

The cost of discipleship (1)

Luke 14:25-35

INTRODUCTION

- Think about these words: dedication, devotion, discipleship, commitment, consecration, surrender, sacrifice.
- There are no blue-light specials on these virtues in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not k-mart.
- I want you to get these two statements into your heart.
- Salvation is free, but discipleship is not cheap.

DAY-TRADERS AND DOT-COM INVESTORS

- Within the church there are a lot of what I call Day-traders and Dot-com investors.
- They know a little about God in reality and many think they can buy a small share of christianity.com without first investigating Jesus' claim to being Lord over all of their lives.

NOW GREAT MULTITUDES ACCOMPANIED HIM

- Luke 14:25 tells us that Jesus was speaking to "great multitudes."
- What He is about to say was not just to His core followers.
- He was talking to a huge crowd.
- We would call this crowd today "groupies."

YOU CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE

- There is a phrase that rings through this passage three times and gives the message Jesus is sharing.
- A pungent sharpness that you can't miss.
- Three times Jesus says, "He cannot be my disciple." (vv. 26,27,33)

JESUS IS NOT LOOKING FOR A CROWD

- Unlike a lot of churches I know, Jesus was not looking for a crowd.
- He was looking for commitment.
- He was not looking for decisions.
- He was looking for disciples.

CHRISTIAN FOLLOWERS ARE CALLED DISCIPLES

- Though we rarely refer to Christians today as disciples, the word "disciple" was the most common name used in the Bible for those who followed Jesus.
- In fact, in the Gospels and in the Book of Acts Christians are called disciples two hundred and sixty four times

THE COST OF FOLLOWING

- One thing you have to say about Jesus, He puts no fine print in the contract.
- He is totally above-board. He pulls no punches.
- Without apology, straight faced and straight forward, Jesus lets people know then as He lets people know now what is necessary if you are going to follow Him.

- In fact, it almost seems as if the Lord Jesus instead of trying to build up a crowd is trying to thin one out.
- He had no interest in popularity and could care less about being a celebrity. He meant business with people and He wants people to mean business with Him.
- If you intend to be a true follower of Jesus Christ, if you intend to be one of His disciples you are going to have to answer three questions.

What Priority Will I Place On Following Jesus?

- "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." (v. 26)

- Now this verse has caused a lot of people a lot of unnecessary problems because it appears as if Jesus is telling us to hate the ones we should love the most, but that really is not what He meant.
- This same Jesus who also tells us to love our enemies would certainly not turn around and tell us to hate our families.

- The word "hate" here really has the meaning "to love less."
- Matt. 10:37 helps to explain what Jesus meant when He said, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."

- One of the reasons why Jesus said this to this crowd was this.
- Two thousand years ago, if you gave your life to Jesus, more than likely you had to give up your family especially if you were Jewish.
- That is true today in certain countries, particularly Moslem countries.
- If a Moslem converts to Christ, he is immediately disowned by his family and often times faces death.

- Jesus makes this demand because He is dealing with the whole question of priority.
- If you are going to be a follower of Jesus Christ, He must be your first love.
- He will not take second place to any one or to any thing.

- Can you ladies imagine a man proposing to you and saying "I want you to marry me under this one condition: If down the road another woman comes into my life that I like and love more than you, you will have to leave?"
- Do you think there is a woman on earth that would accept that type of proposal?

- Well there just has to be no-one else that you love more than Jesus.
- Incidentally, if you don't love Jesus more than you love your family, you don't love your family as much as you should love your family.
- The person who loves others most is the person who loves Jesus best.

YOU NEED TO MAKE SACRIFICE

- The point Jesus was making was there is a sacrifice you have to make if you are going to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.
- He must come first.
- He must come ahead of family.
- He must come ahead of friends.
- He must come ahead of finances.

- Someone has said there are three classes of Christians on the train that is going to heaven.
- Third class Christians have Jesus present in their life.
- Second class Christians have Jesus prominent in their life, but First class Christians have Jesus preeminent in their life.
- So the question of priority is, what priority will you place on following Jesus?

What Price Will I Pay In Following Jesus?

- "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." (v. 27)

NO CHEAP GRACE

- Now I want to emphasize again that although salvation is free, it is not cheap.
- Just as Jesus paid a price in order to save you, you have to pay a price in order to serve Him.
- Now that may turn you off, because I can assure you the message Jesus preached this day turned a lot of people off.

