

## ***The Cost of Being a Disciple!***

Luke 14: 25-34

<sup>25</sup> A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, <sup>26</sup> “If you want to be my disciple, **you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life.** Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.

<sup>27</sup> **And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.**

<sup>28</sup> **“But don’t begin until you count the cost.** For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? <sup>29</sup> Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. <sup>30</sup> They would say, ‘There’s the person who started that building and couldn’t afford to finish it!’

<sup>31</sup> “Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him? <sup>32</sup> And if he can’t, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace while the enemy is still far away. <sup>33</sup> **So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.** <sup>34</sup> **“Salt is good for seasoning. But if it loses its flavor, how do you make it salty again?”**

Last week I spoke of the “Cost of Following Jesus!”

The influence of worldly distractions, how we consider the cost, time to pray for desire, time to worship God, spending time in His Word, discovering ways to give unto others, releasing our own expectations, and the abuse which comes from those who are not committed to serve at this level in life.

Today, I want us to look at another story concerning the **“Cost of Being a Disciple!”** This time, I want us to look at this cost not from what it means to become a follower, rather, **what it means to remain a follower, or a disciple. Our Lord does not want us to start this journey and then stop short of the goal.**

Jesus was speaking to a large group of people who had been traveling with Him. I would imagine that Jesus had been thinking and praying, as He was walking down the road, looking at the many who were walking with Him. Perhaps He would look at someone and wonder to Himself, **“Will this person still be here when times get tough?”** In truth, it is not a matter of if hard times will come, it is when. **“Will that person be walking with Me when his wife tells him he must not go there or do that?” “Will John Doe be with Me, when it finally hits him that he is losing money by not working on the Sabbath, a day when his boss pays double or triple overtime?”** I would bet Jesus had many different thoughts running through His mind as He walked with this crowd of common people. People like most of us sitting here today.

As we look at this story, four thoughts came to my mind about what Jesus was teaching.

- 1) Are we willing to separate ourselves from those who way us down, or, hold us back?**
- 2) Are we willing to put in the hard work required, for the ministry of His kingdom which is ours to accomplish?**

**3) Are we willing to “sacrifice” for His Kingdom sake?**

**4) Are you ready to hold on to, with all you have, remaining steadfast and strong, becoming a pillar of strength for others, no matter what?**

I want us to briefly look at these four thoughts, to see what God’s expectations are, and what His Word is telling us to do. As we do, keep these thoughts in mind, **“Just how committed are we? What cost are we willing to pay? What are we willing to do, to obtain what we want in this life? Do we know what the continued costs of following Him are?”**

**Illustration:**

*There is a silly story about two New York men who had never been out of the city, who decided that they had just about enough “they had it with city living.” So, they bought a ranch down in Texas. They decided they were going to live off the land, like their ancestors.*

*The first thing they decided to do, is that they needed a mule. So, they went to a neighboring rancher and asked him if he had a mule to sell. The rancher answered, **“No, I'm afraid not.”** They were disappointed but they decided to stand around and visit with the rancher for a few moments. One of them saw some honeydew melons stacked against the barn and he asked the rancher, **“What are those?”** The rancher, seeing that they were hopeless city slickers, decided to have some fun. **“Oh,”** he answered, **“those are mule eggs. You take one of those eggs home and wait for it to hatch and you'll have a mule.”***

*The city slickers were overjoyed at this, and so they bought one of those mule eggs and put it in the back of their pickup truck and headed down the bumpy country road toward their own ranch. Suddenly they hit an especially treacherous bump and the honeydew melon bounced out the back of the pickup truck, hit the road and burst open. Now, seeing in his rearview mirror what had happened, the driver turned his truck around and drove back to see if he could retrieve his mule egg.*

*Well, meanwhile, this big old Texas jackrabbit was hopping by and he saw this honeydew melon burst in the road and he hopped over to it, because he was thirsty. Standing in the middle of that mess, he begins to eat.*

