DO count the cost. Do the math. Calculate the loyalties. We do it all the time. Like me, you may've recently filled up your car with gas. Sometimes at those stations which make you pay 1st. You got to figure out how much to buy before it's in the tank. Not my favorite kind of gas station....but that's how life often works. You set out to build something, and you get bids and work out the costs to make sure there's enough money available, otherwise you'll pour a foundation, run out of funds, and your slab of concrete will stand as a monument to your shortsighted lack of planning. We've all seen it. Many things stand partially finished. When a king goes to battle, he counts the cost of war.

Can he afford it? Can his ten thousand troops match his enemy's twenty thousand?

And if they can't, he sends the peace delegation in to negotiate terms. Many of our decisions are economic more than anything else. Can we afford it? Will it break the bank? Is there enough money? We make important choices in our lives by counting the cost. And we're shortsighted fools if we don't. What's hard about following Jesus is that it costs everything...your own dear life. Dietrich Bonhoeffer says it best in his book "Cost of Discipleship": when JESUS calls us, He bids us to COME and DIE. Following Jesus on His road to die and rise is literally going to cost you your life before you gain any new life. Truth be told, if you ran the cost of following Jesus, you wouldn't.

If you counted the cost, you'd never come to Baptism, never trust in Christ, never follow Him. You'd never believe that eating a wafer of bread & a drinking in a sip of wine brings Christ into your life.

No one would believe it. That's why God doesn't make following Jesus a choice.

No one would choose it. We don't take up our crosses willingly. No one wants to die before living. No one wants to love God and His Son 1st and then trust that their love at work in us will make us love our families the best way! We see death, and we run the other way as fast as we can. This is why Jesus calls coming to faith a "rebirth", being born anew from above, becoming a "new creation." Baptism is a washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Seriously, would anyone want to be born if they counted the cost leaving the womb? Not a chance! This is why Jesus has to go the way of the cross alone. There is not a human being alive who'd be willing to take up his cross and follow.

Even Simon of Cyrene had to be forced to carry Jesus' cross. We won't do that. The cost is too great. Jesus bears the cost of discipleship. That's the good news hidden in today's Lovingly hateful Gospel.

Jesus bears the cost. He lays down His life to save the world. He becomes the world's Sin.

He dies our Death. Jesus counted the cost of being the world's Saviour. Jesus counted the cost of rescuing you from your Sin and Death. And it was worth every drop of His holy, precious blood to save you.

He gave up everything that's His – His honor, glory, dominion, power, His entire life – and for the joy of your salvation, He took up His cross to save you. He didn't ask you to choose Him. He chose you. He baptized you. He called you by His Spirit. He put you on the path of life before you even knew it was happening. You were captive to Sin and Death, and God made you free in Christ. Before you believed, before you were born, before you ever were, Christ was your Savior and Lord and Redeemer.

Even if you came to faith as an adult and sought out Baptism, came to Communion later in life, you still didn't choose Him. He chose you. He made sure your life path twisted & turned back to Jesus.

He laid His cross on you, not to kill you, but to bring you life. People do want the most out of life.

And our God doesn't begrudge that. Life has work and dignity and value. But that most we want out of life begins by believing that nothing on earth can offer the most.

The most and best comes from Christ Who is in us.

He's greater than anything in the world.

And that colours our vision to see every other person out there as great because of Christ.

And you follow Him, even to death, in His death, to find life.

It's all by grace, gift, free, gratis in Jesus.

And that's not "cheap grace", that's free grace.

Free to you; costly to Jesus.

The cost of following is high.

But thanks be to God Jesus pays the cost in full.

By learning how to hate, we truly learn how to LOVE.

Amen.