

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Jesus says, “If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, his wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own self he cannot be my disciple.”

(Luke 14: 25)

As you read the sentence above, what thought goes through your mind? Is Jesus having a really bad day? Who ever talks about hating your parents, your spouse, your kids, your siblings—even hating yourself? Who does this? And why? So what is Jesus doing here? He is surely making an outlandish statement. He is surely exaggerating. His words are full of hyperbole. Hyperbole is exaggeration to make a point or for a particular purpose. So why is Jesus exaggerating and what’s his point?

The Greek word that is translated here as “hate” is the word for hate in Greek. But as a secondary meaning the Greek word can also mean “to have less regard for” or “be indifferent to” as additional meanings. So try this version: “If anyone comes to me without having less regard for his father and mother, his wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own self, he cannot be my disciple.” Or this: “If anyone comes to me without being less interested in his father and mother, his wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own self he cannot be my disciple.”

So which translation is best? Always in the art of translation there are decisions which have to be made, both could be accurate depending on context. But you get the idea. What Our Lord is saying is this: You must decide to put your faith in me first and above all else, and above everyone else. This is not to disregard completely all the significant people in our lives. But it is to reorder how those relationships are to be understood in the light of Jesus’ teaching. So, no matter how the above passage is best translated, do you get the point Jesus is trying to make? That is the question of the week.