

# The Cost of Discipleship

## Luke 14:25-33

In our first message, we considered The Call of the Disciple from Luke 9:23. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

In Luke 14, Jesus presses that same truth upon a great multitude. Verse 25 tells us, "And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them..." Many were walking with Him outwardly, but Jesus knew that not all had counted the cost inwardly. So He turns to the crowd and speaks in very plain terms.

We need to understand from the beginning that Jesus is not teaching salvation by works. No sinner is saved by hating his family, carrying a cross, giving up possessions, or making personal sacrifices. Salvation is by grace alone (*sola gratia*), through faith alone (*sola fide*), because of Christ alone (*solus Christus*). Ephesians 2:8–9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith... not of works, lest any man should boast."

But while salvation is not earned by our surrender, the Saviour who saves us does call us to follow Him. He calls sinners to Himself, and those who come to Him must understand that He has the supreme claim over their lives.

This passage is about the cost of following the Saviour who purchased us.

Salvation is free, because Christ paid the price. Discipleship is costly, because Christ claims the life.

That is what Jesus sets before the multitude in Luke 14:25–33. He calls them, and He calls us, to count the cost of being His disciple.

I. A SUPREME LOVE — CHRIST ABOVE EVERY EARTHLY

## RELATIONSHIP (VV. 25-26)

**A. The crowd following Christ needed to be confronted (v. 25)**

**B. The claim of Christ reaches the closest relationships (vs. 26)**

1. These are not sinful relationships — they are God-ordained relationships. Family is not an enemy of discipleship by nature; marriage is honorable (Heb. 13:4); children are a heritage of the Lord (Ps. 127:3); parents are to be honored (Eph. 6:1-2); brothers and sisters are to be loved.
2. Jesus is teaching that to be a true disciple, no relationship — however natural, close, precious, or God-given — should take the place that belongs to Him.
3. Matthew gives the sense of Luke's stronger wording. To "hate" father and mother does not mean to despise them with sinful animosity. It means that our love for Christ must be so supreme that every other love is lesser by comparison.

Matthew 10:37

<sup>37</sup> He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

4. The Lord is not commanding us to love our families less than we ought. He is commanding us to love Him more than all others. The problem is not that we love father, mother, wife, children, brothers, or sisters too much in the proper sense. The problem is when we love them out of their

proper order.

### C. The claim of Christ reaches even one's own life

“yea and his own life also...”

1. Our “own life” includes our desires, plans, comfort, safety, reputation, ambitions, preferences, and sense of control.

Luke 9:24

<sup>24</sup> For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

2. We must not cling to our own life as if we are in control.

### D. The failure of supreme love for Christ makes true discipleship impossible

“he cannot be my disciple”

1. This phrase appears three times in this passage (vv. 26, 27, 33).
2. Discipleship means following Christ as Master. If another love has final authority, then Christ does not.
3. A true disciple may struggle; he may stumble; he may need correction and growth. But he cannot reserve the throne of his heart for someone or something above Christ.

## II. A SURRENDERED LIFE — THE CROSS BEFORE PERSONAL COMFORT (V. 27)

A true disciple does not live for personal comfort, but submits to the cross in following Christ.

## **A. The cross is not mere difficulty — it is death**

1. A man carrying a cross was not on his way to inconvenience — he was on his way to die. So, when Jesus says “bear his cross” He is not talking about carrying burdens, or enduring irritation, or dealing with hardships of life. He is talking about the death of man’s desire to rule himself.
2. The cross was not something you carried and then set down again. It was something you carried to the place where your life ended.

## **B. The cross means death to self**

To bear the cross is to say: “My life is no longer my own; my will is no longer supreme; my desires are no longer final; and my plans are no longer ultimate.

Galatians 2:20

<sup>20</sup> I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

## **C. The cross includes willingness to suffer for Christ**

Jesus is preparing His followers for reality. Following Him will not always be easy, accepted, or comfortable.

2 Timothy 3:12

<sup>12</sup> Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

## **D. The cross must be taken up personally**

“bear his cross”

1. This is individual — no one can bear the cross for

you; no one can follow Christ for you; no one can surrender your life for you. Each true disciple must personally deal with Christ's claim on their lives.

2. As we saw last week, the cross is not only taken up at the beginning — it is carried "daily."

#### **E. The cross is carried while following Christ**

"and come after me..."

This is putting Christ first, making Him Lord and abandoning self and sin and following Him.

#### **F. Without the cross, discipleship is impossible**

"cannot be my disciple"

There is no discipleship without the cross; no following Christ while clinging to the rudiments of this world; no true allegiance while refusing to surrender.

