

The Greatest Story (Part 39):

The Cost of Following Christ

Luke 14:25-33

Memory Verses: Luke 9:23

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Over the past three weeks we've been looking at Jesus as the Messiah. He was the coming king and is the king who has come. Even though the Jewish people, for the most part, still reject him, we join with almost 2 Billion people world wide who proclaim as Peter once did; "You, Jesus, are the Christ, the son of the living God." Through our time in the Old Testament we saw how almost every chapter pointed in some way to the coming Messiah, and in Zechariah and Malachi (along with all of the Major and Minor Prophets), we saw how everything was pointing specifically to Jesus. Now in the New Testament, Matthew and Mark leave no doubt... Jesus is the Christ. Hopefully over the past three weeks you have put your doubts to rest as well and have come to the realization that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah through whom the whole world can be saved.

But as we have made clear... believing that Jesus was the Messiah is not all there is to becoming a Christian. Trusting that He was the Christ, and placing your trust in Him are two different things... and both are necessary to be saved. And as we will see today.. **placing your trust in Christ takes counting the cost of following Christ.**

But counting the cost isn't just for prospective followers of Christ. You see, from my experience, most of the people who claim to be Christians in our American churches, have skipped this step... they have never counted the cost of following Christ... because in their American mindset, they don't believe it actually costs them anything at all. In fact, most of them were sold a bill of goods that was actually non-biblical at best.

I remember attending a revival service this one time and the speaker, I hesitate to call him a preacher, was telling everyone in the audience that if they accepted Christ that they would become wealthier. He even told them that God wanted them to all have new cars and all they had to do to get their new car was to accept Christ. There were some people in the audience who were sick and this man told them that if they would accept Christ then he would heal them of their diseases. And people flooded the altar to accept Christ.

I wonder if it stuck after they found out the truth. Look with me at **Luke 21:16-17**. Wait... you mean that I don't get a car? You mean I don't

get health and wealth? Instead I get the opportunity to be betrayed by my parents and my friends and people will hate me and try to kill me? Well that doesn't sound very good at all. And this is where the inevitable question is asked... well what exactly is in this for me?

Well a lot actually but, you can't come to Christ with the mindset of "what's in it for me?" It's not about you. It's all about Christ. The only way to approach salvation in Christ is with the mindset that it's all about Him... and with that understanding we come to **Luke chapter 14:25-33**. Let's read that together.

This is the cost of following Christ. You must place Christ first; above your parents, above your wife and children, above your brothers and sisters. You must even place Christ above your own life as one willing to carry his own cross. You must come after Him as one who has renounced everything else in order to simply follow.

As you can see... this is not an easy sell. This isn't as flashy as come to Jesus and you will be healed or you will get rich. This is a far cry from the average understanding of accept Jesus, sign the card, chase the American Dream, live as comfortably as you can, try not to curse, and wait for your reward. In fact... this is actually the opposite... this has nothing to do with what you will get and everything to do with what it will cost. This has nothing to do with what's in it for you and everything to do with Christ alone. But if you are truly in love with Jesus then you are more than willing to pay that cost right? As Oswald Chambers says... "It never cost a disciple anything to follow Jesus; to talk about cost when you are in love with anyone is an insult." You see.. it costs... but compared to the all satisfying joy of being with Christ... it really doesn't cost anything. You are happy to pay the cost right?

So this morning we are going to look at this passage a little more in depth as to make it clear to each of one of us this morning what exactly Christ is calling us to and what the cost of following him is... and what we will notice is... **If You Find that Following Jesus Doesn't Cost A Lot Then You Probably Aren't Following Jesus**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to know this morning when counting the cost is... **Following Christ Will Cost You Your Family (vs25-26)**. Look at **Luke 14:25-26** again. The first thing you see here is that Jesus notices the crowds are following him and instead of giving them some easy rah rah speech of joy and encouragement... he tells them to hate their families. What? You can just see Jesus' disciples slapping their heads in frustration... "how are we going to build an army of disciples and establish the kingdom if our leader keeps telling people to hate their mommas?"

This flies in the face of our American Church model doesn't it. If you

get big crowds then you have to do whatever you can to keep them. Our mindset is that if we could just get a bunch of people to claim Christ and fill our churches then we are accomplishing something; we are successful. But Jesus is radically different. Instead of keeping the crowds he was more concerned about making sure the ones who were following him were actual followers.