*Now here come the two city slickers. They saw their mule egg burst open and this long-eared creature in the middle of it. One of the men shouts, **“Our mule egg has hatched! Let's get our mule.”** But seeing those two men coming toward it, that jackrabbit takes off hopping in every direction with the two city fellows in hot pursuit. The two men from New York gave everything they had to catch him, but finally they could go no further. Both men fell wearily onto the ground gasping for air while the jackrabbit hopped off into the distance.*

*Raising up on his elbow one of the men said to the other, **“Well, I guess we lost our mule.”** The other man nodded grimly, **“Yes, but you know,”** he said, **“I'm not sure I wanted to plow that fast anyway.”***

Knowing what we are doing, or, counting the cost of what we are doing, is extremely important, especially when we are committing our life to a task such as following Jesus.

## **First - Carrying your own cross – that stood out to me....**

<sup>25</sup> *A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them,* <sup>26</sup> *“If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.*

<sup>27</sup> *And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.”* (25-27)

It appears, that following Christ may take a stronger commitment than most understand or expected.

Have you ever noticed, there were always crowds around Him, waiting, listening, wanting to hear from Him, intently listening to His teaching. ***But what about when the rubber meets the road?*** Where will these people be when the cost is greater than they were expecting? Where will we be?

I have heard some say, those who decide to follow Christ must plan for the worst, and be prepared to deal with it. Jesus now tells them, how the ***“worst”*** is defined. He says, a man must be willing to ***“release”*** or ***“quit”*** those things which he may hold near and dear, to follow Jesus. Wow, that seems harsh, doesn't it? However, it isn't that what Jesus was actually asking of them in this passage? To hate their families, and even their own life?

Actually, He was telling them that their love for Him, must be so strong, in comparison to how we love our families, so much so, that ***it might appear*** that we hate our families. As if to say, this is the only way we will persevere during times of trials, struggles and persecution for the His kingdom sake. That our comfort and satisfaction, found in the love these people is swallowed up in our love for Christ! Worldly, that seems hard to believe, doesn't it?

In Matthew 10: 38 we read,

***“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”*** MAT 10:37-39 We must be willing to lose our lives in Christ. Now we are looking at the cost of being His disciple.

Both Matthew and Luke mention ***“Taking Up our Cross...”*** The implication here is, that we are willing to bear under extremely heavy circumstances, for Christ's sake. Nowhere near being nailed to the Cross, however. But this does imply, that it may seem too heavy to bear, but we must do so, for the sake of Christ.

## **Second - The hard work to completion**

<sup>28</sup> *“But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? <sup>29</sup> Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. <sup>30</sup> They would say, ‘There's the person who started that building and couldn't afford to finish it!’* LUK 14:28- 30 ***Couldn't afford to finish it, or we wouldn't finish it?*** If we

start and stop, start and stop, it may have more of a negative influence upon others in their decision to follow Christ, let alone the impact upon our lives.

When we take the first step, then step back, or, simply walk away from Christ, that does more damage to us, and those who are watching us, then if we would just stick with it even when times are tough. **We are called to persevere!** To work diligently, until completion. So, Jesus is saying to us, **“Count the cost carefully before you start.”** It’s hard work, and we need to understand that when we start this journey.

When we take upon ourselves the Identity of being Christ’s followers, we are advertising to the world. That we are following Him, and seeking to live as He lives. So, before we decide to say **“Yes, I will follow You,”** we should prayerfully sit down and consider what it will be require of us. This is one reason why I insist on meeting with those seeking to be baptized and publicly declaring of their faith. It is not just for them, it also deals with what others will think, say or do, because of our public testimony. Our families, our friends, and perhaps even your spouse, children and those we are close to.

### **Illustration:**

*A distraught man sought out some medical help for his problem with snoring. The physician asked if this snoring was causing friction in his marriage. The man replied, "No, it's primarily just an embarrassment for my wife. The real problem is the distraction it creates for our pastor."*

Falling sleep in our walk with God, is happening more frequently than we may wish to admit. If we decide, to start this journey, we should do so with the intent that we can and will finish it. Keep in mind, many others are watching us to see what we do. We do not intentionally want to be an embarrassment unto the Lord. Hard work lays ahead, count on it and decide at the start to stay the course.

