TITLE: Radical Discipleship

TEXT: Lk. 14:25-26; Mt. 6:24 & 16:24-25; Jn. 8:31-32; Ro. 5: 3-5; 1 Pet. 4:12-13; Lk. 22:42

INTRODUCTION: This morning, I want to talk about discipleship, the scriptural kind of discipleship. And that is radical discipleship.

 How many of you this morning consider yourself to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? How many of you consider yourself to be a radical disciple of Jesus Christ?

 Many of you may be thinking, well I don’t want to become a radical Christian! I mean doesn’t that just turn people off?

 That may depend on our definition of radical..

 In the world in which we live being a radical anything carries a negative connotation with it.

 They are just radical environmentalists!

 He is just a radical conservative!

 She is just a radical feminist!

 He or she is just a radical Christian!

 Being radical about anything carries a negative connotation in our society, but our society, the nation in which we live, exists only because of those who founded it were radicals.

The heritage dictionary defines radical as:

 **1.One who advocates fundamental or revolutionary changes in current practices, conditions, or institutions: *radicals seeking to overthrow the social order .***

 The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States were radical documents in the day that they were written. The men who were responsible for putting them together were often seen as radical men—especially by the British hierarchy.

 Three weeks ago we celebrated Independence Day, the day that Americans celebrate the declaring of its independence from Great Britain….

 I want you to listen to the last paragraph of our Declaration of Independence..

*“ We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in general Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the World for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name and by the authority of the good people of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance the British Crown and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as free and independent States, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliance, establish commerce, and do all other acts and things which independent States may of right do.*

 *And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred* honor.”

 Folks this was a radical document made by radical men!

 A radical being one **who advocates fundamental or revolutionary changes in current practices, conditions, or institutions.**

The pledge that these men made to each other was as radical as you can get…

 *And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred* honor.”

 Most of these men ended up giving their fortunes for the cause of independence. Many gave their very lives. All maintain their sacred honor!

 Only a radical would go to those extremes! Only a radical would be willing to sacrifice so greatly!

 The Founder of our faith, Jesus, was also a radical!

 **--One who advocates fundamental or revolutionary changes in current practices, conditions, or institutions.**

In fact I believe that Jesus is the most radical person who has ever lived.

You can’t get any more radical than going and giving your life on a cross for someone else’s crimes!

 Picture Jesus before Pontus Pilate---convicted of crimes He didn’t commit--beaten by Roman soldiers, laughed at, spit on, whipped until all the flesh was removed from his back---forced to carry His cross to His own execution—nailed to that cross and hung up on it to suffer a slow and agonizing death in the heat of the mid-eastern sun---

 He did all this while having the power to stop it at any time that He chose…

 Yet because of a love that defies our human understanding, a love that we can never fully comprehend, Jesus endured all of that for us! He died for our sin so that we wouldn’t have to die in our sin!

 Folks that is the ultimate example of what being a radical is all about!

 To be so committed to something or someone that you are willing to give all that you have and all that you are..

 And it is to this kind of radical discipleship that we have been called to as Christians..

 Don’t think so? Then just listen to what Jesus has to say to anyone who would be His disciple….

**Luke 14:25 (NIV) Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said:**

26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple.

Folks, this is a radical statement!

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple.

 The word "Hate” is not used as an absolute but a relative term here. To neglect social customs pertaining to family loyalties would probably have been interpreted as hate in Jesus day. Jesus is not contradicting the commandment to honor one's father and mother here…

 He is talking in the context that if we have to choose between the two!

Hate…the Greek, miseô, means to hate or detest and it is an old and very strong verb.

 But even so Jesus does not mean here that one must hate or detest, his father or mother to be His disciple.

 It is only when the element of choice comes in, as it sometimes does, where a father or mother or other family members may oppose Christ that one must not hesitate but choose where ones loyalties lie.

 Jesus said in:

**Matt 6:24 (NIV) "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.**

 This speaks of how one prioritizes their life, what we make of most importance.

