

**June 22, 2008**  
**The Rev. Lisa Graves**  
**"Matthew 10:24-39"**  
**The cost of discipleship**

Our gospel tells us that discipleship is costly.  
Following Jesus may cost us  
Our family relationships and ties,  
It may cost us society's approval  
It may take away our social status and power and ultimately it may even  
cost us our very lives.

This was certainly true for  
The early Christians  
Living on the fringes of  
a Jewish culture that found  
Jesus' claim to messiah ship  
crazy at best  
and criminal at worst.  
Professing Jesus as Lord  
Caused the faithful to be  
cast out of households,  
Thrown out of synagogues  
To be unwelcome  
in the market or gathering places.

In fact, the first Christians  
were barely tolerated  
by any of the communities  
and subsets that existed in the ancient East.

So to follow Jesus  
meant leaving behind  
your family alliances,  
your inheritance,  
your heritage  
even the security of your livelihood.  
You were an outcast.

Today we are increasingly finding  
that being a Christian  
is radically different  
from our own cultural norm.  
Our Secular society views  
religion and faith with suspicion --  
and those who profess their faith  
are seen as freakishly zealous or  
hopelessly naïve.

To truly follow Christ  
is to live the life of a resident alien  
in the world.  
We are both a part of the world,  
and apart from the world.

For as Christians

we should make our choices  
about marriage, parenting,  
money, charity and life priorities  
based on the vows of our baptism  
and the deeply held tenants of our faith.  
Living in this way  
makes us vastly counter cultural  
in a world that values  
money over people  
and success over outreach.

But Jesus tells us  
that if we are living our faith  
we will be in conflict  
with the ones we love  
and the world we live in.

Jesus did not come into our world  
to make everybody happy.  
He came to give us life --  
to fill us with courage and faith  
and to set us on a mission  
of world-wide,  
earth shattering importance.

He asks us to renounce  
all that we love,  
all that we love  
and to love all that is left.

To go out into the world,  
the world that does not welcome us  
or know us  
and care for his suffering people.

Because the broken  
and the impoverished  
are as precious in his sight as we are,  
and the hairs on their head  
are numbered too."

What he asks of us is costly.

Often in the church  
when we talk about the high cost  
of discipleship  
the talk about Dietrich Bonheoffer.

Dietrich Bonheoffer was a  
Lutheran pastor and theologian,  
and a leader against Hitler  
and the Nazis in the 1930s and 40s.

He was a popular preacher  
and teacher in his ministry.  
And he spent several year-long studies  
in the United States

at Union Seminary in NY.  
Each time he left  
to go back to Germany  
his colleagues would urge him  
to stay in the United States.

Each time he would admit his regrets --  
for he loved New York,  
and the church he attended in Harlem  
and his colleagues at the seminary --  
but each time he left  
saying his place in life  
was in his country,  
helping his countrymen  
escape the madness that was coming.

When Hitler took control of Germany  
in 1933 he took over the Christian churches as well.  
Bonheoffer was dangerously  
vocal in his opposition.

In 1934  
a group of Lutheran pastors  
including Bonheoffer,  
organized themselves  
in opposition to the Nazi run church  
Creating what they called  
the confessional church,  
an independent protestant church  
that resisted both  
collaboration with the state church  
with the Nazi government  
and the racist nationalism of the Nazi movement.

Later Bonheoffer joined the resistance  
and was part of a plot  
to execute Hitler and negotiate peace.  
In April of 1943 he was arrested  
and spent his last two years in prison,  
doing some of his best,  
and most acclaimed work.  
He was executed on April 9.

Bonheoffer is considered  
a martyr of the faith  
because his involvement  
in the conspiracy was grounded  
in his conviction  
that discipleship to Jesus Christ  
required Christians  
to stand in solidarity with  
the oppressed by standing for  
and with the oppressed against the oppressor.

In other words,  
he was advocating discipleship,  
Costly discipleship.

Before we can look  
at what costly discipleship,  
or costly grace might mean for us,  
let's look at what cheap grace  
or cheap discipleship might be.

In his book "The Cost of Discipleship"  
Bonhoeffer says that  
"Cheap grace means  
grace as bargain basement goods,  
cut-rate forgiveness,  
cut rate comfort,  
cut rate sacraments.  
Grace is doled out  
by careless hands  
without hesitation or limit.  
It is grace without a price, without cost.

Cheap grace means justification of sin,  
but not of the sinner.  
Because grace alone does everything,  
everything can stay in its old ways.  
Thus, as Christians  
we should live the same way the world does.  
We can go along with the world  
and not even try to live a different life under grace from a life lived  
under sin ..."

Writing from prison,  
Bonhoeffer said that  
cheap grace is wanting forgiveness  
without repentance;  
it is seeking the solace of the lords' supper without the confession  
of sin; Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the  
cross, grace without the living, incarnate Jesus Christ.

So what then is costly grace?  
Bonhoeffer says costly grace  
is the hidden treasure in the field,  
for the sake of which  
people go and sell with joy  
everything they have.

It is Christ's sovereignty  
for the sake of which  
you tear out an eye  
if it causes you to stumble.  
It is the call of Jesus Christ  
which causes a disciple to leave his nets and follow him."

Bonhoeffer says "it is costly  
because it calls to discipleship;  
and it is grace

because it calls us to follow  
Jesus Christ.

It is costly because  
it costs people their lives;  
it is grace because it  
thereby makes them live.

Above all, grace is costly,  
because it was costly to God.  
because it cost God the life of God's son."

During the week of July 14 through the 18th we will be spending 5  
evenings at how we can live with hope in an impoverished world and we  
will be exploring what discipleship might look like today.  
I invite you to come  
and spend time with the questions  
of costly discipleship  
and our mission to each other and the world.

British writer G.K. Chesterton wrote,  
"The Christian ideal has not been tried  
and found wanting.  
It has been found difficult  
and left untried."  
I pray that we will take an honest look  
at the difficulty of discipleship and try."

Amen.