

*Luke 14:25-35 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. 27 And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. 28 “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? 29 For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, 30 saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’ 31 “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 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. 33 In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples. 34 “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? 35 It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”*

What does it cost to follow Jesus?

1. Hate all that you love
2. Take up your cross
3. Count the cost

Jesus died on the cross in our place, taking away our sins and opening the door to heaven for us. What he did was so amazing, so wonderful, so incredibly glorious that we can hardly take it all in. Such a loving Savior deserves our complete, undivided devotion. His amazing grace and unconditional love compel us to serve him all our days. The Apostle Paul tells us, *“Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”* (2 Corinthians 5:14-15) Christians follow Jesus without reservation. The reason we follow him is because we know exactly who he is, why he came to earth, and what he did for lost sinners. We know that he’s the Savior of the world — that he’s our Savior. (Adapted from Meditations September 4, 2005) The question then is, “How do we follow Jesus?” Or perhaps more appropriate for consumer driven Americans, “What does it cost to follow Jesus?”

*Large crowds were traveling with Jesus.* Jesus was popular! Jesus could have kept his popularity by simply giving them what they wanted, making it easy to walk with him, keeping them happy and satisfied. You would think Jesus would have enticed them into discipleship, that he would have made the bar of discipleship very low. You would think he would have said, “It’s easy being a disciple. Love your wife. Love your kids. Show up to work on time. Be nice to your neighbor.”

But what does he say? *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.”* He says to hate. But aren’t we supposed to love? Love your neighbor as yourself, the Bible tells us. Love your enemies, it says. How can Jesus tell us to hate our parents, family, ourselves?

If Jesus has called you to faith through the gospel, then you need to put everything in a scale. Jesus is on one side and everything else — family, possessions, dreams, goals, our very selves — are in the other side. You can’t put anything over on the Jesus side. It can’t be Jesus and children. It can’t be Jesus and career. It can’t be Jesus and money. If we put anything on the Jesus side, we are not being his disciple.

If you were driving in the car and your child became terribly sick, what would you do? Head to the hospital. How would you feel about road construction or detours that made it difficult to get to the hospital? You would hate them. So, we are to hate whatever gets in the way of our discipleship.

Too many church people today want to be disciples without discipleship. Like the crowds who traveled with Jesus, we hang out with him to get the goodies from Jesus, but we fail to consider what it really means to be a disciple of Jesus. For example, people want to go all summer despising God’s Word and still call themselves disciples. They want to live with someone outside of marriage or get drunk every weekend or never use their financial resources to serve others

or never share their faith in Jesus and they still want to call themselves disciples. Franz Pieper warned, "The Christian who does not strive to serve God alone is perilously close to losing his Christianity." (Christian Dogmatics, Vol. III, p. 33) The Apostle James called that a dead faith, that is, a fake faith, a false faith.

And there's the problem. We don't really want to be disciples. We wouldn't chose to be disciples. "The sinful mind is hostile to God" the Apostle tells us. Our sinful nature never wants to be Jesus' disciple. That's why Jesus chooses us. "You did not choose me," Jesus told the twelve, "but I chose you." Salvation is his job. It was his job to carry his cross. It was his job to bear our sins in his body. It was his job to pay the penalty we deserved and it was his job to rise again to guarantee our salvation. And it is also his job to make us disciples, to choose us, to bring us to faith through the gospel. Yes, Jesus chose us; we didn't choose him. "You did not choose me, but I chose you," he said. But don't forget what comes next. "To go and bear fruit." Salvation is free; discipleship costs us everything.

What does it cost to follow Jesus? We need to hate whatever gets in the way of our discipleship. And we need to take up our cross. *And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.* Prof. Daniel Deutschlander explained that the cross is a consequences, not a cause of discipleship. It is a necessary consequence of discipleship. No cross, no Christian! The cross is heavy and painful. He further explained, "A sermon from the pulpit or a lesson in the classroom, therefore, that tries to make Christianity sound painless, effortless, easy, entertaining, or just a Sunday morning jaunt to the happy place of souls is counterfeit Christianity." (The Theology of the Cross, p. 4)

The cross meant pain and shame, but mostly shame, the shame of everyone knowing that you are a low-life criminal. The shame of everyone thinking of you as scum. Discipleship that carries the cross is discipleship that is willing to suffer shame for Christ. Are we willing to do that? Are we willing to look stupid for Christ? Are we willing to stand by the teaching of creation even when everybody thinks we're stupid for doing that? Are we willing to stand by the teaching of Scripture on the roles of men and women even when people think we're practically as backward as the Amish? Are we willing to stand by the inspiration of the Bible or any of the other teachings of Scripture even when people think we are not very sophisticated? It is impossible to be Jesus' disciples unless we are willing to carry our cross.

Jesus told two parables. One about a man building a tower and the other about a king going to war against a much larger force. The point of both stories is that we can't go into things blind. Know full well what you are getting yourself into. Ask yourself, "What does it cost to follow Jesus?"

A boy once said to the High School Football coach, "I would like to play football. In fact, someday I think I would like to win the Heisman Trophy." The coach responded, "Well, first you will have to shed those twenty extra pounds. You will have to come out to the field every afternoon immediately after class and practice with the team until dark. You will have to be in the weight room working out every Saturday." The boy said, "But I heard football was fun."

So, we need to understand what it means to follow Jesus. There will be crosses to bear, but those who love Jesus will bear those crosses. There are Christian nurses who refuse to scrub up for an abortion. There are Christians who will not compromise their principles for the sake of climbing the corporate ladder or making a bundle of money. There are many who give a good days work even if they aren't treated well. There are physically challenged Christians for whom each day is a struggle, and yet maintain a cheerful outlook and confident trust in the Lord.

One believer doesn't look like much in the world at large, a mere grain of salt, and yet, the salt seasons the stew. *"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?"*

What does it cost to follow Jesus? Standing up for Jesus, keeping him first in our hearts and living our faith could cost us our friends, our families, even our lives. But what is any of this compared with the cost Christ paid to purchase our salvation? Christ counted the cost of our redemption and went to Calvary's cross without complaint. He let nothing stop him from being our Savior. May we let nothing stop us from being devoted to him.