THE CROSS AS A SYMBOL OF DEATH

- Billy Graham once said something that I agree with whole-heartedly. "I think the main reason people do not come to Christ is because they do not want to pay the price, but Christ will not compromise and He will not negotiate."[1]
- Jesus said, "You have to take up the Cross." Now the cross was the symbol of one thing in that day – death.

LOVE JESUS MORE THAN YOURSELF

- The only reason a man would take up the cross was because he was going to die.
- Jesus makes it plain that he not only expects us to live for Him.
- He expects us to die with Him.
- That is why he said back up in verse 26 you've got to love him "more than your own life."

DEDICATION THAT IS COSTLY

- Jesus spoke of the necessity of total commitment -even to the point of death.
- He conveyed this in no uncertain terms when he said to his disciples, “You must take up your cross and follow me.”
- Why was he so harsh? He knew what lay ahead:

MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, APOSTLE JOHN & DOUBTING THOMAS

- Dedication is costly. It cost Matthew his life by a sword in Ethiopia.
- It cost Mark his life at the hands of a mob in Alexandria.
- Luke was hanged on an olive tree in Greece.
- It cost the Apostle John banishment on the Isle of Patmos.
- The once doubting Thomas paid the price on a lance.

JAMES, BARTHOLOMEW AND PETER

- James the Greater was decapitated at Jerusalem.
- James the Less was thrown from the Pinnacle of the Temple, then clubbed to death.
- Bartholomew was flayed alive.
- Peter was crucified in Rome with his head downward.

JOHN AND ANREW

- Only John made it through alive but he was exiled to a small island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea.
- Andrew witnessed to Christ right up to the moment of his own death on a cross.

NO CHEAP GRACE BUT COSTLY GRACE

- Jude was shot with an arrow. Make no mistake about it.
- This gospel we treasure was paid for in blood.
- But that is the secret of its greatness.
- "Talent is cheap, dedication is costly."
- You and I need this message of the cross, because we are tempted to believe there is some other way.

- Husbands and wives want to have lasting marriages, but they want to do it without it costing them their fidelity and freedom.
- Parents want to raise Christian children, but they don't want to pay the price of setting the kind of example necessary to help children know the Jesus way of living.

- If you are not willing to die to self, to ambition, to desire, to what you want and surrender your life totally to Jesus Christ you cannot be His disciple.
- If you want to win a popularity contest in this world, don't bother following Jesus.
- The world mocked Him and it will mock you. The world scorned Him and it will scorn you. The world rejected Him and it will reject you.

WHO RULES AND REINGS OVER YOUR LIFE

- Now this demand answers the question of pride.
- Who is going to rule and reign over your life? Jesus or you?
- If you are going to put Jesus on the throne you are going to have to put yourself on the cross.
- Someone has said, "When Christ is on the cross, self is on the throne.
- But, when self is on the cross, Christ is on the throne."

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

- I was reading one time about Alexander the great, who was carrying his triumphant military campaign into a certain city.
- It was a strongly fortified walled city. Alexander approached the city and demanded to see the king and set out his terms of surrender.
- The king laughed at him and said, "Why should I surrender to you?"
- You can't do us any harm! We can endure any siege."

- Alexander said to the king, "I want you to watch this." Nearby within sight of the city walls was a sheer cliff.
- He ordered his men to line up in single file and to March towards the cliff.
- The city's citizens watched with horrified fascination as one by one Alexander the Great's men marched over the edge of that cliff and plunged to their deaths

- After several men had obeyed his orders, he commanded them to halt.
- He then called his troops back to his side and stood silently facing the city.
- The effect on the citizens and the king was stunning.
- From spell bound silence they moved to absolute terror.

SURRENDERING ALL

- They realized they had no walls thick enough and no defence strong enough to protect themselves against that kind of commitment and that kind of devotion.
- Spontaneously they rushed through the gates to surrender themselves to Alexander the great.

- That is the kind of surrender and sacrifice that Jesus is asking for.
- One thing you have to say about these terrorists, they are willing to die for what they believe.
- The tragedy is that terrorists are more willing to pay a price and are more willing to die for a lie than Christians are to live for the truth.

- The reason why the Lord makes this demand is because He wants anyone who wants to follow Him to understand there is a price to be paid.
- There is a cost to be counted.
- How often today do we worry about the price of something when we ought to consider the cost of something?

- Because there is a big difference between price and cost.
- Even though the price for a one hundred thousand dollar Mercedes is the same for both me and Bill Gates, I can assure you the cost is far more for me than it is for him.

