

THE HIGH COST OF DISCIPLESHIP IN THE KINGDOM

LUKE 14:25-35

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Introduction

The text of Scripture that we will look at from Dr. Luke's Gospel this Lord's Day is extremely challenging and sobering for God's people. Of all of the many challenging sayings of Jesus, this appears to be one of the most difficult sayings of them all. In fact, there is no one who could respond to Jesus' teaching without doing so in reliance upon the grace of God found in Christ and His Gospel!

Jesus teaches that there is a high cost of discipleship that must be considered when following Him; Jesus asks for our all. Because of God's loving and electing grace to His people, God gives his all to his people in Christ so that they will give their all to him.

In our passage today, Jesus speaks of our relationships, bearing our crosses, and renouncing all that we possess in order to revel in all that God has given to us in Christ and His Kingdom. We should learn that the LORD Jesus asks for everything that we have when we become his disciples; there should be nothing that we hold back from him and his Lordship. He who has ears to hear, let him hear (14:35b).

We should not forget our context where earlier in chapter 14 (verses 15-24) Jesus spoke of many of those in Israel who had been invited to the wedding banquet of God through Jesus Christ and had rejected his gracious invitation by making up perhaps *legitimate excuses* that had become *illegitimate priorities*. In light of this, Jesus goes on to further "push" the great crowds who are presently accompanying him (14:25) to turn from their sins and look to Jesus by faith alone.

Three times Jesus tells the crowds that they **"cannot be his disciple"** (vv. 26, 27, 33) if they do not fully reorient their lives around He and His Kingdom in reliance upon His grace.

Jesus lists allegiance to one's family network and the shackles that constitute one's possessions as impediments to authentic discipleship. Jesus teaches that those who have been reoriented toward His Kingdom by God's grace should show forth new commitments, attitudes and allegiances (cf. Green, pg. 564).

ESV **Luke 14:25-35: Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them,** ²⁶ **"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?**

²⁹ *Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him,* ³⁰ *saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'* ³¹ *Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?* ³² *And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.* ³³ *So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.* ³⁴ *"Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?"* ³⁵ *It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

I. Cost of Discipleship 101: Hating one's own family (v. 26a)

Dr. Luke changes our scene by telling us again that Jesus is surrounded by large crowds (he has done this before to let us know the scene has changed in Luke 11:29; 12:1, 54). The crowds are surrounding Jesus and listening to his teaching as he travels on to Jerusalem to die (9:51).

The crowds or multitudes reminds us that although most earthly and sinful leaders in this world want as many as possible to follow them, Jesus does not desire this kind of superficial following. Jesus teaches the people to consider and count the high cost of discipleship and allegiance to Him before starting the journey of seeking after Him as teacher and Lord.

Many in the crowds were just following along listening to him and playing it secure by not fully associating themselves with him (due to the possible danger from Jewish as well as Roman authorities). In light of this, Jesus challenges those who are merely following him to consider what it means to truly follow him- -as a disciple!

A Disciple of the Kingdom

The question that Jesus addresses in our sermon passage today is: ***“What is a true disciple of the Kingdom?”*** That is, how does a true disciple live and believe as a follower of Jesus? What does a true disciple of Jesus and His Kingdom look like?

The Greek word for ***disciple*** is μαθητής mathetes {math-ay-tes'} and it means a learner, pupil, disciple. The word was used in Ancient Greek to refer to one who sat at a master-teacher's feet (like a Padawan in Star Wars ☺). The implication is that to be a true disciple of Jesus is to live and obey God based on what Jesus teaches to you. To be a true disciple of Jesus is to live with ultimate allegiance to Jesus Christ and His teachings. As Jesus says in John 14:15:

^{ESV} John 14:15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

But I must add that the kind of disciple that Jesus is speaking of here is not some kind of “super-disciple” type. These are not merely the “great disciples of the faith” or merely those who we might consider “super mature” in their faith who might have been ordained clergy and joined monasteries in order to give themselves wholly to God.