### **III. A SERIOUS CALCULATION — COUNTING THE COST BEFORE FOLLOWING (vv. 28-32)**

After calling for supreme love (vv. 25-26) and a surrendered life (v. 27), Jesus now warns against something very common — thoughtless following.

The word "for" connects what follows to what has just been said. In other words: because discipleship requires supreme love and the cross, therefore — a man must think carefully before claiming to follow Christ.

#### **A. Discipleship must not be entered carelessly (the builder — vv. 28-30)**

1. The picture: a man decides to build a "tower" —

likely a structure connected to his property for protection or storage. But before he begins, he does something very practical:

“sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost”

2. He pauses to consider and calculate what it will require; what it will cost; and to decide if he has what is necessary to finish it.

## **B. Failure to count the cost leads to shameful incompleteness (vv. 29-30)**

1. The man begins well. He lays a foundation. There is visible progress. Others see it. But somewhere along the way, he runs out of resources.
2. The unfinished structure stands as a testimony — not of wisdom, but of foolishness (v. 30).
3. A man may begin following Christ with enthusiasm; he may show outward signs of commitment; he may appear to be following Christ. But if he has never truly counted the cost, there will come a point where the demands of discipleship expose the shallowness of his commitment.

John 6:66

<sup>66</sup> From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

## **C. Discipleship requires sober assessment, not self-confidence (the king — vv. 31-32)**

1. The setting changes from construction to conflict. A king is preparing for war. He has ten thousand soldiers while the opposing king is

coming with twenty thousand. Before engaging, what does he do?

“sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able...”

2. A man who comes to Christ thinking: “this will cost me nothing...”; “this will not affect my life...”; “this will not require change...” has not understood what Jesus is saying.

#### **D. Jesus calls for thoughtful commitment, not an emotional reaction**

1. These two illustrations together teach one clear truth: true discipleship must not be entered into lightly.
2. Jesus is calling for deliberate, informed, settled commitment.
3. He never tried to persuade men to follow Him by hiding the cost. He did not lower the terms to gain a response. He told the truth plainly, so that those who followed would follow knowingly.

This is very different from much of what is often called “decision-based” approaches, where the emphasis is on getting a response without fully explaining the implications.

#### **E. The issue is not our sufficiency, but our willingness**

1. Jesus is not teaching that we must have enough strength in ourselves to successfully live the Christian life before we begin. If that were the case, no one could be saved.

2 Corinthians 3:5

<sup>5</sup> Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God;

Philippians 4:13

<sup>13</sup> I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

2. So, the issue is not: "Am I strong enough in myself?" The issue is: "Am I willing to yield myself completely to Christ?"

#### **F. Without counting the cost, there is no true discipleship**

Before Jesus tells us that we must forsake all, He tells us to count the cost. He wants no man to follow Him under false pretenses. He calls for a commitment that is informed, deliberate, and real.

### **IV. A SURRENDERED OWNERSHIP — FORSAKING ALL FOR CHRIST**

A true disciple must relinquish all personal claim to everything he has and yield it fully to Christ's authority.

#### **A. Discipleship requires total renunciation**

"whosoever he be of you..."

1. This is universal. Luke 9:23 — "If any man..." — there are no exceptions.
2. "That forsaketh not..." — the word "forsaketh" carries the idea of renouncing, saying farewell; relinquishing claim. It's a decisive act of the will.

#### **B. This is not physical poverty, but surrendered ownership**

1. Jesus is not teaching that every disciple must

literally sell every possession and live in absolute poverty.

2. The issue is not having things — the issue is who owns them.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20

<sup>19</sup> What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? <sup>20</sup> For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

**C. The disciple becomes a steward, not an owner**

The disciple does not lose everything — he transfers everything. What was once claimed as “mine” is now placed under the authority of Christ.

**D. Without this surrender, discipleship is impossible**

“he cannot be my disciple”

Jesus does not leave room for divided ownership. He does not accept partial surrender. He does not recognize a disciple who reserves the right to say, “This part of my life is mine.” He says plainly — without this surrender, a man cannot be His disciple.

Conclusion:

Christ has shown us the cost of true discipleship:

- A Supreme Love — Christ above every relationship
- A Surrendered Life — the cross before personal comfort
- A Serious Calculation — counting the cost before following

- A Surrendered Ownership — forsaking all for His claim

And three times He has said it:

“he cannot be my disciple.”

This is not the price of purchasing salvation — Christ has already paid that price in full. But this is the reality of following the Saviour who purchased us.

The question is: Have we yielded to Christ? Is He first above every relationship? Is self truly under the cross? Have we honestly counted the cost? Have we surrendered our claim to all that we are and all that we have?

Salvation is free because Christ paid the price. Discipleship is costly because Christ claims the life.

The final question is simple: Have you come to Christ on His terms — or only on your own?