

THE COST OF BEING CHRIST'S DISCIPLE

Luke 14:25-33

TEXT: *Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-- yes, even his own life-- he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 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. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

The night before Jesus was crucified, He told His disciples: ***My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.*** In 15 Now and then, an example of such a love is reported. Someone slips and falls onto the tracks of a New York City subway, and seconds before the next train arrives someone risks his own life by jumping down between that third rail that carries the deadly electrical currents that run the train to pull the helpless victim to safety. During wars, reports surface of soldiers who fall on a live grenade, sacrificing their own lives to save their fellow soldiers from being harmed. These are fine examples of the kind of love that Jesus demands of us.

God's very first commandment: ***You shall have no other gods,*** is explained by Martin Luther in his Small Catechism exactly as all of Scripture teaches when he writes: What does this mean? **We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.**

The words of our Savior set before us this morning broadens the meaning of what God demands of us when He tells us to SIT DOWN AND CONSIDER THE COST OF BEING HIS DISCIPLE. I. The cost is extreme; but, II. Heaven is worth the cost.

I. But first of all, it's essential that we understand what is a disciple of Jesus. This is important because what the Bible reveals about this is NOT what human reason believes. Human reason imagines that being a disciple of Jesus is like the thousands who followed Jesus 2000 years ago. The world would define both the Christian and disciple as one who tries to follow the teachings and philosophies of Jesus Christ. What they fail to understand and believe is that a true Christian is a disciple, and at the same time he is one who has been called, gathered, enlightened and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. For Scripture reveals: ***no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.*** 1 Co 12

What this means is that it is by God's grace alone that any one of us here today can lay claim to the title "disciple." It's not a matter of good works, but a matter of faith, created and worked by the Holy Spirit. What this means is that when the water of Holy Baptism pours out and splashes upon the forehead of a tiny baby, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon him, working the miracle of faith, giving even that tiny baby the faith, knowledge and trust in Jesus that is required for salvation. In short, it's a miracle, not a

matter of human evaluation and choice. A spiritually dead baby is made a disciple of Christ.

Today our Savior advises us all to sit down and consider what this means:

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' 'Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 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. While unbelievers will do this with their human reason that suggests that is enough to be a relatively good person, you and I are called to consider the extreme demands that being a disciple of Christ requires.

Jesus Himself says: *If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-- yes, even his own life-- he cannot be my disciple. any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.* The meaning is obvious: there is no middle ground; no 20/80 split. When it comes to a choice between mother, father, son, daughter, or even our own life and Jesus, love for Jesus must be 100%. Everything else must go. Is Jesus just speaking in hyperbolic terms? Is He just exaggerating to make a point? Remember Martin Luther's explanation to the First Commandment that we make our children memorize: **We should fear, love and trust in God above all things!**

At this point, some will walk away. They will mutter to themselves, "You know, I once rushed a burning vehicle, risking my own life to rescue a person trapped inside. I was called "a hero" by the local news. And not I must also hate my own child? This is madness. This cannot be a god of love!"

Others who do believe Jesus to be the Son of God will cry out in despair: "My God, what can I do to be saved, let alone to be called your disciple! For your Law is clear and it condemns me!" Jesus once said: *No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.* Mt 6 Already, each of us must confess that we have failed in this aspect of our discipleship. Proof of our failure rises before us even today when we give our best offerings to the Lord, since not one of us is able to give an offering to the Lord that reflects complete trust in Him. Are they REALLY our best? Or has there been a 50-50 split, or even a 90-10 split: 90% for Jesus, and 10% for my own self-interests and pleasures? What does He mean when He says: *any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.*

As we sit down and consider these things, only a true disciple will not despair and run away from Jesus. That's because a true disciple of Jesus is one who knows and believes what God has done for us through Jesus. This Law of discipleship is like all of God's Law. It reveals to us our need for a Savior. And in Jesus we find that salvation. For our salvation, we find no comfort in examining our discipleship. Instead we are told: *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* He 12 Why? Because God did what no one can do. *God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish*

but have eternal life. In 3 Fix your eyes on Jesus and you will see your salvation in the One who paid for ALL our sins and failures. He redeemed both unbelievers and disciples alike with this divine sacrifice for the world's sin!

Fix your eyes on Jesus, and you will see the extreme cost that God graciously paid to possess you, and at the same time you will learn the value of being His disciple, for you will also see that for God to do this, heaven must surely be worth more than anything on this earth!

II. Heaven must be worth the sacrifice of everything we know on this earth if Jesus was so desirous to have us with Him that He would willingly be declared the sin of all mankind and to endure the shame and suffering of the cross where He endure God's wrath in our place. He who created all things, this beautiful world and all its pleasures, though still degenerating under the curse of sin, has boldly promise a new heaven and earth that far surpasses all that we know and have here! Heaven must be worth more than anything on earth!

Heaven must be worth it if Jesus Himself commands His disciples to be willing to give up everything, from parents to children, from all earthly wealth to our own lives, to be His disciple.

Heaven must be worth it if generations of Christian disciples before us have gathered together for the past 2000 years to hear the blessed promises of the forgiveness of their sins, and have given generously of their time, energy and money to keep the preaching of the Gospel alive to this day so that THIS generation of disciples can still enjoy its saving assurance.

Heaven is indeed worth it, so Jesus says: ***...anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*** Jesus says this because being His disciple is not a matter of our reason and choosing, but it is a matter of being by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit who made us His disciples by creating faith in our hearts even when we were infants, keeps us in this faith by His power in the Gospel that we preach and the sacraments. So while we look to His cross for our salvation, we are told that He will give each of us our cross, and throughout our lives, many crosses, which our Heavenly Father uses to keep us humbly trusting, not in our own good works, but in the works of Jesus. He keeps us in that state of repentance by showing us our sins with the Law, so the cross of Jesus is our joyous comfort of forgiveness. So that we live day and night like that criminal that was crucified next to Jesus, pleading, ***Jesus, Remember me when you come into your kingdom.*** Though he lost his life, he gained Paradise.

As we weigh the cost, and the reward of faith in Jesus, our crosses become amazingly bearable. And as disciples of Jesus who carrying our crosses for our Lord and Savior, others will join us: our children, our grandchildren, our friends and neighbors. They will ask us about the hope that we have, and as we tell them about Jesus, the Holy Spirit who created faith in my heart will gladly do the same for them. Amen