

“The Cost of Being a Disciple”

October 25, 2020

Luke 14:25-35

I. Introduction

When Jesus left the Pharisee’s house, great crowds followed Him, but He wasn’t impressed by their number or enthusiasm. He knew that most of them were not interested in spiritual things. Some wanted only to be entertained—they hoped to see more healings or perhaps to be part of another miraculous feeding of thousands. Some may have followed along just to watch Jesus interact with the Pharisees and leaders of Israel. They liked seeing them humiliated and being “*knocked down a peg or two.*” Since it was just a few months until Passover, others hoped that Jesus was going to Jerusalem to overthrow Rome and establish David’s kingdom and they wanted to see it happen. They were the ones who lined the streets on Palm Sunday and shouted, “**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord**” (John 12:13). Regardless of their reason, most were expecting the wrong thing for the wrong purposes.

The Greek word translated “*disciple*” is a broad term that identifies a learner or a student—a better word for today might be the word “*apprentice.*” In ancient Jewish culture, rabbis were wandering teachers and as they traveled about, they were accompanied by their disciples or students. Although He wasn’t recognized as such by the religious establishment, Jesus was recognized as a rabbi by His disciples and others, e.g., in John 3:2 when Nicodemus “**came to Jesus at night, he said, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.’**” Jesus was a traveling teacher, a rabbi, who at times had 1000’s of followers. These followers were at differing levels of commitment from those totally committed (like the Apostles) down to the uncommitted curiosity seekers. During His 3 years of ministry, Jesus made the requirements for being a genuine disciple clearer and clearer—earlier in Luke 9:23, Jesus had said, “**Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.**” Because of Jesus’

expectations, there were times when many would leave; for example, after one “hard teaching,” [John 6:66](#) says, “**From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.**”

By the time of the Book of Acts, the term disciple had almost become a synonym for Christian—[turn to Acts 11:25-26](#). In today’s Scripture, Jesus once again taught those following Him about the cost of being a disciple—beginning with the priorities of a Christian.

II. Priorities of a Christian

A. A true disciples loves Jesus Christ more than family. Jesus gave three priorities for those who wanted to be one of His genuine disciples, i.e., a true Christian. First, He said, “**If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters ... such a person cannot be my disciple.**” A true disciple of Jesus Christ, a genuine Christian, must love Jesus Christ more than family.

Please don’t misunderstand what Jesus was saying—Jesus taught in [John 13:34](#), “**A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.**” In [Ephesians 5:25](#) Husbands are commanded to agape love, to sacrificially love their wives. Similarly, [Titus 2:4](#) says that wives are to love their husbands. [Exodus 20:12](#) commands children to “**Honor your father and your mother.**” Jesus even taught in [Luke 6:27](#), “**But to you who are listening I say: ‘Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.’**” We are to love our families—even our enemies.

The word “*hate*” in Jesus’ teaching back in Luke 14 could be translated as “*love less.*” Jesus put it this way in [Matthew 10:37](#), “**Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.**” A Christian’s love for Jesus Christ must be so strong that all other loves are like hatred in comparison—love less. To hate one’s family means to prefer God over them by disregarding what they desire if that conflicts with what God requires; it is to love God more than them.

B. A true disciple loves Jesus Christ more than self. The second priority of a Christian is to love Jesus Christ more than self. Jesus said, “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.” A true disciple loves Jesus Christ more than self. The call to salvation, to be a Christian, is a call to self-denial. That is what **Romans 10:9** means: “If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Jesus must be Lord, i.e., He must be the authority as Lord, King, and Master, not self, not family, or anything or anyone else. As Jesus put it in **Matthew 6:24**, “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other.”

C. A true disciple offers his own life. Jesus went on to say that this selflessness extends to the point of death. He said, “And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” This is the third priority: A true disciple offers his or her own life. “The “*cross*” is the willing sacrifice of everything one has, including his own life for the sake of Christ. It means to confess Jesus Christ as Lord in actions as well as in words and to obey Him in spite of any shame or suffering that may come. All one has and is belongs to Jesus Christ. **Turn to Romans 6:11-13.**

III. Two Illustrations of Counting the Cost

A. Building a Tower Jesus then gave two illustrations to demonstrate the importance of understanding the sacrifice required when making a commitment to Him. The first illustration is that of a man who is thinking of building a tower on his land or in a city. In either case, such a task would be expensive; the builder must be sure that he can afford such a project. So, before he even starts to build or before he even “puts in the first shovel,” it is best to estimate the cost.

Preserving one’s honor and avoiding bringing shame on oneself and one’s family was extremely important in Jesus’ day. So, for a person to have laid the foundation and not be able to finish a project would have brought tremendous shame. It would have made the man and his family the laughingstock of

the community as “everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’”

B. Fighting a War The second illustration is that of a king “about to go to war against another king.” Jesus said that before going out to battle, a prudent king will “first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand.” To go to battle and lose would be folly, perhaps even suicidal. So, if he has no possibility of victory, the 1st king’s only sensible move would be to “send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.”

