Our scripture this morning comes from Luke 14:25-27. While you’re finding that, two cab drivers were talking one day. “I couldn’t help but notice that one side of your cab is red while the other side is blue. Why is that?” The other driver smiled, “Well, it’s for protection. You see, when I’m involved in an accident, nobody trusts a witness who can’t even get the color right!” Those who witness our walk as disciples of Jesus Christ should never be confused. They should be able to walk all the way around us, look under us, check the door jambs, look under the hood – anywhere where the old us may show through… and all they’ll see is Jesus.

**Luke 14:25-27 25Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them 26“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. 27And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.**

 We’ve been looking at discipleship. We’re called to be disciples of Jesus, the Master. As disciples, we’re focused on learning all the ways of the Master, to the point that we have become like the Master. Our study is focused on the Master. We react to others like the Master; love one another like the Master. We follow when called, seek Kingdom benefit, follow closely, and accept our responsibility. Discipleship is a lifelong journey.

 In our scripture, we first note the crowds – verse 25 - Now great multitudes went with Him. We see multitudes associated with Jesus many times – multitudes were healed, multitudes were fed, multitudes marveled, multitudes came out as He was betrayed (Matthew 26:55). Many were walking after Him for the healing, the feeding, or the companionship. Not everyone following Jesus is a disciple of Jesus. Don’t let this lesson be lost on us. Not everyone who calls on Jesus knows Jesus – He’s very clear on that – in Matthew 7 and again in Matthew 25 Jesus says He will tell some who did some pretty nifty stuff in His name to depart! Discipleship is not uttering the name of Jesus. Discipleship begins when we seek the will of the Master.

 Verse 26, Jesus must be first. It’s no problem when we love mother, father, wife, child, brother, sister, and have healthy self-respect… the lesson is – don’t let anything get between you and Jesus! But some of us do. It’s like the taxi-cab painted in two colors! One side has Jesus and the other side has mammon and Jesus says that we might as well paint it all mammon… cause He won’t take part in a two toned life! Everything in our life is to accentuate the Savior… if it doesn’t, it can’t be a part of our life.

 Verse 27 is my focus today. Bear in mind that there is a multitude standing there when Jesus says, “And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” In the midst of hundreds, Jesus makes it personal. In the midst of our sanctuary today, Jesus makes it personal. Notice Jesus doesn’t say, “whoever doesn’t bear the cross of the person standing next to you.” He says bear your cross. The Greek word used here for cross means literally a pole, but it also means figuratively self-denial. In Matthew 16:24 Jesus confirms this requirement - Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Now if I looked the whole multitude over, I doubt I’d have found one single cross in that whole crowd… maybe a good sized walking stick or shepherds staff… but not one cross! Jesus was saying – until you put Self away and begin to do the work that I am calling you to do – the work of my Father – you cannot be my disciple.

 In Mark 8:34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” Notice it says he called the people to Himself - with His disciples also - interesting… Jesus says, step 1 of being my disciple – deny yourself (means to utterly disown yourself!) step 2 – take up the assignment I am giving to you… while still denying yourself! Step 3 – follow me, (the Greek word follow literally means – to be in the same way) while carrying out the assignment… while still denying our selfish desires.

 It’s a hard assignment. It’s a personal assignment. In Matthew 28, we read Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen. No multitudes here… only 11. 1 Peter 2:11-12 says, “ Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.” As we do the work Jesus calls us to, that of making disciples, we must be a vessel painted with one pigment – the blood of Christ. When I look upon this mess I call Richard, but Jesus calls Beloved, my thoughts turn to the forgiveness He’s given and the Grace that He’s extended. Lifted from imperfection into perfection only by His Grace, I seek to teach others, that they may find His incredible Grace and be lifted from imperfection into perfection.