

Title: The Cost of Discipleship

Scripture: Luke: 14:25-33

Series: Topical Sermon

1. Introduction:

- a. What we have before us today is one of the most important passages of Scripture.
- b. In this passage, Jesus defines and sets the biblical criteria for genuine discipleship.
 - i. And by defining discipleship, Jesus categorizes any other definition of discipleship as false.
 1. We know that only genuine disciples have been justified and made heirs of the eternal promise of salvation.
- c. Today, like in the time of Christ, people are prone to redefine discipleship and make it something far more comfortable and noncommittal than what was intended.
 - i. The danger of this near belief in Jesus is presented to us in **Matthew 7:21-23** “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (22) On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ (23) And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’
 1. In this passage, we encounter a coming judgment day in which many so-called

believers will be astounded to find themselves outside of salvation.

a. Notice that each of these calls Jesus Lord.

b. Notice that each of these has excellent works.

2. However, they are unknown by Christ.

3. How incredibly tragic to be thoroughly convinced about something that is not true.

a. I do not want this for any of you.

d. Beloved, pay careful attention today to what it means to be a disciple. May your hearts be mindful of what our Lord teaches on this subject.

2. Verse 25: Association does not a disciple make: Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them,

a. In this first verse of consideration, we are immediately awestruck by the number of people “following” Jesus. The Bible clearly states that it **was a great crowd** in number.

b. We notice that this crowd got close to Christ. They were **accompanying** him on his journey, on his mission. They were present wherever He was.

i. At precisely this point, we run aground on the modern definition of discipleship. Today, as long as the crowd seems to be following Jesus, we are prone to declare them Disciples of Christ. After all, we conclude, they **accompany** him. But beloved, please notice that a mere following of Jesus is unacceptable to God. We note that:

1. Jesus was not impressed with the numbers.
 2. Jesus was not impressed with the half-hearted following.
 - a. And today, Jesus is not impressed with church attendance, tithing, or a following of convenience.
 3. Our churches are filled with such people. People that come to church sing the songs, give, and have some sort of mental assent to the truths of Scripture. Today we are quick to label many as Christian, but Jesus does not do so.
 - c. We are confronted by the fact that Jesus, unpleased with this half-hearted following, turns to this very crowd and delivers some of His most challenging teachings. He wants to define for the crowd, and for you and me today, what it truly means to be a disciple.
 - i. Jesus does not want any misunderstanding. He does not want the crowd to think that he accepts their nominal “following.”
 - ii. The exhortation that follows is for all to hear. It is a matter of everlasting life versus everlasting death. Eternity rests in the balance.
3. Verse 26: Criteria 1 of Discipleship: Loving God Above All: 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.
- a. To this crowd, our Lord says, “You are following me, but you do not love me above all!”

- b. Here, Jesus tells the people that devotion to Himself must be so wholehearted that even attachment to parents and the other members of one's family must not be allowed to stand in the way of following Christ. In other words, Christ demands all!
- i. There must be a surrendering of all relationships in order to be a disciple.
 - ii. This, beloved, is a radical statement. Disciples are to give wholehearted love to Jesus. A lukewarm or divided heart is indicative of an unsaved soul.
- c. And what has bothered many people about this verse is the word **hate** which Jesus uses. Does the Master mean that a true disciple must dislike, detest, abhor, loathe his Father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters?
- i. We must read Scripture with Scripture. The parallel passage clears up the meaning of this verse for us. In **Matthew 10:37** Whoever loves Father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.
 - ii. Then, the meaning of hate in our passage is to love less in fervency. In all things, Christ must always be loved more. He must have the preeminence.
 1. This is heaven's aim. We see in **Colossians 1:18** And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

- a. Beloved, Christ must be preeminent in your life! The Father has exalted Jesus to the highest place, and it is the church's job to do the very same. We must exalt Jesus above every other love!
 - iii. The Savior demands in Luke 14:26 and other like-passages is complete devotion, the type of loyalty that is so true and unswerving that every other attachment must be subject to it.
 - 1. This is the call of discipleship! There is no other acceptable definition.
 - 2. Beloved, to what extent do you love Jesus? This is the most crucial question that you can answer today. To what extent are you devoted to His cause, to His glory?
 - 3. We cannot merely follow Jesus, but we must be fully identified with Him, or we cannot be His disciple!
- 4. Verse 27: Criteria 2 of Discipleship: Our Lives as a Sacrifice: Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.
 - a. **Whoever does not bear his own cross**: The picture here is of a condemned man who is forced to take up and carry his own cross to the place of execution.
 - b. However, what the convict does under compulsion, the disciple of Christ does willingly and even joyfully.
 - c. He voluntarily and decisively accepts the pain, shame, and persecution that will be his lot because of his loyalty to Christ.