 If we place more concern on the acquiring of money and materialistic things then we do on our relationship with Jesus Christ then we have made an idol out of those things and they need to be forsaken if we are to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

 If we place more emphasis and importance on our family relationships then we do on our relationship with Christ then we have made an idol out of our family relationships.

When Jesus says …

 **If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple…** He is simply saying that if it ever come to the choice of one or the other, than in order to be His disciple we must choose Him even if it means forsaking all else.

 Folk’s that is what real Christian discipleship is and that is as radical as you can get.

**Matt 16:24 (NIV) Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**

25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

 We are not just to be willing to forsake all others if that is what it takes to fully commit ourselves to Christ but we are to be fully willing to forsake our own selves in order to serve Christ.

Example: In the late 70’s there was a Russian band that got out of Russia while USSR still had closed borders… Each young man was a Christian and in their concerts they told many stories about friends and loved ones who were Christians in the USSR who literally gave their lives for Christ…

 One man had a Grandfather, taken away and never seen again for being overheard speaking about Jesus by the wrong person..

 One man had a Christian friend who was inducted into the army who had his eyes gouged out for not pledging life and allegiance to the cause of communism because of his devotion to Christ.

 They told of Little girl who while at school one day the KGB came in and called for all the students to be assembled.

 They then threw down a Bible on the floor and had each child come down and denounce the Bible by spitting on it as they passed by.

 When it came to this little girl, with tears in her eyes she knelt down, picked up the Bible and gently wiped the spittle off it and then kissed its cover.

 Outraged, one of the KGB officers pulled out his sidearm and shot the little girl in the head in front of the assembly.

 Radical discipleship is not determined by ones age!

 Then toward the end of their concerts they often made a challenge to their American audience about their devotion (or seeming lack of it) to Christ—

 One of the young Christian men in this groups name was Peter…

 Once after a concert where they had shared about this great faith and martyrdom that was taking place in the underground Church in Russia a woman came up to Peter after the concert and said that she was a Christian and that she was offended by what he had insinuated about her as an American Christian… She said, Young man, don’t you think that we American Christians are just as willing to die for Jesus as you are in Russia?

 Peter’s reply was: Mam, I find it hard to believe that many American Christians would be willing to die for Christ when it seems so many who claim to be Christians in America are not willing to live for Him. OUCH!!

 One thing that has always sifted the wheat from the shaft within the Church, the body of Christ, is persecution.

 When it comes to the persecution of the Church, that persecution will separate the men from the boys, separate those who just consider themselves to be a disciple of Christ from those who are a true disciple of Christ.

 I mean that if you know that if you speak publicly about Jesus and that you may very well be imprisoned or even put to death for doing so and you do it anyway then you are a disciple of Christ!

 Our Christian brothers and sister in the old USSR suffered that kind of persecution and guess what? The Church flourished under that kind of persecution!

Example: Two Russian police officers armed with ak-47’s entered a underground Church service in Moscow…

 They had everyone lift up their hands…They then said that anyone who would denounce Christ could leave unharmed…several left… After they left the men put down their guns, explained that they too were Christians and just wanted to make sure that everyone who was there was really a Christian, and after the wheat and shaft had been separated they joined together in worship with the rest of the Church.

 Sound radical? True discipleship is radical discipleship!

 I love seafood so I will use a seafood illustration this morning….You know, Christians have a lot in common with lobsters…..

 From time to time, lobsters have to leave their shells in order to grow. They need the shell to protect them from being torn apart by other bigger fish, yet when they grow, the old shell must be abandoned. If they did not abandon it, the old shell would soon become their prison--and finally their casket.

 The tricky part for the lobster is the brief period of time between when the old shell is discarded and the new one is formed. During that terribly vulnerable period, the transition must be scary to the lobster. Currents cartwheel them from coral to kelp. Hungry schools of fish are ready to make them a part of their food chain. For a while at least, that old shell must look pretty good.

 We are not so different from lobsters in that respect. To change and grow as a Christian, we must sometimes shed our shells--a structure, a framework--we've depended on.