COUNTING THE COST FIRST

- That is the point Jesus makes in the first of too many parables He tells.
- "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it." (v.28)

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A STRONG TOWER

- The Christian life is like a strong tower.
- It is to be a tower of work,
- a tower of worship,
- a tower of witness and a tower of warfare,
- but there is a tremendous cost in building this tower.

NOT WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE

- Do you know why so many so called "Christians" drop out of church?
- Do you know why so many so called "Christians" fall by the wayside and disappear?
- It is because they were not willing to pay the price.
- They didn't count the cost.

HALF FINISHED CHRISTIANS

- The number one problem we have with a lot of our church members on the roll who never show up is they are half finished towers.
- They ran one lap of the Christian life and they quit.
- They fought one round of the Christian life and they quit.
- They played one quarter of the Christian contest and they quit.

WAR AGAINST THE DEVIL

- Jesus then goes on to give another parable.
- "Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? (v.31)

ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

- Now we have learned that the Christian life is not a frolic, it is a fight.
- When you come to Jesus you had better suite up because you are going to war.
- In this army there can be no cowards for the odds are too great.
- Christianity is not for the faint of heart. You had better be ready to do battle with the world, the flesh and the devil everyday.

- You cannot be a coward and you cannot be a compromiser.
- "Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace." (v.32)

CALLED TO BE SOLDIERS

- We have been called to be soldiers, not diplomats.
- You know what is wrong with the average Christian?
- He wants to be just godly enough to be accepted by the Lord and just worldly enough to be accepted by the world.
- So you must ask yourself the question, what price will I pay in following Jesus?

What Passion Will I Present In Following Jesus?

- "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple." (v. 33)
- This pretty much sums it all up of exactly what Jesus expects.
- Now notice Jesus does not say that we are to give away everything.
- Jesus says we are to give up everything.

- You've got to be willing to sign the title deed of everything you have and everything you are over to Him even if that means giving your children to the mission field,
- Even if that means leaving home to go to another place of service,
- Even if it means answering His call on your life and giving up a lucrative salary and a steady job in order to follow His call into missions and ministry.

SACRIFICIAL TRAINING

- Now having said that don't get the idea that sacrifice is a negative.
- Sacrifice is a positive.
- The football team that sacrifices on the practice field and in the weight room wears the championship ring.
- The athlete that sacrifices on the practice field and on the track wins the gold medal.

- But, in order to win that gold medal or that championship ring there has to be passion.
- A passion to pay the price.
- A passion to have the proper priorities.
- That translates into a passion that other people can see that will make them want to play on your team.

SALT DISCIPLESHIP

- That is why Jesus finishes by saying, "Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavour, how shall it be seasoned?"
- It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out.
- He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (vv. 34-35)

- Now why does Jesus end up talking about salt?
- Salt was a very valuable item in the days of Jesus.
- As a matter of fact, part of a soldier's pay was given in salt.
- The words salt and salary are very closely related. That is where we get the saying, "He is not worth his salt." Salt has very many wonderful qualities: salt purifies, salt preserves, salt penetrates.

BEING A WITNESS

- As salt, we are to give every lost sinner a taste of Jesus and a desire to come to Him.
- Just as salt makes you thirsty for water, the salt of the disciple ought to make someone else thirsty for Jesus.

WHAT GOOD IS A SILENT WITNESS?

- But, the world is not going to be attracted to Jesus by half hearted followers.
- The world will never be willing to do business with Jesus until they see that His followers mean business with Him.

SURRENDERING ALL FOR CHRIST

- I wish all of us would be like one man who said: "My face is set. My gait is fast. My goal is heaven. My road is narrow. My way is rough. My companions are few. My guide is reliable. My mission is clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, diluted or delayed.

- I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in a maze of mediocrity. I won't give up, shut up, let up or slow up until I have preached up, prayed up, paid up, stored up and stayed up for Christ."[2]

DAVID LIVINGSTON

- David Livingston was one of the greatest missionaries the world has ever known.
- When I was in Africa I went to some of the places where Livingston journeyed.
- He laboured many years in some of the deepest, darkest jungles of Africa.
- Because of his sacrifice, today there are over three hundred million Christians in Africa.



The devil's cataract



Main Falls- 93 metres



SACRIFICIAL COMMITMENT

- One time Livingston received a letter from a certain society that said, "Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to know how to send other men to join you." David Livingston wrote back and said, "If you have men that will come only if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come even if there is no road at all".

COMMITTED FOLLOWERS

- That is the only kind of followers that Jesus desires.
- That is the only kind of followers that Jesus deserves.
- That is the only kind of followers that Jesus demands.
- Because the Kingdom is not K-mart SHOPS.