- i. There is a willingness to die!
- d. ...**and come after Jesus**: This phrase means to attach oneself to Jesus as his disciple. It means to follow Him, His teaching, and His manner of living.
 - i. Following Jesus: **John 8:12** Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
 - ii. Follow His teaching: **1 John 2:3-4** And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. (4) Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,
 - iii. Follow His manner of living: **1 John 2:6** whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.
- e. **Cannot be my disciple**. This person does not belong to Jesus. This person is not saved. They will be rejected on the Day of Judgment. These will be the ones that call Him Lord, Lord, and will pass by them!
- f. Summarizing our Lord’s teaching: “If anyone wishes to be counted as my disciple, he must once and for all say farewell to self, decisively accept pain, shame, and persecution for my sake and in my cause—day in, day out—and must then keep on following me as my disciple. He must subject himself to my discipline.”
 - i. Beloved, are you a disciple of Christ?

5. Verse 28: Parable 1: Count the Cost of True Discipleship:
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?

- a. Christ presents the first of two mini parables for our consideration. He speaks of a man who desires to build a new tower to protect His property.
- b. Jesus rightfully concludes that before the building starts, the man must first see if he has the resources to finish the job. He must count the cost of the tower with what he has on hand.
- c. This parable, coupled with what we learned above, teaches us the following:
 - i. The cost of following Christ is not cheap!
 1. **John 15:18-19** “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. (19) If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.
 - a. You will be hated! It will be difficult!
 - ii. The cost of following Christ requires complete devotion to His cause.
 1. **Philippians 3:7-11** But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ (9) and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from

the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— (10) that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, (11) that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

iii. The cost of following Christ means a denial of self, wants, pleasures, comforts, and life itself.

1. **Philippians 1:20-21** as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. (21) For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

d. Beloved, Jesus is honest with us from the very beginning. He does not hide the fact that Christianity is not easy.

i. The question to ask is; do I love Him more than life itself?

e. At this point, another question may arise in our hearts. Is following Jesus Christ worth it?

i. How much is your soul worth to you? How valuable is the eternal state?

1. **Matthew 16:25-26** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (26) For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

2. Speaking of the glories of heaven, we read in **1 Corinthians 2:9** But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—

6. Verses 29 and 30: There is no honor for those that do not finish: Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, (30) saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’

a. There is only one group that the world hates more than Christians. That group is the people that formerly identified themselves as Christians and now live apart from Jesus.

i. The world delights in mocking those who, having started, could not see their confession through to the end.

1. They see the hypocrisy of such living.

a. Where once the person confessed Christ, they now live in the same wretched agony of sinfulness found in the world. They are worse than the sinner because the sinner never started.

b. Jesus speaks of such people.

i. **Luke 9:61-62** Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” (62) Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

- c. Consider the following excerpt from *Pilgrims Progress* in which Christian flees the city of Destruction: So I saw in my dream that the man began to run. Now he had not run far from his own door, but his wife and children, perceiving it, began to cry after him to return; but the man put his fingers in his ears and ran on crying, life! life! Eternal life! So, he looked not behind him but fled towards the middle of the Plain.
7. **A Note of Caution**: We must address the following:
- a. No one can start or finish the Christian life by his own strength. When Christ commands you to count the cost, He asks you to be sure that you are willing to accept all of what discipleship means.
 - i. This readiness comes from a sincere giving of oneself to Christ.
 - ii. It comes from a prayerful heart that asks God to start and finish the race.
 - iii. We are called to sanctification:
 1. **Philippians 2:12** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,
 - iv. But the very next verse states:
 1. **Philippians 2:13** for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.
 - v. Furthermore:

