

## Luke 14 25-30 All Age Service

The other day, I was listening to a radio phone-in programme and a man called up to talk about what happened when he tried to build an extension to his house. He got permission from the Local Authority, drew up plans, and sacrificed lots of things, to save up for his extension. After a long time and a lot of effort, he got all the money he needed. Then, just when he was ready to start, he decided to have a quick look on the internet for something. By chance, on an auction site, he saw a beautiful, vintage car (a DeLorean, for those of you who are interested). And he thought I'll just put in a really low bid. No one will ever accept it.

What do you suppose happened next? Shortly afterwards, his bid was accepted and *all* his money was spent. The man said he was very happy with his new car, but his plan to extend the house never happened. Despite all his efforts, this man didn't finish what he started. He lacked *perseverance*, so, we can be very glad that this man did not have our roof fund in his bank account!

In our Gospel reading today, we met someone else just like him, a person who makes plans, begins to follow them, but can't finish what they start. All of us find it hard to finish things sometimes. When I was young, I began to learn the cello, but it was difficult to learn, and too big to take on the bus to school, so after a couple of years of struggle, I gave up.

I wonder who else here has started something and not finished it? The truth is that lots of us have ambitions to start things and then find we don't have the energy, or the will, or the resources to finish what we started. And Jesus knows that we find it hard to keep going. He says that if we want to follow him, it won't always be easy and we need to learn how to keep going; how to persevere.

The word disciple and the word discipline come from the same root word in Latin, which is about instruction and learning. A disciple is someone who learns how to be part of God's family and some of that learning is about how to persevere when life gets tough.

This week, some people are celebrating Mother Theresa's life, because she is being made into a saint. Mother Theresa was a special person because she kept going even when things were tough. Not everyone agrees with everything that Mother Theresa did, but they would agree that she understood how God wants *everyone* to matter, whoever they are or where ever they come from. One of her sayings was 'there should be no throw-away people'. But even Mother Theresa suffered long periods of doubt about God. She struggled with her faith, but God gave her the strength to keep going and through her doubts and difficulties, she brought God into some of the darkest places in the world.

Mother Theresa's life shows us that being a saint is not about being extra holy, it's about being extra stubborn, for God. Being a disciple, needs discipline and means staying focussed on God's message to the world, that everyone matters; there are no throwaway people in God's house.

God is building a house in the world, made of us, God's disciples. As we grow and learn, we become the building blocks of that house. God wants everyone to come and be part of the house. There are no throwaway people in God's house. That means that Christians who are very strong in their faith and wobbly Christians all belong in the same house, because it's the *being together and persevering* that makes the house. Who has a house with walls that decide not be walls, when the wind is too blowy? Does anyone have a house with doors that decide to lie down on the floor when the rain is a bit too wet for them? No. The house stands, when all the parts of the house work together. Standing together in God's love is what makes the house strong.

So, let us pray not to be extra holy, but extra stubborn for God so that, just like Mother Theresa, we too, can build God's house and bring God's message of light into the dark places of the world.

**Amen**