***The word “disciple” here is any ordinary Christian who claims the name of Christ-
-this is important for all to understand! We might think in light of this challenging
teaching of Jesus that this message is only from a select few! All Christians by
God’s grace can follow him in the manner described by Jesus!***

Hating Our Family?

***Hating One’s Own Family: The Kingdom changes our most basic identity as part
of a family network and our most important allegiances and loyalties in this world.***

If one is a true disciple, Jesus will be more important than one’s family.

The family is the most basic social unit; what could Jesus mean by hating one’s own family as part of considering the cost of Kingdom discipleship and what high cost it takes to follow him?

Although the family is the most basic social unit in this world, with the coming of the Kingdom of God being manifested in Jesus Christ, there is a greater, more important family made up of disciples of Jesus Christ.

We should be reminded again that the Kingdom of God is not a democracy! God calls His people to bow their knee to Christ who is the Messianic King. Every knee will bow and every tongue will one day confess that Jesus Christ is Lord of all to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

A call to the Kingdom, to identify oneself as a Kingdom disciple is to say ***“I am a servant of the LORD of the Kingdom”***; ***“I am dedicated wholeheartedly to him before all things, even the most basic and important of social relationships in this world such as my family.”*** ***“I will march when he gives me orders; nothing shall stop me from following and obeying Jesus Christ my Lord”***- - this is the response of Kingdom disciples.

We must never forget that a call to Kingdom Discipleship is a call to ultimate allegiance to Jesus and His Lordship over us.

Jesus is placing the emphasis of importance on that which is eternal compared to the family that is part of this present world that is passing away. We are told elsewhere in Scripture that in the “regeneration” of all things or the new creation, there will not be these kind of relationships (Matthew 22:30):

For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

Jesus is saying not to place this most important and sacred basic family unit before following Jesus Christ. Do not allow one’s family, their belief systems, opinions,

priorities, typical sins and practices, and the continuing of the family name to get in the way in importance or priority with Jesus' Kingdom.

It should be remembered that in the ancient Jewish world to follow Jesus would have been to forsake one's family if they were unbelievers (compare today with modern Moslem or Asian countries where families are wholly devoted to other gods). There could be no nominal Christianity and casual devotion to Jesus in his time.

Jesus makes all other loyalties and ties absolutely subordinate to loyalty and devotion to Him. If loyalty to Him clashes with loyalty to family or loved ones, the true disciple is to treat his loved ones *as though they are persons whom the disciple hates* (Geldenhuys, pg. 398).

Hatred? What about loving God and neighbor as ourselves?

The *hatred* that Jesus speaks of here is not one of affection but a disavowal of primary allegiance to one's kin (Green, pg. 565). In Jesus' world there was a high cultural value placed on the family and Jesus is saying that even this important relationship to family must never come before following Him in His Messianic-Kingdom-Mission.

In using the term hate, Jesus is using this rhetorically (see Bock, pg. 1284). The call to hate simply means to "love less" (as in Gen. 29:30-31; Deut. 21:15-17; Judges 14:15).

Hate means "love less":

^{ESV} **Genesis 29:30-31:** So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years. ³¹ **When the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.**

"Hate" can also mean to choose or not to choose as in Malachi 1:2-3 as quoted in Romans 9:13: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

Jesus teaches us to love God and neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:32-34; cf. Luke 6:27). He teaches us to honor our father and our mothers (Mark 7:9-13). He teaches us for spouses to love one another (Eph. 5:21-32). What hatred means here is that we are not to love our family members as much as we love Him! It means to love them less in light of Jesus and His Kingdom, not allowing our allegiance to them to be greater than our allegiance to Him.

As Professor Bock rightly notes while the image is strong, it is not a call to be insensitive or to leave all feeling behind.

As New Testament and Greek Professor Blomberg teaches: "Unlike our English words for "love" and "hate," Greek, particularly when influenced by Hebrew or Old Testament backgrounds as here, often used these words not to refer to an emotion but

to a commitment, to speak of a person to whom one was more or less loyal”
(*Preaching the Parables*, pg. 183).

