

## The Cost of Discipleship

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Luke 14:25-33; Deuteronomy 30:11-16

<sup>25</sup> Now great crowds accompanied Jesus, and he turned and said to them, <sup>26</sup> “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup> Whoever does not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

<sup>28</sup> For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup> Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, <sup>30</sup> saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ <sup>31</sup> Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand, to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.

<sup>33</sup> So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

<sup>34</sup> “Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? <sup>35</sup> It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Today we are hearing some of the most harsh words, some of the most heart wrenching verses spoken by Jesus. Jesus pressing in for us to find that following him, is to commit our lives to Him. It is not something we do halfway. Discipleship is a commitment that begins with a heart, and with a mind that clearly understands that Jesus requires total submission from us. For many it’s not an easy task, but it’s the task that we’ve been called to by Jesus. The Good News is that Jesus stands ready and able to help us in our call to be disciples. It is a call our Lord intended for all of us when he said,

<sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

As His Church, according to the New Testament, our fundamental ministry is making disciples who are making disciples. We do not want to be a church that is long on membership, and short on discipleship. Christianity is not just about going to church once a week, trying to stay out of sin, or attending another program. Christianity is glorifying the Living God to the point where we bring His salt, and His light for His transformational power and His eternal difference to others.

In our reading this morning Jesus is confronting those who follow Him for their own interest. Those who follow Him for entertainment. Jesus confronts those today who come only to be fed. We all need to be fed, but at some point, along our journey, we are to also feed ourselves, and to feed others. To each one who claims to be His Disciple, the question is asked, “Whose life is

being changed by God because of your witness, because of your testimony, because of your life and walk within the gospel?"

In our timeline of Jesus' ministry, this passage occurs after His Feeding of the 5,000 with no more than five loaves and two fish, and after His Transfiguration where He speaks with Moses and Elijah. Jesus is now towards the end of His three-year ministry with some 29 miracles under his belt. His fame is known throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. He is now in Judea around the countryside of Jerusalem where a crowd is following Him and He turns to the crowd, and He says these words, in verse 26 of our reading,

<sup>26</sup> *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.*

Jesus is using these startling words, He is using hyperbole, to drive home an important point: That our allegiance to Him must be so complete that it's above all our earthly relationships.

And he's using the Greek word, *Miseo*. In its use, this word implies a comparison. That our LOVE for others would look like HATRED in comparison. That in our obedience to God's commands to Love and Honor our Fathers and Mothers, where we strive to love others as ourselves, our commitment to Jesus would far outweigh our commitment towards any other person. Our love for others would look like *hatred (Miseo)* in comparison. This is radical, and that is exactly the point Jesus is making: Our love for Him should be radical. Our God is not the author of confusion. He is reminding us of the priority of God, and of His Son in our lives.

Later when Jesus enters Jerusalem for the last time, He is asked which is the greatest commandment of the law. Jesus says, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. And the *second* is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Let there be no doubt. We are commanded to love our families, but we are called to love Jesus even more.

Jesus teaches His disciples that we are to take up our cross when we follow Him. That we are to prepare ourselves to follow Him all the way to Calvary. We are to come to Christ as if we've already died. In our desire for His ways, we have died to the worldly way and sinful nature because our lives belong completely to Him. When we belong to Him, we find the ultimate in self-preservation. It is our eternal life that becomes our focus, not this life that is consumed in death. It is when we take up our cross in willingness to die with, and for, Jesus Christ, that we find our lives for eternity in heaven with the Lord.

In Matthew 16:

<sup>24</sup> *Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup> For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?*

The Apostle Paul understand this. Paul says in his letter to the Galatians:

<sup>20</sup> *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh ...I live by faith, in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* Paul is saying, “I have chosen death to the flesh-life.” It does not remove him from participating in the world. For Paul, and for us, it means discipleship is a way of life and a lifestyle. God doesn’t care what car you drive, what home you live in, or what jewelry you wear. What God cares about is your priority for Him in your life.

The question for all of us is not, “How much do you have?” The question is, “How much of You does God have?” Disciples who are distracted by the stuff and sin of this world are showing that their true allegiance is to this world, not to Jesus. They are “disciples” in name only. Greg Laurie reminds us, “Every disciple is a believer, but not every believer is a disciple. Anything short of discipleship, is settling for less than what God really desires for us.” The greatest treasure in life is walking in the freedom and the liberty of Jesus Christ. Giving Him your all.

Yes, we are to have a total commitment. Jesus tells us that it’s also a costly commitment:

<sup>28</sup> For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? <sup>31</sup> Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?

Through these two illustrations—building a tower and going to war—Jesus warns us that following Him is not just a passive decision. Like building a tower or going to war discipleship is not something we can abandon halfway through; it’s a *commitment* we need to see through to the end. Following Jesus is an active assessment of everything we are willing to give up for Him. For the faithful, taking up our cross and following Jesus is a lifelong endeavor with eternal significance.

No matter how you rationalize it. No matter what your salvation experience, there was a moment when every believer made a clear, verbal commitment to Christ, saying, in one form or another, “I have decided to follow Jesus.” Part of confessing Christ with our mouth, is to accept His righteousness, and to declare Him as Lord of our lives. We became disciples of Jesus, with the expectation that we are His stewards for His purpose, to use as He sees fit. Knowing that the cost of following Him cannot be calculated because following Him will cost us everything. Billy Graham says, “Salvation is Free, But Discipleship costs Everything We Have.” Salvation is a one-time event. Discipleship, however, is a long-term process. It happens when a saved person decides to obey Jesus on a daily basis.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer draws our attention to this difference in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*. He makes a distinction between “cheap” and “costly” grace. Bonhoeffer states that “Cheap grace is grace without discipleship.” Cheap grace, as Bonhoeffer puts it, is to hear the gospel preached as follows: “Of course you have sinned, but now everything is forgiven, so you can stay as you are and enjoy the benefits of forgiveness.” It is a false proclamation. It is the false preaching of Forgiveness without Repentance, Communion without Confession, Salvation without Sanctification.

Grace given out of God's love for us, was costly - requiring the sacrifice and death of Jesus. Costly because it compels believers to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow Him; it is Grace because Jesus says: "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." His Costly Grace of ultimate healing, the forgiveness of sin, and life everlasting is so much better than the cost of sin that leads to eternal death and damnation. Grace. We cannot earn it. We cannot work for it. Our acceptance of it comes out of Love for Jesus and is seen in our lives for Him and for others.

In closing, Jesus reminds us that His call is clear and requires our total commitment. That our heart's desire for our Lord and Savior is above any material thing, above any earthly relationship. In this clear, and total commitment we will find that the cost of following Jesus is so much better than cost of NOT following Jesus. Today, Jesus says, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Are you listening to your call to be His disciple?