Notice it says “if anyone comes to me.” Meaning... Jesus isn't addressing people who are opposed to his movement and message... he's addressing people who have already come to him or are coming to him... and instead of making them feel comfortable in their decision he challenges them. The problem in many of our churches today is that we comfort people rather than challenging them. No one grows in comfort... no one becomes a warrior in comfort...no is transformed by comfortable preaching... and Jesus knows this. So Jesus does it differently... **Jesus doesn't try to draw crowds... he tries to thin them.**

So how does Jesus try to thin the crowd? What challenge does he give that will separate the true followers from the false. Well... he goes right for the jugular. Jesus brings the sword of division in one of the most outlandish and offensive statements that he could've ever made to Jewish people. Jesus tells them to abandon their families. Now you must understand... in Jewish tradition family came first... and it still is that way today. Nothing means more than being loyal to your family. So to tell them to abandon their families was probably the most ridiculous and evil thing he could have said. But before we get carried away... lets examine the words of Christ.

The word hate here doesn't mean hate the way we think of hate. We think of hate as... “that person who wronged me... I wouldn't spit on them if they were on fire.” We think of hate like... “i hate the cowboys so much that my toilet paper is cowboy toilet paper.” We think of hate like Candace Pierce... who hates Coca-Cola so much that she wouldn't drink it if she was stranded in a desert and about to die of thirst and the only thing to drink was a nice cold can of Coca-Cola and a bottle of motor oil... she would drink the motor oil.

But often when you see the word hate in the Bible it is used to differentiate between preferences. For example the Bible says I have hated Esau and loved Jacob. Well God doesn't hate Esau... but he chose Jacob over Esau which from Esau's perspective can look like hatred. Here Jesus the choice is simple... either Jesus is first place or your family is first place.. choose. In Jewish tradition, to choose something else over family meant that you hated your family... and Jesus is saying... if you want to be my disciple then you must choose me over your family.

Think of it like this... Think of the people who have to leave their families to do their duty. Soldiers must choose to defend their country

over being close to their families. So a mother may say... “why do you love your country and hate me?” Police officers and fire fighters must leave their wives and children, putting their lives on the line everyday, in order to serve and protect. So a wife may say... “why do you love those people so much that you would leave me and the kids... you must hate us.” Or what about missionaries who often leave behind their families and friends and travel to the ends of the earth all for the sake of spreading the Gospel to people who don't know Christ. A grandmother may say... “you must hate me to take my grand-babies away from me and go to another country.”

The point is simple... Jesus is taking his followers around Israel and preaching the Gospel and healing the sick. He's on a mission which will require that they leave behind their families and anyone who says... I want to but family comes first... can't come. This means a father may have to tell his children, much like I had to a couple of weeks ago, I can't make it to your soccer game today because I'm doing a charity 5k for a ministry in town. Sometimes our commitment to Jesus means that family will have to be neglected.

If you haven't ever wrestled with picking Christ over family... or you find that when making that choice family always wins... then perhaps you haven't counted the cost. You see... **if Jesus isn't first place he doesn't have a place at all .** That may sound hard but that's the cost. So... do you love Jesus enough to place him first, before your family? How will this change your life if put into practice? **If You Find that Following Jesus Doesn't Cost A Lot Then You Probably Aren't Following Jesus.**

The second thing we need to know this morning when counting the cost is... **Following Christ Will Cost You Your Dreams (vs26).** Look again at the end of **Luke 14:26d** . It will cost you not just your family but “**yes, even [your] own life.**” What this mean sis that you must choose following Christ rather than following your own life... meaning your goals and your dreams. Look at our memory verse for the week... **Luke 9:23 - “if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”** Following Christ means first denying yourself the things that you personally want in order to chase what Christ wants.

Many say... I'll follow Christ as long as it doesn't derail my desires. I'll follow Christ as long as I can keep my personal sins, personal opinions, and my personal feelings. Well you can live like that if you want... but unfortunately you won't be following Jesus Christ.

Some say I'll follow Christ as long as it doesn't derail my long-term plans & dreams. I'll follow Christ as long as I can still be an NBA star, or as long as I can pursue being rich, or as long as I can work on Sundays... etc.. But again... it doesn't work like that. You can make your own rules but in the end you will only be following a god of your own making. You see... **we can't just add Jesus to our lives... we must make him our lives** . If you

are still chasing your dreams and have never given thought to what Christ's dreams for you may be then perhaps you've never counted the cost. Perhaps Christ wants you to be in a specific ministry but that might cost you your career or your hobby. Perhaps Christ wants you to be a minister or a missionary but that might cost your dream of going to a specific college or pursuing a specific career path. Are you willing to give up on your dreams in order to chase Christ's dreams for you?