The Kingdom of God revealed in Jesus is the most important endeavor, goal, and we must allow God’s teachings to us in Christ to form and shape our beliefs, our opinions, change our priorities to fit Jesus’ mission, and to sanctify us in the typical sins and practices that we have been taught in the family structure.

Christ is to be our first love before all things- - even our own family. If one does not place Christ before his own family, he cannot be His disciple.

As Jesus says in Matthew’s Gospel:

^{ESV} **Matthew 10:37** Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

In an anti-family world in which we live it is proper as Christians to place an importance and focus on the family and particularly in our role of raising godly children to be true disciples of Christ’s Kingdom. ***However, we are not to place our family before Jesus Christ.*** Some Christians frankly seem to love their family more than they love Christ in how they reveal their priorities.

Oftentimes, in an effort to promote the family’s well-being, particularly the well-being and success of our children, we idolatrously place them even before Jesus Christ himself! We are called by God to love our children and to place their spiritual well-being first by showing them the great commitment it takes to be a true disciples of Christ and His Kingdom.

As Pastor Kent Hughes points out with regard to many imbalanced Christians today: “We miss the mark [of raising godly children] when we put their development athletically, intellectually, culturally, artistically, socially before their spiritual well-being. We fall short when we spend more time in the car in one day shuttling them from games and lessons than we do in a month in prayer for their souls. By comparison, our lives reveal that we hate God and love our children disproportionately- -and that we are not Jesus’ disciples” (*Luke*, Vol. II, pg. 126).

The truth is that if we “hate” our own family, that is if we love them less than Christ, giving HIM our full allegiance as parents and spouses, then we will by God’s grace be able to love our family more as God has called us to do - -this is yet another ***Kingdom Paradox!*** And this love is ultimately shown by how we teach them about Christ and His Kingdom, and the importance of giving up all for him!

It is interesting to note that in a recent study of Christian college graduates in the U.S. that the single most important reason why many young people who felt called to the ministry did not follow this call was because their parents were not enthusiastic about it or even opposed the call. This was usually because the *Christian* parents did not

think that the children would be earning enough money in such a career (Statistics from Blomberg, pg. 183).

True disciples are those who truly love more because they place Christ and His Kingdom first in all things, including their most intimate and dear relationships.

II. Cost of Discipleship 101: Hating one's own life (v. 26b)

Again, the question may be asked: "What does Jesus mean to hate one's own life; did not God give us life and shouldn't we appreciate what God has given to us?"

Hating My Life?

Hating One's Own Life: The Kingdom changes our most basic understanding of ourselves as a person in our identity and vocation in this world.

The *hatred* that Jesus speaks of here is not some kind of self-abhorrence of one's self. Rather it is a call to finding our identity as a person in the life that is found in Jesus Christ. As we learned above, it is to love Jesus more than we love our very own life!

One's life consists of all of our privileges, passions, and priorities that are part of who we are (our identity) and make up what we do (our vocation) in this world. Life is the collective term for all that we are in this world whether we are speaking socially or positionally or financially. Jesus is warning against idolatry that is so easy for human beings to slip into.

The idolatry that Jesus is speaking of is being consumed by our privileges, passions, and priorities in this world where these become more important to us than the Kingdom of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

As Jesus has taught earlier:

ESV Luke 9:23-26: And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Jesus is making entrance into the Kingdom hard humanly speaking, is he not? We should be leery of any kind of easy-believism that sometimes creeps into evangelistic messages: "Just come down the aisle"- "sign the card"- "pray this prayer"- and then one can leave knowing that come what may they are a disciple of Jesus because they have done these things- even if the person's priorities do not change, and there is never any more fruit produced than this bare confession.

In light of what Jesus is teaching here, it is only by a sovereign work of the grace of God in regeneration that a person can respond to Jesus' Kingdom call. Jesus is

preaching a hard message about believing in Him! He is pushing many mere nominal believers who are not truly committed to following him to consider again what he is demanding of them when they seek to follow him!

