

Matthew 10: 24-39 and Psalm 125

This passage from Matthew is quite hard hitting, Jesus is explaining to his 12 closest disciples that discipleship has a cost and it will be a serious and life altering decision for them to follow him. And in our position over 2,000 years later we know all too well that it really was, as all but one of them (John) died unpleasant martyr's deaths but they'd spread Christianity throughout the world.

Jesus is personally inviting them to prioritise following him above everything else – their families, their jobs, their personal wishes – everything - and join with him in sharing the good news.

What he was asking of them was not unusual as at that time students or disciples would join themselves to a rabbi and become part of his school, leaving their old lives and families behind and spending all their time with their rabbi. It was a full time occupation and in due course they would be expected to become a rabbi themselves, teaching others.

Discipleship was not about personal gain but about a lifelong commitment to follow and spread the message. A commitment to prioritize one's relationship with God over all other relationships and possessions and maintain this commitment even in the face of adversity. It's a reminder to us that following Jesus requires a deep commitment and a preparedness to make sacrifices.

However, we need to be aware of the difference between being a disciple and being a fan. A fan will invest much time and effort into following their favourite band or team, they'll "religiously" turn up to see them, but can potentially switch allegiance when another band comes along or if their team isn't winning. Fans are usually extremely well informed about the focus of their interest, knowing facts, scores etc.

But Jesus wants more than this from us, he doesn't just want us to turn up and fill the pews or chairs on a Sunday, sing along enthusiastically and listen attentively to the talk – we are called not to be fans, but disciples.

So how can we ensure we are doing this? Being a disciple is not part time. It's 24/7. A fan might choose to miss a game as they don't feel like going one day or might have something more interesting or appealing to do. We're called not just to be here on a Sunday morning but also to let Jesus change us all day and every day.

And not doing this has consequences - a few chapters before our reading (in chapter 7, verse 21) Jesus says "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." He said many will protest claiming they've done good things – but they'll be turned away, the will of the Father is that we are more than fans, that we become disciples.

Jesus encouraged his disciples to have a personal relationship with him, to study his words and works, to observe and then to participate and take on responsible roles.

It's important that we profess our faith publicly and stand up for our beliefs – even when this can be challenging or the unpopular or unfashionable route.

We shouldn't let fear dictate our actions or prevent us from living out our faith – we know that God will protect and provide for us even and especially in challenging times.

Are we prepared to prioritise our relationship with Jesus above everything? Can we find the courage to publicly acknowledge our faith? Even when facing opposition?

I am pretty confident that we're thankfully not going to meet the fate of the original 12 disciples but we may well face conflict when we expose evil and challenge power and demand change. And by undermining the status quo we are very likely to face opposition – but we are called to shine light into dark places.

We do need courage at times to do this – but we shouldn't be afraid to share the good news and shine the light of faith in the world – remember our own church's strapline – is Sharing God's Love: to live by love, to be known by faith, and to be light of hope.

In today's world where material wealth and personal comfort can often take precedence this passage highlights that we should be willing to take a counter cultural stance and focus instead on eternal rewards and trust in God.

Taking up the cross for us means following wholeheartedly and aligning ourselves with God's will – being willing to put God first. It may involve challenges and throw up difficulties but ultimately it leads to a deeper relationship with God and gives our lives purpose and meaning.

In our current society we unfortunately see a growth in lack of commitment – for example in stepping up to lead a scout group, join the PTA committee etc. Sadly people are more than happy to come along and benefit from these - but are unwilling to step up. We at Holy Trinity are so fortunate with our wealth of volunteers but we're always looking for more to share the journey whether it be running our café or foodbank, joining our pastoral team or helping with our services. And when we have our wonderfully well equipped and heated transformed building we will be needing even more people to be able to minister to the needs of our community and offer companionship, refuge and hospitality - more than just once or twice a week.

Society encourages us to put ourselves first, to avoid stress and think of self – but actually Jesus is asking us all to step up and get involved with each other.

We need to remain steadfast – remember we are not alone – we are a family together – our church family - and we are all called to action – to examine our lives and our level of commitment – our faith should form the foundation on which we build the rest of our lives.

Dear Lord We acknowledge the challenges and sacrifices that come with discipleship – but also recognise the immeasurable rewards and blessings that await us. Guide us in our journey as disciples and enable us to be bold witnesses for your kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Carol Elsasser, 21 June 2026