



SUNDAY 4 SEPTEMBER 2022

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

23rd Sunday of the Year (C) : Luke 14: 25-33

Do you have ideas and intentions you never get round to doing anything about? Join the club. We can always hope that these might plant the seeds for later projects. Big aspirations usually require persistent hard graft and decisive planning. On top of that, our ideas might well change as we become aware of implications and consequences. Was anything ever straightforward?

Jesus teaches by stories. You don't start building a tower if you lack the wherewithal to finish it. If you watch 'Grand Designs' on telly, no one completes on budget and the stresses, the weather and the unforeseen deliver a strong blast of reality to beautiful plans. We're never shown projects that are abandoned through rising costs and damage to health and relationships. It's great to have ideas, but remember the carpenter's dictum—you measure twice and you cut once. Twice may be insufficient.

Heroic war stories do inspire, but the human cost, the detail and small print below the headlines, belies the searing grief in homes across the map. People cannot be described as collateral damage except by war-gamesters, professional or otherwise. The Lord's cautionary tale about the consequences of drastically uneven troop numbers in a face-off before battle is a warning shout to stop and think again.

Notice in these two stories from the Master Storyteller, he gives the same piece of advice to the tower-builder and the battling king - 'first sit down and consider'. We may think we do that of course. But he's clearly suggesting we don't make a decision and fill in the reasons afterwards. Rather, ponder seriously what you'd like to do because your preferences may lack their true cost.

That's why he can shock his hearers by claiming priority over family members. Yes, he uses the exaggerated word 'hating' father, mother and others. It's not to be taken literally. The fourth commandment requires we honour our parents. He reminds them and us of the cost of following him. Family demands much of us, but the disciple of Jesus has a cross to carry. There can only be one number one, the God who pursues us down into the flesh and becomes one of us is Our Lord. He wants us to 'first sit down and consider' what committing ourselves to him can mean in real time.

The message is personal. Jesus is travelling with crowds buoyed up with curiosity and fascination. Do they know what they let themselves in for if they're to give more than lip-service to being one of his followers? You may well have experienced the hardship caused by your allegiance to Jesus, his teaching and his Church. Being a real, practising disciple cannot be casual but is deliberate and tough. He loves you for it. Our daily task?..... First sit down and consider.



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

Pope Francis talking about Justice for Future Generations

What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? This question not only concerns the environment in isolation; the issue cannot be approached piecemeal. When we ask ourselves what kind of world we want to leave behind, we think in the first place of its general direction, its meaning and its values. Unless we struggle with these deeper issues, I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results. But if these issues are courageously faced, we are led inexorably to ask other pointed questions: what is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have for us? It is no longer enough, then, simply to state that we should be concerned for future generations. We need to see that what is at stake is our own dignity. Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us. The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn.

Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth. The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world. The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now. We need to reflect on our accountability before those who will have to endure the dire consequences.

-