III. Cost of Discipleship 101: Bearing one's own cross (v. 27)

The Greek literally reads here: ***"Whoever is not bearing and is not coming after me"*** (because both verbs are in the present ongoing tense). The focus of Jesus is not merely the beginning of one's discipleship-following of Jesus, but what one is doing now in the present tense with regard to Jesus and His Kingdom.

Cross-bearing is a perpetual dying and daily self-denial for the cause of Christ and His Kingdom.

As Jesus says elsewhere in Dr. Luke's Gospel:

^{ESV} **Luke 9:23-24:** And he said to all, ***"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*** ²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

As God gives his all in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ for his people, so God in Christ demands that we too bear our crosses. Our crosses are following Jesus daily and bearing the cross that he sovereignly places upon us in order to make us more like Jesus Christ. Our cross-bearing is ultimately being identified with Jesus Christ and being treated like Jesus Christ because of this identification. As Jesus says in John 15:

^{ESV} **John 15:18-19:** ***"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.***

In Jesus' time, this would not have been heard by the crowds in such a metaphoric manner as we might hear it today. When the crowds heard what Jesus was saying here, they would have understood that he was saying that one cannot be his disciple if they did not forsake allegiance to Rome and be willing to suffer the most heinous death on a cross for Jesus' sake.

In Jesus' time period about A. D. 6 the Romans crucified hundreds of followers of the rebel, Judas the Gaulonite; and for the inhabitants of Palestine crucifixion was a common spectacle both before and after that date. So the words of the Lord probably made the hearers feel that He demanded that whosoever wished to follow Him had to deny himself to such an extent that he would even be prepared to suffer the most cruel and ignominious death in the course of following Jesus (Zahn, quoted in Geldenhuys, pg. 400).

Another Bible teacher said that the taking up of the cross was the voluntary acceptance of martyrdom (T. W. Manson).

“Bearing the cross, not merely wearing the cross!”

Not to be in any way condemning, but it is interesting how many of us cherish crosses that we wear around our necks or on pieces of jewelry we may have. This is an interesting way of showing one’s devotion to Jesus (I can’t imagine anyone in the ancient Roman world wearing one!).

Think about it: The ancient cross was a symbol of shame, torture, and death; it was the most heinous death one could imagine and was a public shame reserved for criminals and slaves. To wear a cross on one’s necklace in the ancient world would have seemed strange at best! It would be like a modern person wearing a hangman’s noose or an electric chair reserved for the condemned criminal on death row!

So crosses are emblems of humiliation, shame and suffering and paradoxically, it is the cross of Christ where we find the salvation of our souls and the forgiveness of our sins.

And so I understand that the cross as a symbol for many people is precious, but we must bear in mind that ***the cross we are to bear is not merely wearing it, but it is in bearing it so we show forth in our lives and our commitment to the Kingdom of the reality of our being dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ*** (cf. Rom. 6:1-14).

The cross we bear is a living symbol and picture of our being dead to this present age, and dead to any other ultimate allegiance except Jesus Christ and His Kingdom.

The cross is a picture of our discipleship and that our new Kingdom identity as disciples is in being identified with Christ in his suffering and cross-bearing.

We must remember that the cross we bear in this life is one where we are identified in the life and death of Jesus Christ himself. We as his disciples bear the cross that he gives to us because he bore the cross of salvation for us. As the Apostle Paul teaches us in Romans 8, we know that we are adopted as God’s sons in Jesus because we suffer along with him and in that suffering we long for the restoration of all things.

^{ESV} Romans 8:18-25: For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

We do not place our hope in this present world that is passing away. Rather, we trust in Christ come what may and continue to look to Him who is the Author and Perfector of our faith (Heb. 12:1-4).

Discipleship-Discipline- The cross-bearing is also sanctifying us in Jesus!

Our cross-bearing is our privilege of being identified with Jesus Christ in his death, and also as part of our “*discipleship-discipline*” God allows us to become more like Christ through discipline for our sinful condition. We should remember that people are not punished for particular sins necessarily (see John 9 for example; the man was not born blind because of his sin or his parents’ sins, but the man carried this particular cross of discipline for the glory of God).

