



16<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
September 29, 2019  
Luke 14:25-33

“Count the Cost”

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! In the name of Jesus, dear fellow redeemed by Jesus' blood,

“What am I doing?” Have you ever said that? I've said that to myself numerous times in my life. I few times stick out pretty clearly. From about 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through 8<sup>th</sup> grade my friends and I would play two-hand touch football every single recess, every single day, rain or shine, wind or snow. When I got to 9<sup>th</sup> grade I decided not to play football. But my friends convinced me to play my sophomore year for JV. I had never played competitive football before. So arrived at the early practices about a week and half before school started for practices with the varsity, about in the middle of those practices with the sweat, the pain, the aches, the drills, the conditioning, I said to myself, “What am I doing?”

I remember once about 4 years ago in the evening of one of my pastor conferences we were invited to a congregation member's home. At his home his 18 year old son had built a homemade extreme sports swing. They like used an arrow to shoot this rope high up into a tree branch and somehow tied it up, put a swing on the end of it, then built this rickety scaffolding up. So, you'd climb to the top, get on the swing, hold on, and drop off the side of this scaffolding. It felt like you were free falling to the ground. I remember getting about half way up thinking, “What am I doing?” There's probably a thousand things that could have gone wrong and had I really thought about it, I probably wouldn't have done it, but I survived and it was fun, although I didn't do it a second time.

What about you? Have you ever stopped yourself and asked, “What am I doing?” Maybe it was getting into something risky, maybe it was a quick decision, maybe it was an impulse buy. Now, it's one thing to make an impulse buy or a quick decision about something small, but...what about when it comes to something really important, something that will impact the rest of your life, like what college to go to? Do you just randomly pick one out? Or what about when it comes to what job? Or what about when it comes to picking a spouse? Do you just happen to meet someone randomly and decide to marry them? Or do you spend some time getting to know them before you commit the rest of your life to that person?

The last few weeks we've been hearing some hard words from our Savior and today is no different. Jesus wants us to be aware of what it means to be a Christian, it's not a flippant thing, it's not something we can just impulse buy in on, being a follower of Jesus requires total commitment. And Jesus tells us a number of things that are meant to shock us. He uses three statements to drive this home, the rest simply explains these three statements. Here they are: **“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.”** Then he says, **“And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”** And finally, **“In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciple.”**

The first statement is probably the one that is most shocking to us. If you don't *hate* your family, even your own life, you can't be my disciple!?!? What does that mean? The last few weeks we've heard some difficult things from our Savior, that being a Christian won't be easy. We're going to have to deal with division, the only way to heaven is a narrow door, and we need to be so humble to realize we can't rely on ourselves for eternal life. Now, Jesus ties it all together. He uses the example of earthly relationships that tend to be the strongest to point out that we can't let anything in this life come before him. First, there's the relationship of child to parent, then spouse and children, then brother and sister, and finally the relationship you have with the person you know the best...yourself! Your own desires for a happy life! Jesus points to these strongest relationships we have and tells us that if those relationships, or even our own lives, try to push their way to the top of our priority list, then we have to *hate* those things!

But wait a minute. Doesn't God tell us things like, **"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer?"** And **"Love your neighbor as yourself"**? What is Jesus talking about here? Yes, God wants us to love our neighbor. But the love God calls on us to have for others isn't an affectionate, emotional love. It's way deeper than that. The love God wants us to have for others is a love for the soul. Love for the eternal well-being of people and God wants us to have that for all people. Jesus isn't contradicting that kind of love. Jesus is talking about a very specific situation. A situation where those closest to us – Father, Mother, Spouse – if any person tries to rip Jesus away from us- regardless of our relationship or affection for them – God wants us to be prepared to hate them for doing that. This is where it is difficult for us. Hate and love at the same time. God does that. He hates sin, he hates it when people turn away from him, but at the same time he continues to love all people and want all to be saved. So, we may hate a loved one for trying drag us away from Jesus, we still love them, we still care about their soul. This is a serious warning! If we let anything in life become more important than Jesus, we can't be his disciple.

Next, to drive this home, Jesus says, **"And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."** Each Christian is not just going to have family and friends who may try to rip them away from Jesus, but they're going to have their own specific struggles and burdens that will try to tear them away from our Savior. Our crosses may look very different but each of us has them and if we don't bear those crosses, we can't be Jesus' disciples. He wants us to know that heaven is so valuable that it's worth dealing with some hardship here.

Finally, Jesus drives it home by saying, **"In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples."** Nothing in this life can come before our Savior. We must be willing to give up anything and everything to be Jesus' disciples. It may cost you a relationship with a family member who wants to ridicule Jesus or His Word, it may cost you giving up a job or a love of things.

The cost of being a disciple is incredibly high. It means being willing to give up EVERYTHING we have on earth. So, whether you've been a Christian a long time, or for just a little while, or you're not sure if you want to be a Christian, Jesus tells us to consider the cost. Consider the cost so that when life does become difficult, when it tries to rip us away, instead of being surprised and taken off guard, we'll be prepared.

That's the point of the two illustrations Jesus uses. If the person who wants to build the tower doesn't consider the cost and just starts building it, when the man realizes how much money it's going to take to complete the tower, he won't finish it, he'll quit and then he'll even be ridiculed for biting off more than he could chew. Or a king going off to war, when he sees he's overmatched he'll surrender because he knows he can't win. The cost is too high. So, if someone fails to count the cost of following Jesus and decides the cost is too high, they'll stop building the tower, they'll surrender, give up and walk away from Jesus.

But walking away from Jesus? It's incomprehensible, isn't it? After what he's done for us? Think about it: Jesus counted the cost, didn't he? He counted exactly the cost that it would take in order to save this world from it's sins and rebellion. And what are we told? **"Who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame."** Jesus came to have a single-minded focus, always fearing, loving, trusting in God above all things, above his family, above his struggles and burdens, above his own life itself. He kept a perfect and complete trust in God, following God's will so completely that He laid His life down on the cross. He felt every bit of the rejection that we deserved from God. And for what purpose? So that in His glorious resurrection from the dead He forgave your sins and won for you your real home in heaven forever. That's how much He loves you, that's how much He wants you to be with him forever in heaven!

But we're not there yet. We're still here. And while we're here Jesus wants us to know what we're in for. It's a war, it's a battle every day. And the stakes are high – eternal death is stake. If we're not prepared to hate family, to carry our crosses, if we're not prepared to give up everything, we'll end up like the man who tried to build the tower but couldn't or

surrender like the overmatched king, we'll quit. Jesus doesn't want this to happen. So, he warns us. The cost of following Jesus in this life may look high, but really isn't. It isn't when we compare it with the alternative: eternal death in hell.

There are many in the world who may at first say, "This Jesus' stuff is great!" But later on faced with bearing a cross or the hardships of life, they quit, they give in, they weren't prepared.

But then there are others who calculate the cost, see the high cost of following Jesus, but they don't run away, they don't forge ahead on their own, they fall into the arms of their love God who saved them from their sin and who promises to carry them through...and He does! The God who loved us so much to die for our sins, also provides the support we need to deal with the high cost of following Him. He gives us everything we need in this life so we can join him in the next.

Trust in your God who saved you, rescued you, carries you and you can be sure that you're not only a disciple of Jesus but that you're prepared to deal with the cost of following him. Amen.