

**Luke 14:25-33.**

*<sup>25</sup> Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: <sup>26</sup> "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup> And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup> "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? <sup>29</sup> For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, <sup>30</sup> saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' <sup>31</sup> "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup> In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.*

**Consider the Cost of following Jesus**

- 1. Take an honest assessment of your life of faith.**
- 2. With God's help adjust where needed**

The summer is coming to a close. For many, school has already started. The fall schedule, the new season, unofficially begins after this weekend. And as we head into any new season such a shift provides an opportunity to pause and analyze things in our life, to assess how things are going, and then to adjust. As you prepare for a new school year or transition from summer to fall you might look at things like budgets and priorities and goals and hobbies. You might consider how you are currently spend your time, you might think about your habits, your diet, or other things that are important to you, things that you are doing or would like to do more of or less of. You might look at all these things and make a few adjustments here, set a few goals there. This is as a good of time as any to analyze, and assess, and adjust.

As we prepare at church to begin fall ministries like Sunday School, and Bible Class, and others, it is often the case that we take a look at what we are doing, assess how things are going and how they have gone, and then we talk about ways to adjust. We may consider different ways to augment ministries, to make things better, to rearrange and make some changes here or there. We might look to buy more materials, we might look at our schedules, plan activities, move things around, or add something new. We might consider the time and the cost that this would all entail, and then we would work to implement

those changes. It is helpful process, sometimes a very necessary process; to assess and adjust.

As a follower of Christ consider this, how are things going for you? As we head into the fall season, it would be wise for us to assess how we are doing in our walk with Jesus in our faith and how we carry out and care for that faith. This can be a helpful process, sometimes a very necessary process. And so as we look at our lesson for today let us pause and take an honest assessment of our life of faith and with God's help adjust where needed. Let us consider the cost of following Jesus.

As Jesus was going about teaching and preaching large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: <sup>26</sup> ***"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.*** <sup>27</sup> ***And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."*** These words would certainly give pause to many, if not all, of the people that were traveling with Jesus. For many were doing nothing more than that, traveling with Jesus. They were along for the ride, they wanted to see the wonders, they were trailing along with the crowd, motivated by curiosity and pulled along by the gravity of the moment. This was the thing to do, this was the news of the day. This man Jesus was incredible to watch as he healed and as he taught. But were many of these people really following Jesus, were they really listening and believing what he was saying? Did they really hold him dear as their Savior and LORD?

It doesn't really appear so, and that is why the words of Jesus recorded for us here sound so surprisingly sharp. The crowds that were traveling with him for entertainment sake needed a jolt so that they would consider what was truly at stake. And so Jesus speaks these shocking words. <sup>25</sup> ***Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said:*** <sup>26</sup> ***"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.*** These were words designed to create a response. To give his audience reason to pause and think. You can almost imagine either an audible gasp or a stunned silence. *Hate my father and mother, hate my wife and children, my brothers and sisters, those who are nearest and dearest to me. Yes, and even my own life. What is Jesus talking about?*

His following remarks would clarify things. <sup>27</sup> ***And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*** When following Jesus things will not always be easy. Following Jesus is not about being merely entertained. Priorities will be tested. Sacrifices will need to be made. Hardships and discomfort, pain and struggle, are often the mark of those who follow Jesus. As he had said before (Luke 12:51) divisions in and among the family would pierce the hearts of many and would cause pain and strife among those who would follow him. For those who would truly follow Jesus, Jesus would have to be the top priority, the one whom they followed and believed in and trusted and loved more than any other.

Maybe the cost of following Jesus was division within the family, or it was the cutting off of ties with unbelieving friends. It could mean the leaving behind of worldly wealth or pleasures that were being enjoyed at the expense of one's faith, or the price to pay was the constant battle against sinful desires and bad habits and addictions. Each believer has a different cross to bear, but this is the struggle that the follower of Jesus is called to. Jesus would always be there to help, but our Savior is making it clear that those kinds of difficult things would be a reality. There would be a cross for each believer to pick up, carry, and bear. There would be some difficulty that would challenge the disciple who follows Jesus.