We too should understand that God doesn’t necessarily cause us to be disciplined for a particular sin we can point out in our life, although there are consequences to our sinful behavior (don’t hear me wrong). We should understand that as “discipleship-discipline” God calls all believers in Christ to be disciplined for their sinful condition in a way that unbelievers do not experience.

Thus believers in Christ bear the cross that God sovereignly gives to them in their life knowing that God loves them and is sanctifying them and conforming them to the likeness of his son. As the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 8:

^{ESV} **Romans 8:28-29:** And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ ***For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers***

As God’s elect in Jesus Christ we have been foreknown intimately by God himself and we have been predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ! God’s goal in our cross-bearing is making us Christ-like!

Is it hard? YES! It is possible to endure? YES!

God teaches us elsewhere in Scripture that his grace is sufficient for everything he calls us to endure. The Apostle Paul experience a great deal of cross-bearing in his life that made him more like Christ and all believers are called to sovereignly endure what God calls them to:

2 Corinthians 12:8-10: Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Can you say honestly that you are content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities? Can you say in reliance upon the grace of God that when you're weak and humbled before God and man then you are truly strong?!

Oftentimes we are tempted to trivialize our cross-bearing. ***Our "cross" becomes anything that is an inconvenience for us.*** For instance, we are without a roomier car, a bigger home, we lack air conditioning in the summertime, we had a lot of traffic to experience on the way to the office *ad infinitum, ad nauseum!*

Statisticians tell us that the number of Christian martyrdoms in the twentieth century surpassed the total of all previous centuries of church history combined (persecution and imprisonment of Chinese Christians, persecution and murder of Christians in Indonesia, and tens of thousands of Sudanese Christians who were sold into slavery by Muslim leaders- -we dare not trivialize the cross that Jesus has given us the privilege to bear! (Statistics from Craig L. Blomberg, *Preaching the Parables*, pg. 182).

We must understand, particularly as American Christians, that cross-bearing is not necessarily related to mere inconveniences. Our cross-bearing is primarily in experiencing humbling weaknesses such as sicknesses, insults for the name of Christ, hardships because of our stand and identity as disciples of Christ, persecutions because of Christ, calamities that God allows to come into our lives, and sometimes martyrdom- - that are much greater than merely being without some of our beloved conveniences. As the Apostle Paul said:

ESV 2 Timothy 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...

Life can be hard and Jesus never promised us a rose garden! He promised us peace and joy in the midst of our tribulation! He told us that He has overcome sin, death and our worst enemy the devil through his cross-bearing, and in light of His cross-bearing, we can endure too!

Listen to how the author of the Book of Hebrews encourages all believers to look to the faithfulness of God in other disciples' lives as well as the faithfulness of God ultimately revealed in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ for his people:

ESV Hebrews 12:1-5: Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

Bearing our cross is assigned to us by God in his sovereignty; bearing our cross is endured peacefully and joyfully by God's grace; bearing our cross is possible although difficult because we are being stretched in our sanctification and conformity to Christ-likeness; bearing our cross is evidence that we are truly children of the Living God in Christ.

So Jesus says: "Count the cost" of what it means to follow him before you commit yourself wholly in word, thought and deed. Jesus calls us to give up our closest relationships, losing our lives even unto death, and renouncing all that we have in order to follow him. The greatest and most important mission, goal and thing in our life must be Jesus and His Kingdom.

How can we do this? Only by God's grace that is available in Jesus Christ.

This is not a message for the sinfully faint-hearted; this is only for those who have experienced a powerful work of regeneration-resurrection and have died with Christ and now have been raised up to live with him (Romans 6:1-14). Let us pray to have the mindset of the Apostle Paul who exclaimed in light of the cross of Christ:

ESV Philippians 3:9-11: [I want to] be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith- ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

As C. S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity* (pgs. 163-164): "The Christian way is different... Christ says, 'Give me all. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want you. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree down. I don't want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked—the whole outfit."

