

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Cost of Discipleship Thirty-first Week in Ordinary Time Wednesday, November 8,
2017 8:15 AM Rom 13:8-10; **Lk 14:25-33** (We have to be willing to surrender
whatever needs to be surrendered in order to do God's work and therefore inherit eternal life.)

So there are comforting words in Scripture, and then there are very challenging words. **This particular reading is extremely challenging** and uses very graphic language: hating father, mother, wife, children, and one's own life, some translations: "one's very self." Well this is all very provocative. **Why would one hate one's mother or father or one's own very life? So we cannot take things utterly literally.**

But we have to understand that there is a tremendous challenge to discipleship, and **what Jesus means is before you really decide you want to be a disciple, you better count the cost, and the cost involves actually everything**, because nothing is more important than the work of God. Nothing is more important than the life of God. **Since you are being invited to the life of God, you have to be willing to let go of your own, so to speak, life.**

Now ordinarily people think in terms of their bodies. They think they are bodies. People think they are some body. And what they protect and what they nurture and what they promote is their body and that body's role in the world, that body's importance in the world, influence in the world, possessions in the world, authority in the world, and on and on. But **Jesus is trying to teach his disciples that that's not what life is about. Those are all means to an end, but not an end in themselves.**

So we don't want to actually hate our fathers or mothers, but we cannot put them in front of God. We don't really want to hate our lives, but we don't want to put them in front of God. **We have to be willing to surrender whatever needs to be surrendered in order to do God's work and therefore inherit eternal life.** And eternal life is something that is wholly other than what we call life, life in our bodies, life in the world. It's something far richer. And by the way, it is not

necessarily completely discrete. That means it's not totally separate either. **The life Jesus is talking about can start right now. And that's the whole idea of repentance.** When you really turn to God and **when you are really willing to let go of everything else, then at that very moment eternal life begins.**

I'm sure you've got sometimes some sort of holy card at someone's funeral. It says, "Born into eternal life" on such a date. That's wrong. **We are born into eternal life when we accept Baptism and all its consequences.** That is meant to transform us into a new being, much as a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly. It begins here on earth, and it begins **when we start really being willing to respond to the word of God.**