And it may not be as big as giving up on your dreams... it may be as small as just denying yourself some pleasure that is hindering your walk with Jesus. Here's a question... "what exactly have you ever denied yourself of for the sake of Christ?" I've met so many so called Christians who have not actually denied themselves anything. They still act like the world, pursue the same things as the world, talk like the world, watch the same shows, listen to the same music... What have they denied themselves? So I ask you that question today... What do you need to deny yourself of starting today for the sake of following Jesus? **If You Find that Following Jesus Doesn't Cost A Lot Then You Probably Aren't Following Jesus**

The third thing we need to see if we are going to count the cost of following Christ is.... **Following Christ Could Cost You Your Physical Life (vs27)**. **Luke 14:27** says that we must "bear [our] own cross". Listen... the cross isn't a cute little symbol to wear around your neck – it is a device of extreme torture and death. It is the equivalent of our electric chair, gas chamber, or hangman's noose. It's like wearing a noose around your neck. Try that and see where that takes you... no where good I promise you. But the symbolism here is clear... Christ is saying that if you want to follow me then everyday you must pick up your torture... everyday you must fight the fight against comfort... everyday you must be ready to die to yourself... and everyday you must be ready to give up your physical life if necessary.

It's a change of mindset. We often live our lives as if we will never die, we will never face persecution, we will never have to make a choice whether to worship Jesus or be killed... so when those times do come... we won't be prepared and the chances of us handling the situation poorly are drastically increased. If I'm caught up in the pleasures of this life and haven't given one thought to denying myself for Jesus or giving my life for his cause and then I'm approached by a gunman, much like Cassie Burnall was at Columbine, and asked if I believe in God... I'm likely to say No.. in order to save my skin. Thank God Cassie made a different call.

In order to make the right call, Jesus wanted his followers to feel close to death everyday knowing that each day may be their last. They were to wake up each day thinking; "today my life may be required of me for Christ... am I ready to give it." So the question is simple... if muslim

terrorists were to invade our worship service this morning and make each one of us reject Christ as our Lord or be killed... what would you choose? You say, well Shevi.. that won't happen. Listen, it happens almost every single day in other parts of the world. Just the past two months over 500 people in Nigeria have given their lives in this exact scenario. And you need to know that it very well could happen in our lifetime. Are you ready to give your life? **If You Find that Following Jesus Doesn't Cost A Lot Then You Probably Aren't Following Jesus.**

Lastly, we need to see that ... **Following Christ Will Cost You Your Excuses (vs28-33)**. Look again at **Luke 14:28-32**. You see... your excuses will not save you. We see two scenarios here. One of a builder who starts building but doesn't have enough money to finish. And one of a king who goes out to battle but hasn't prepared his army to win. The application is simple. If you start building but don't have enough money to finish... you will be mocked. Your excuses will make no difference; "I didn't know it would cost me this much"... or "I didn't know I couldn't take a break," will mean nothing. You should've known the cost ahead of time. And if you go to war but don't have enough money for soldiers and equipment... you will be defeated. You can't offer terms of peace after the battle starts... meaning you won't be allowed to accept Christ after he pours out his wrath. Your excuse... "I didn't know the fight would be this hard" will mean nothing because you should've known.

This is why we need to be honest to people when sharing the Gospel. We can't feed them a bunch of hooey just so they will say yes... we need them to know the fine details so they don't start building and quit or go to battle and be defeated. Don't you get that! That's why I can't just preach all the good stuff and comfort you... I must also preach the very challenging things to transform you.

Look again at **Luke 14:33** ... you must renounce all excuses. You can't hold onto your life... and you can't make excuses. "I'll follow Jesus but.. I won't stop that, or I'll follow Jesus but I won't go there... or I'll follow Jesus but I won't serve here. Nope that's not going to cut it. In order **to keep from renouncing Christ you must renounce everything else**. And... **If You Find that Following Jesus Doesn't Cost A Lot Then You Probably Aren't Following Jesus**

Application (Resolution, You)

The bottom line is that it costs everything to follow Christ. So... What does that mean practically speaking in your life? It means a **Blank Check**. A Blank Check means telling Christ that you are willing to go where ever he sends you ... just write it in the blank. It means telling Christ that you are willing to do whatever he wants you to do... just write it in the blank. It

means telling Christ that you are willing to reach whoever he tells you to reach... just write it in the blank. It means telling Christ that you are willing to deny yourself whatever he tells you to... just write it in the blank. If you can't give Christ the blank check then you can't be his disciple . **If You Find that Following Jesus Doesn't Cost A Lot Then You Probably Aren't Following Jesus**

Conclusion

You each are being given a **Blank Check** right now. There is a place for you sign your name and a couple of things that you need to pray for God to show you what to write in those blanks. We are going to sing a song... and as we sing it I want you to... if you are willing to... write your name in the place for your name...Then pray for God to show you this morning what exactly he wants you to write in some of these blanks. If you can't figure it out this morning thats fine... we challenge you to pray over this blank check for the next week and ask God to show you what to put there... or you can leave it blank and put it on the fridge to remind you that your life is God's.

If while you are praying God speaks to you clearly about something and you want prayer... I and the elders will be here to pray with you.