In both illustrations the point is that if people count the cost before undertaking any important task in daily life, how much more important is it to count the cost before committing oneself to Jesus Christ and eternity? It’s important to count to cost before committing to Jesus. Jesus doesn’t want superficial, temporary, self-seeking followers like those represented by the rocky and thorny soils in the parable of the sower in [Matthew 13:20-22](#): “The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.” Jesus doesn’t want half-hearted followers. True discipleship demands one’s all; persecution and worries will be things of the past.

Jesus said, “In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.” Jesus’ point is that those who would be His disciples must recognize that they are stewards of everything and owners of nothing. If the Lord asked them to give up all they had, they would be willing, because loving obedience is their highest duty and joy. At the same time Jesus is warning against half-hearted commitment. He wants every disciple to count the cost and to be willing to give up everything

for His sake so that they can enter a life filled with “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). Turn to Romans 12:1-2.

IV. A Parable

Jesus finished His teaching on the cost of being a disciple by giving a parable about salt. Salt is good, it is needed for life. Salt was a very valuable item in Jesus’ day; part of a soldier’s pay was given in salt. In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:13, Jesus said that His disciples are “the salt of the earth.” When a sinner trusts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, a miracle takes place and “clay” is turned into salt.

Salt has many uses. One use of salt is as a preservative. Like salt for food, God’s children in the world are helping to retard the growth of evil and decay. Salt also gives flavor to things and it makes people thirsty. By their character and conduct, Christians ought to make others hungry and thirsty for the Lord and the salvation that He alone can give. Salt doesn’t normally lose its saltiness, but if it becomes contaminated with impurities, it loses its effectiveness. In Jesus’ day there was no way to restore it, and the salt was thrown out into the street to be walked upon.

In this parable of salt, Jesus is teaching that He doesn’t want temporary or half-hearted disciples. He wants those who are committed totally to Him. Only those who are true disciples can be used by Him for good in this world; to preserve it and to draw others to Christ. There are times when for a short time one slips due to family pressures, selfishness, the allure of the world, i.e., impurities from the world slip in. But God knows the heart and when one comes back to Him repenting and confessing, God will forgive and continue to use them.

Temporary Christians, uncommitted disciples, thorny or rocky soil Christians are ultimately worthless to the Lord. They really aren’t true Christians. Jesus isn’t their Lord and Savior. They aren’t truly saved. Like contaminated salt, these half-hearted Christians are still contaminated by worldliness and at the end they will be thrown out into eternal judgment—turn to Matthew 7:21-23.

V. Conclusion

In Jesus' day and in the early generations after Him, to decide for Jesus usually meant facing rejection, ridicule, tension—even death. No one decided to become a Christian casually. Though some may be hostile toward believers, in our culture that is not the norm. Today, many people assume they are Christian simply because they live in a culture grounded in Judeo-Christian roots. They are not true believers.

Regardless of the time and the place, discipleship requires that Jesus be given primary allegiance. As Lord, Jesus demands to have priority in every area of a Christian's life. The actual giving over of one's self to God is a continuing process. It takes time in God's Word, prayer, being with other Christians who encourage our walk with God and listening to God through all the different ways He speaks to us. One never completely arrives as a disciple; we are always growing in Christ—Paul wrote to Christians in Philippi in [Philippians 1:6](#), “**Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.**”

Jesus isn't teaching that we must be perfect in order to become one of His children. Salvation is by grace, and grace alone. The gifts He gives us are the resources that make possible and enable us to be what He calls us to be. We do not fix our faults or weak areas so that we may earn His favor; instead, we turn to Him so that He can begin the work of transformation. Christians are a work in progress. Paul understood the need to give all to Jesus and that the Christian life is a continually changing thing—[turn to Philippians 3:7-14](#).

What about your life? your walk as a Christian? Is Jesus really number **ONE** in your life? Does God and His expectations come first, or does He finish a distant second or third or somewhere else farther down the line behind family, friends, work, or even yourself?

Do you offer your own life to Christ? Is everything you are and have available to Him? Or are there some things that you keep for yourself? Are there impurities that you keep hidden in your life that

hinder your growth and witness as a child of God? Are you really growing in your walk as a Christian?
Are you more Christlike today than you were last year?

Jim Elliot, the missionary martyr to Ecuador wrote, *“He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”* What about you, have you given your “all” to God? Let me close with a chorus from a really old hymn:

Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid?

Your heart does the Spirit control?

You can only be blest,

And have peace and sweet rest,

As you yield him your body and soul.