1. **Jude 1:24** Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy,
 - b. So if you have counted the cost and abandoned all to follow Him:
 - i. **Philippians 1:6** And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.
8. Verse 31: Parable two: Jesus is coming as King Eternal:
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?
 - a. The king in this parable is not in the same position as the builder of the preceding parable.
 - i. That man, the builder, was free to act or not to act, to build or not to build the tower. The warning was that he needed to count the cost before he began to build. He needed to finish what he started. There is no room in the kingdom of God for those that start as disciples and yet, being pressed by the cost of discipleship, do not finish.
 - b. The king in this parable faces an entirely different scenario. Someone is coming against him with twenty thousand soldiers, but he has only ten thousand. So, he must decide.
 - i. Will he fight, or will he surrender to the greater force?

ii. Beloved, do not miss the point that Jesus is making here. In this parable, Jesus is the King with the greater fighting force. He is the juggernaut that cannot be stopped.

1. This is a frightening thought for us to consider. Christ is promising that he will come again and not in the same way He came in his first advent. His second advent will see Him come not as the suffering servant but as the conquering King.

2. Consider the biblical narrative in **Revelation 19:11-16** Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

(12) His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself.

(13) He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. (14) And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.

(15) From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. (16) On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

3. To the unsundered that would rather make war with Jesus, the Bible warns in **Revelation 19:21A** And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse...
 - a. Jesus ALWAYS wins! No man, no people, no nation can defeat the sovereign God!
- c. **Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able...**
 - i. By this phrase, we understand that we must also calculate the cost of refusing to follow Christ in counting the cost of discipleship. Notice that this king asks the question, “Am I able **to withstand the coming King?**”
 1. Beloved, this is an excellent question for our consideration. Are you able to withstand the coming King?
 2. Can you defeat Him who is sovereign?
 3. Do you have the resources, the ability to defeat Jesus Christ?
 4. Beloved, He is coming with His army and His sword!
- d. We do not have the resources to fight Jesus...**with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand:**
 - i. Notice the state of the matter. Notice the condition of your power. Whatever you have, Jesus has more. Whatever power you possess, Christ is matchless in power.

ii. Your best effort will end in an utterly humiliating defeat.

1. Consider that even the enemy of our souls cannot withstand Jesus Christ. We read in **Revelation 20:10** and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

e. What are we to do?

9. Verse 32: **Surrender**: And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for peace terms.

a. Here we encounter an incredible truth. The sinner, too, must act. Neutrality, when it comes to Jesus, is impossible.

i. **Matthew 12:30** Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

1. There is no staying out of the fray. Jesus Christ is coming!

b. Notice that the king in our parable realizes the hopeless condition he finds himself in.

i. He realizes that he cannot defeat the coming foe.

1. The heavenly King is not a friend but an adversary to the sinner. This lesser king needs to change that relationship and do it as quickly as possible (**while the other is yet a great way off**). There is no time to waste.

- a. He does not want this coming heavenly King to fall upon him unsuspectingly, so he acts.
2. Oh, that this would not escape our attention today.
 - a. **Hebrews 3:15** As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”
 - c. What, then, should this weaker king do? He should become reconciled with God by surrendering to Jesus Christ. That is the wise, sensible, reasonable thing to do. He must surrender (**he sends a delegation and asks for peace terms**).
 - i. Notice two key points:
 1. He **asks** for reconciliation. He asks for forgiveness for having started this war in the first place. He is the party at fault and must, therefore, make amends.
 - a. This is true of every sinner. We will always be an offense to God while in our sinful state. We are the ones that, through our sin, have started a war with God.
 - b. His justice and holiness have been offended. Sin must be destroyed.
 2. He asks **for terms of peace**. He offers an unconditional surrender.
 - a. In terms of salvation: Must I confess what I am? Must I come as a beggar before God’s throne? Must I admit my inability?

- b. In terms of discipleship: Must I love Jesus more than anything else? Must I be willing to die for His cause?
- c. If you desire to be saved, you must surrender to Jesus and accept His terms.
 - i. Salvation belongs to Him!!!
 - ii. We do not want to be at war with Jesus! The outcome is disastrous.
 - iii. Jesus is nearing: and now is the critical hour.
 - iv. **2 Corinthians 6:2** For he says, “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

10. Verse 33: Invalid Confessions: So, therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.
- a. Wholehearted devotion, all-out loyalty, and complete self-denial so that one places himself, his time, his earthly possessions, and his talents at the disposal of Christ is what Jesus requires of disciples.
 - i. Are you His disciple?

Public Reading
Romans 12:1-4