### **Third - What are we willing to give Up?**

<sup>31</sup> *“Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him? <sup>32</sup> And if he can’t, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace while the enemy is still far away. <sup>33</sup> So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.* Sacrifice! Sacrifice! Sacrifice! **Giving up everything we own,** to follow the Lord.

What is it that Paul says in Romans 12, and we have read over and over?

Romans 12: 1-2

*“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies **as living sacrifices**, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.”* ROM 12:1-2

Sacrifice, sacrifice, sacrifice.... What kind of sacrifice are we making for the Lord?

Let’s be honest here for just one moment. Have we been sacrificing for God? Really sacrificing? I mean truly sacrificing?

If we do not have the resolution and courage to finish, he is saying to us, maybe **“it is better not to start the race.”** It could harm you, and all who are watching, along the way.

### **Illustration:**

*Running in the summer games in Spokane. Running the 880, never running it in the past. Got to about ten-yard from the line, I looked behind me, and then someone passed me up. I have never forgot that moment.*

We are to keep our eyes fixed on the object of our faith, and keep moving until we cross that finish line. When we walk after Christ, we are like a man who is going to war, considering the hazards. It doesn't mean we will enjoy whatever may happen along the way, or that we want them to happen. They are simply are a part of the journey.

As soldiers of the Lord, we should be training to fight the good fight, to win the race, to win the battles for Christ. Our training does not end until the war is over. That means, until we see Jesus, face to face. Until then, the training continues.

Do you remember the story of the rich young man who came to Christ and asked, "**Lord, what do I need to do to get to heaven?**" I have done all that you said. Jesus told him, "**Give everything you have to the poor and come and follow me.**" In that young man's minds, the right thing to do was to turn and walk off, why? He wasn't ready, or willing, to let go of the things of this world. **Something to think about.** If we decide to walk after Christ, we must ask the Lord to help us sever our ties to this world. Completely, or, we will be pulled back to them when struggles come, and easily destroyed. *(Most of us here know exactly what I am speaking about)*

### **Fourth - Holding on to what we have...**

*"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." LUK 14:34-35*

What was Jesus say about salt? I believe, it is a warning against "Apostasy." **What is "Apostasy?" It is, nothing less than allowing our worldly desires to overcome our relationship with Jesus.** People, who would rather not part with what they have in the world, will throw up their hands and **become wholly destitute in the Spirit of Christ.** Destitute essentially means, **"not having something."**

When we are destitute in the sense of being poor in that area, or technically **"without."** There are a number of things we can be destitute in. If all our friends have abandoned us, we're **"destitute of friends."** In this case, if we are **"destitute in Christ,"** basically it means that we have left Him and His teaching for something in the world.

In Christianity, there is a term known as, **"Backsliding,"** which usually means **our turning away from Christ, leaving Him behind. Not that He leaves us, we leave Him** ~ perhaps even claiming to have something, outwardly, but inwardly, we are spiritually dead.

Thus, Jesus says, when salt loses its saltiness, there is nothing we can do for it.

*"It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." It is simply worthless and useless.*

If Christianity loses its saltiness, so to speak, it is worthless, false, empty, saltless, and of little or no value. We are going through the motions and finding little help for our lives.

Luke says, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."* Why, he was saying, ***"Hold on to what you have in the Lord!" "Hold on with all your strength."*** Never let go of Him, if we do let go, it will be even more costly than we think. Yes, tough times will come, difficult situations will arise, but hold on. Trust the Lord...

***Our God is an Awesome God, who reigns from heaven above, and He has the power to transform our lives,*** when we get serious and allow Him to lead in every part of our lives.

***Count the Cost of Being a Disciple.... Honestly, it a higher cost to let go of Him than to stand firm in His grace. I would say, "Count the cost of not being His disciple."***

Closing Prayer...