And Jesus says this not to be rude, not to be controversial, not to be abrasive or mean. But he says this in love. What good would it do these people if he was not genuine and honest with them? What good would it do if he talked about faith in him as a cake walk on easy street? None. It would in fact harm them and set them up for tremendous disappointment and grief. In love he is so honest and forthright with his audience so that he is able to show his genuine concern for their souls and he is able to prepare them for the path ahead. A path that would that would include eternal blessings but would often mean that life for his disciples would be quite difficult.

With these words Jesus prepares his disciples and his would-be-disciples and he urges them to consider the cost. To take some time and to pause and think, *"Ok, why I am here?" Am I here just because of the gravity of the moment or am I willing to follow this guy wherever?* And so it is that Jesus speaks to the crowd traveling with him by using a couple of illustrations about counting the cost. <sup>28</sup> ***"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?..."*** <sup>31</sup> ***"Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?"***

As we consider that scene as Jesus gives this whole crowd reason to pause, to assess and to evaluate why they were there, it is a useful exercise for us as well. Is there not, a certain gravity that pulls us here too? Occasionally we feel the pull of the crowd, we follow without sincere devotion, and we show up here because a sense of an obligation, of duty, of responsibility to support this church of mine. Occasionally, it is the pull of routine. This is what I always do. This is what my family does and has always done. This is what I am supposed to do. So we put on the church clothes, we get into the car, we walk over here, we sit down, we stand up, and then go on our way.

Jesus wants more than that, and we know it. He doesn't want us traveling with him until we get tired of it, he wants us to have a deeper and lasting relationship with him. He desires a relationship with us that is strong through all the ups and downs, strong until the end, and will therefore result in us being with him forever. And so he prepares us, he encourages us. He is honest and genuine in his love and concern for us. And he calls out to us, saying, Christian, love me more. Listen to these words of Jesus. <sup>33</sup>

***In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.***

What is keeping you, what is keeping me from a deeper relationship with God? What is keeping us from a closer walk with Jesus? It is worth sitting down and taking this into account. Is it my relationship with my family? Do I spend so much time and effort with them that I push Christ off the top of my priority list? Do I fail to consider the cost of being a disciple of Jesus so that after putting myself into different roles and different pleasures, I have no time, or money, or energy left for my LORD and God? Is it my love of things, or work, or pleasure, or vice, or leisure, that keeps me from being fully connected to Christ? If we take an honest assessment of our lives, these kinds of scenarios play themselves out way too often in our lives. Devotional time is cut out, time in God's house, service to his church, it is all left behind, or perhaps, Jesus gets the leftovers, but not our best.

It may sound harsh. But these words are meant to give us reason to pause, to assess, and then to adjust. You love your family and God loves that, but God calls you to love him more. You know that this might be a challenge to change daily priorities, this bible class or service opportunity might add to the already busy schedule, this obedience to God may cause you to leave behind something in your life that your human nature wants to cling on to, but it is worth it. It is all worth it to follow Jesus.

Consider the cost that he paid and the prize that he won for us. He gave it all, so that we might have it all. He gave all of himself so that we might be with him in heaven forever. He gave up his glory and he took on shame so that our shame and disgrace of sin might be replaced with eternal victory. He left his throne in heaven. The ruler of all things, submitted himself to our world of sin and sorrow, of filth and pain, so that we might rule with him in the peace and joy and victory of heaven. He took on death itself so that we may have life. And on top of all of this he speaks. He speaks to us through his word, so that we may know just how much he loves us. He speaks and is genuine and truthful with us so that we may be prepared. He speaks so that we may not be lured away from him by anything or anyone that this world has to offer.

Let us listen to his voice. His words give us ample reason to stop and think, to assess and adjust, so that you and I might follow him on the paths of righteousness to which he calls us. His words prepare us for the challenges ahead. His words lead us to a daily adjusting and a careful balancing of our priorities. He wants us to love him more.

As we head into a new season, consider some of those things that are keeping you from a deeper relationship with God. Take an honest assessment and with God's help let us make some healthy and God-pleasing adjustments always thankful for the cross that our Savior willingly took up and carried for us so that we might stay close to him through this life and then follow where he has gone so that we may be with our Savior all the day of our lives and forever in heaven. AMEN.