IV. Cost of Discipleship 101: Examples of how to count the cost (vv. 28-32)

Jesus focuses in both of these brief parables to illustrate true Kingdom discipleship and to reveal whether one has adequate resources to succeed in finishing the course before them (in building a tower and in defeating an enemy). If one is not with the adequate resources required the results end tragically in being mocked and in surrender to the enemy.

Jesus says that following Him in His Kingdom is like these Kingdom parable-illustrations.

Do you have the adequate resources to follow Jesus as His disciple?

Jesus is teaching all who would consider following him faithfully as a disciple to consider whether they are able to finish the race or course set before them.

The greatest resource needed to finish the race or course of discipleship is the grace of God found in Jesus Christ alone. The resources are not found in your family, your identity as a person and what you do, or in your possessions. Rather, your more-than-adequate resources are found in Jesus Christ.

In fact, we are told in Philippians 1:6:

ESV Philippians 1:6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

As His disciple, you must renounce all other things (see v. 33)

a. Building a tower (vv. 28-30)

The first parable asks if we can count the cost of discipleship.

b. Going to war (vv. 31-32)

The second parable asks if we can afford to pay the price of refusing Jesus' call (Blomberg, pg. 185).

Through these two examples, Jesus teaches that whosoever desires to follow Him should first make sure whether he is prepared to pay the full price, that is, the willing denial of himself to the utmost for His sake (Geldenhuis, pg. 398).

V. Cost of Discipleship 101: Renouncing all that one has (v. 33)

One able scholar correctly translates Jesus' saying in verse 33 in this way: "So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not bid farewell to all you have" (Green, pg. 563). Another scholar translated this well: "Similarly, then, every one of you who does not say goodbye to all he has cannot be a disciple of mine" (Joseph Fitzmyer, quoted in Hughes, Vol. II, pg. 128).

The Greek word for "renounce" (or "forsake" KJV) is ἀποτάσσομαι (ἀποτάσσω) Meaning: 1) to set apart, separate 1a) to separate one's self, withdraw one's self from anyone 1a1) to take leave of, bid farewell to 1b) to renounce, forsake.

Renouncing All That One Has: The Kingdom changes our attraction and idolatry toward our possessions and makes us ready and willing to part with them at any time.

This last condition on being a true disciple of Jesus Christ is really a summary of the first two conditions (at least the first two conditions are included in this one).

ESV Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Jesus is not telling us necessarily to sell all that we have and live in the desert or in caves or monasteries as hermits or monks. What he is telling us is that as a disciple, we must daily acknowledge that all that we have belongs to Christ.

True disciples must dedicate all that God has given to us and allow God to be in control of everything that we have. We must be willing to give up all that we have in order to seek He and His Kingdom without hindrance (see Matthew 6:24-34).

Being a disciple of Jesus is recognizing that all that one has, all that one is (including one's own precious desires, plans, ideals and interests), belongs ultimately to God and has been granted to the disciples as a stewardship.

Stewardship is where one takes care of another's possessions. A steward does not actually own the possessions, property, or whatever it is, they take care of it for someone else.

In our lives, we must renounce all that we have in our lives Jesus says (v. 33). What we have is what God has given to us and we are to be good stewards of these things. They are not to own us however; they should not be so important to us that we are willing to forsake Christ and his Kingdom in order to keep them, or try and obtain more of them.

These belongings that God has entrusted us must be understood with the right perspective: they are gifts of God to be used for our enjoyment in Jesus Christ, but in God's sovereignty the Lord may give and he may take away, but we are to still praise His name for His goodness and grace (see the Book of Job).

Belongings in this world prevent many from following Jesus Christ! They are unwilling to give up and renounce all that they have to follow Jesus Christ. As Jesus says in other places in Scripture that it is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God:

ESV Luke 18:24-25: Jesus, looking at him with sadness, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

Why? They do not trust him and trusting God is a vital aspect of saving faith. In fact, in discipleship, saving faith has three aspects: **Knowledge, Assent, and Trust**.