 Discipleship means being so committed to Christ that when he bids us to follow, we will change, risk, grow, and leave our "shells" behind.

 Be willing to forsake all else in order to follow Him.

 The main thing that we need to forsake in order to be a true disciple of Christ is self!

 Forsake what we want and think is important for what Christ wants for and from us and what Christ deems to be the most important for us.

This is what the Apostle Paul was talking about when he says in:
**Galatians 2:20(NIV)**  **20I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**

 There was a man who asked a mail-order company to send him plans for a birdhouse. Instead of sending him the plans for a birdhouse, they mistakenly sent him plans for a sailboat.

 He tried to put it together, but it just wouldn't work. He couldn't figure what kind of bird was going to live in this dumb birdhouse. For one thing there were no entrance holes in it, no way for a bird to get inside of it! So he wrote a letter and sent the parts back to the company.

 They wrote a letter of apology and added this postscript: "If you think it was difficult for you, you should have seen the man who got your plans trying to sail a birdhouse."

 A lot of times we try to operate on the plans of Christ when we aren't fully devoted to the cause of Christ.

 There are a lot of people who call themselves a disciple of Christ in our nation but how many of us are living our lives as a disciple of Christ?

Before His plans (The Bible) will work we need to be sure that we have applied its principles to our life.

 Jesus is the principle of the Word of God. And that principle needs to be applied before the plan will ever work!

John 8:31 (NIV) To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

**32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."**

Jesus said: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

 Holding to the teaching of Christ will require radical discipleship on our part at times won’t it?

 Only a radical like the apostle Paul could say and mean such things as:

**Roma 5:3 (NIV) … but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;**

**4 perseverance, character; and character, hope.**

**5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.**

 Only a radical like the Apostle Peter can make a statement such as…

 **1Pet 4:12 (NIV) Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.**

**13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.**

 Only a radical will be able to rejoice in times of suffering! Rejoice in times of trial and tribulation!

Only a radical can turn the other cheek or go the extra mile for the cause of Christ!

 Only a radical will be able to forsake all else, be willing to leave father and mother, sister and brother to take up their cross and follow Christ.

 Only a radical will be willing to forsake his own plans and desires in order to do what someone else has planned and desires for him….

 Again, Jesus is our supreme example of what radical discipleship is all about.

 The night before Jesus went to the cross He knew what lie ahead of Him.

 He knew he would be forsaken by His closest friends, tried before an angry mob, found guilty of trumped up crimes that He didn’t commit, mocked, beaten, whipped, spit upon and humiliated! He knew the agony that lie ahead for Him on the cross!

 And beside all of this, He who knew no sin, was about to become a sin sacrifice!

 The sin of the entire world was about to come down upon His shoulders!

 Your sin, my sin, every man’s sin was starting to bear its full weight upon the sinless Lamb of God…

 We see the agony of that event in the Garden of Gethsemane where it says that Jesus started to sweat great drops of blood as this agony stated to weigh down upon His soul….

 And then we see the ultimate example of radical

Discipleship….

 In this agonizing state Jesus looks toward Heaven and cries out to His Father….

**Luke 22:42 (NIV) "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."**

How would you describe yourself this morning? How would you describe your relationship with Christ Jesus?

 Are you a radical disciple of Jesus?

 Have you emptied yourself of self and come to Him saying; None the less, Lord, not my will, but Your will be done in my life?

 To make that statement and mean it will require that we be a radical.

 Radical about our relationship with the Lord.

Radical about our love for Jesus.

 Willing to forsake all else if that ever be required of us in order to fully serve Him.

 Willing to even forsake our very selves, especially our very selves in order to serve Him more.

To become a man, woman or child **who advocates fundamental or revolutionary changes in (our) current practices, conditions, or institutions!**

This morning, is it your desire to be a radical disciple Jesus Christ?

I think that radical discipleship can be summed up in four words: APJF Always Put Jesus First!

**Matt 16:24 (NIV) Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**

Are we daily taking up our cross and following Jesus?