

We have to understand what Jesus means in today's gospel, otherwise it sounds a bit harsh. When he says 'Anyone who prefers father or mother to me is not worthy of me... – or son or daughter – he doesn't mean that we have to *choose* between love of family and friends and love of him. In Luke's gospel it actually says 'Anyone who comes to me without hating mother or father cannot be my disciple' – which sounds even worse. He didn't mean it the way it sounds. Jesus simply means putting family or friends before; which *further* means not seeing love of family and friends as separate from him; which *subsequently* means experiencing love of family and friends *in* him. So we could well read this gospel passage as: 'Jesus instructed the Twelve as follows: "Anyone who does not see the love of family and friends as inseparable from love of me is not worthy of me."' This makes a lot more sense: the Master who told us to love our enemies would hardly tell us to love our family and friends less. The creature is not in competition with the Creator.

And what does 'losing our life' mean?

It means losing that sense of 'I, me and mine' that is our ego, the self-identity that maintains itself by shutting out everyone else. It's the result of the family we were born into, our upbringing, our culture, our personal beliefs – it's the permanent feeling of being 'me'. I want to share a few quotes just to give a sense of this 'I, me and mine': 'Religious people often prefer to be right rather than compassionate – they want their faith to endorse their ego.'
(Karen Armstrong)

‘Love is happy when it is able to give something. The ego is happy when it is able to take something.’

(Indian philosopher)

‘When the ego dies, the soul awakes.’

(Mahatma Gandhi)

We all need a strong sense of who we are, a healthy ego, to survive in life. When Jesus says ‘Anyone who finds his life will lose it; anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it’, he means we must lose our *identification* with it. We are than our personal story – that has its importance and purpose, but it isn’t who we truly are.

Jalal Rumi, Persian mystic, once said:

‘Let go, little drop. You will not find yourself a drop in the ocean – you will find yourself the ocean in a drop.’

And that’s what Jesus meant by ‘losing our life’.