Some acknowledge that God exists and they believe that Jesus is a good man or even a good savior. Some will go to Jesus or "God" when they are sad and need hope or

help in their lives. Some will assent that what the Bible teaches is true and helpful to their lives; they assent to much of the truths found in Scripture.

But trusting God in Jesus Christ which is an important aspect of saving faith many do not have. Many who call themselves Christians or disciples of Jesus might have knowledge of God and His Word, and even assent to these truths, but on a day to day basis they do not find it easy to trust God in his will and sovereignty.

As Professor Geldenhuys wrote commented helpfully here: “The important thing is that whosoever desires to follow Him must be inwardly free from worldly-mindedness, covetousness and selfishness and wholly devoted to him” (*Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, pg. 399).

VI. Cost of Discipleship 101: Good salt (vv. 34-35)

Jesus ends his teaching here with an epigram (this is defined in my dictionary as “any witty, ingenious, or pointed saying tersely expressed”).

ESV Luke 14:34-35: "Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? ³⁵ It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

These last two verses serve as a conclusion to Jesus’ teaching the crowds on the high cost of discipleship. If one is not characterized by the qualities he has described as a true disciple then one is not a disciple.

Jesus is not teaching that one can lose their salvation in using the language of being thrown out, but he is teaching that some who claim to be true disciples are really not by the way they think and live. As Jesus soberly says to some who claim to know him: **“Depart from me, I never knew you.”** (cf. Matthew 7:20-23):

Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. ²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

To put it another way (as Jesus has done three times in our passage), if one’s priority is found primarily in their family, if their identity is found in what one does as a vocation or in what one has, if they are unwilling to part with their possessions, **then they are not, that is they cannot be Jesus’ disciples.**

Salt can function as seasoning, fertilizer or a preservative. Salt is good and useful when it is salty; if it loses its purpose or saltiness, it is worthless (then you only have pepper! ☺). A more modern idiom that is compared to this with regard to discipleship might be “running out of gas” (Bock, pg. 1291).

One who is not willing to forsake everything to follow Jesus as a disciple is like salt that is not salty- -like unsalty salt that is worthless, so are half-hearted disciples who have not really considered the high cost of being a disciple!

Jesus ends with: He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

We must all soberly consider the high cost of following Jesus. We must consider how much God has given to us in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ *for us!*

Believers (or those who trust him with their all!) are heirs of all things in Christ Jesus! God has given to us in His beloved Son and we more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Romans 8:31-39). We need grace daily to follow Jesus as His disciples, and the grace that we need is found in Christ alone –the strength and power is not found in yourself! Even the grace we need to follow is provided; seek God’s grace in Christ Jesus, and find in Jesus Christ the eternal hope of a true disciple.

But consider the cost. If you are not ready to forsake all other allegiances and renounce all your worldly possessions, desires, plans, and dreams, then you cannot be Jesus’ disciple.

Seek the LORD while he may be found- -He is found in Jesus Christ- -trust in Him today!

Thanks be to God for His Word.

A prayer of John Calvin:

Grant, Almighty God, that as you have once adopted us, and continue to confirm this favor of your by calling us unceasingly to yourself, and you do not only severely chastise us, but also gently and paternally invite us to yourself and exhort us at the same time to repentance- -grant, that we may not be so hardened as to resist your goodness, nor abuse your incredible forbearance with us, but submit ourselves in obedience to you; that whenever you may severely chastise us, we may bear your corrections with genuine submission of faith, and not continue untameable and obstinate to the last, but return to you, the only fountain of life and salvation, that as you have once again begun in us a good work, so may you perfect it to the day of our Lord. Amen.

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Scripture Lesson

Matthew 10:34-42: ³⁴ "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶ And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷ Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ⁴⁰ "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. ⁴¹ The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. ⁴² And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."

^{ESV} **Matthew 5:13-14:** "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. ¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

^{ESV} **John 12:25-26:** Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

^{ESV} **Revelation 12:11** And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

^{ESV} **Philippians 3:3-9:** For we are the real circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh- ⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, under the law blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith...

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