

Count the Cost
9.4.16
Grace UMC, Zanesville

Luke 14. 25-33 - Cost of discipleship

25 A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, **26** *“If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. 27 And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.*

28 *“But don’t begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? 29 Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. 30 They would say, ‘There’s the person who started that building and couldn’t afford to finish it!’*

31 *“Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him? 32 And if he can’t, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace while the enemy is still far away. 33 So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.*

Leader: The Word of God for the People of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

Count the Cost

Opening remarks: Block Party

It was a glorious day!

Just like it was in Jesus’ day. It was a glorious day indeed! He was the biggest thing to happen to Palestine. He was a Dome of the Rock Star! Crowds from all over the region closed in to see Him. Call them groupies! Traveling companions. A large crowd began to move wherever Jesus went. Maybe they were curious. Maybe they were serious.

Perhaps they wanted to see the miracle-working rabbi from Galilee. Maybe they longed to hear an inspiring message. Maybe it was because “everyone else was doing it.” Maybe some came to be touched or healed.

Whatever the case, many people came out to see Jesus.

But Jesus didn’t seem to be concerned with the size of the crowd; rather He addressed the level of commitment.

So Jesus decides to find out just why the people were following Him. He lays it all out on the line. He turns to the crowd and says: *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his family - yes, his own life - he cannot be my disciple.”* (Luke 14.25-26)

Now it seems like this was not a very hospitable comment. Instead, wouldn’t it have made more sense for Jesus to say: *“Wow! What a great crowd! I want everyone to go invite one friend and come back tonight for a carnival. We’ll have live music. All the bread and fish you can eat. We’ll even have a ‘water to wine’ booth. I may even get in the dunking booth. And whoever invites the most friends gets one free miracle. Let’s pack this hillside out!”*

But no! Jesus doesn’t say that at all. He tells the large crowd: *“If you want to follow Me, you must hate your family!”*

“WHAT?!?!?”

“What’s he talking about?”

And so many packed up and left.

“This isn’t what I signed up for!”

Dawn Chesser, UMC Discipleship Ministries:

“What’s going on in this text? Large crowds of people are now joining a growing entourage around Jesus. Some of them may think joining the crowd makes them one of his disciples. He turns to them to clarify what he expects of His disciples.” More than admiration, “He needs people He can count on, absolutely. Their allegiance must be to him, and him alone. Not to family. Not to self-preservation. Not to comfort. And not to possessions. Only to Jesus.”

“In so doing, he wasn’t telling his admirers to go away. He was telling them not to confuse themselves for disciples, because he didn’t.”

“On the other hand, if some of them were willing to be that committed to him, Jesus was also offering a call to discipleship.”

It’s important to note that Jesus doesn’t “browbeat anyone. He simply puts forth what his standards for disciples are, and explains why those standards are as high as they are. It’s because the stakes of his mission and ministry are that high. They still are. But not all will respond to a call to discipleship.” (Dawn Chesser, UMC Discipleship Ministries Website)

So when Jesus says “*if you don’t hate your father or mother, you cannot be my disciple*” He isn’t really saying that we literally hate our family. Or is He?

Idleman explains: “Obviously, hating your family contradicts other teachings of Jesus. (*“Love one another”*) This is strong language *that* was understood in Jesus’ day. “Because in this culture if you were to become a follower of Jesus without your family’s blessing, it was equivalent with hating your family.” So you see, deciding to follow Jesus was seen as “turning your back on your family and walking away from them.”

Jesus is simply up front with the crowd about what the cost may be to follow Him. He says it may mean “offending your parents or grandparents”...and even “being cut out of the will or even cut off from the family.”

What might it mean for you?

Maybe, it will mean disappointing your father or mother.

Maybe you will be ignored by your siblings.

Maybe your spouse or children will criticize you.

Maybe your friends will laugh at you. Or abandon you.

Jesus: “*If you want to be My disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison*” (Luke 14.26 NLT)

In other words Jesus may be saying, *‘If you’re not willing to choose Me over your family, then you are not ready to follow.’*”

Other translations use the phrase “*love Me more*” rather than “*hate.*”

In either case, Jesus makes it clear, that when defining our relationship with Him, “*He wants to be your one and only.*” (Not a Fan. *Becoming a Completely Committed Follow of Jesus.* Kyle Idleman. © 2011 Kyle Idleman. Ch. 4 “One of Many or Our One and Only?” pp. 55-68)

This is a difficult text to consider. I would like to avoid it.

Are we guilty of watering down the gospel?

One Pastor offers this apology. *“Too often in my preaching I have tried to talk people into following Jesus. I wanted to make following Him as appealing, comfortable and convenient as possible.”* (Not a Fan. *Becoming a Completely Committed Follow of Jesus*. Kyle Idleman. © 2011 Kyle Idleman. Introduction, pp. 12,13, 14, 15)

What Jesus seems to be doing here is pointing the people in the direction of understanding what it means to truly Follow Him.

“Following Jesus... is more about... repentance than forgiveness...surrender than salvation... brokenness than happiness.. Death than life.” (Not a Fan. *Becoming a Completely Committed Follow of Jesus*. Kyle Idleman. © 2011 Kyle Idleman..Introduction, pp. 12,13, 14, 15)

Idleman continues:

Crowds are happy to follow Jesus as long as that doesn't require any significant changes or have negative implications.

But following Jesus will cost you something.... (It) always costs something.

A telling question: *Has following Jesus cost you anything?*

Is He one of many? Or is He your one and only?

Some questions to consider:

1. *For what do you sacrifice your money?* - “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matthew 6.21; our bank account says a lot about what we value in life. It may determine our true loyalty. Are we a Fan or a Follower?
2. *When you're hurt, where do you go for comfort?* - Where do we go when we're in need? A person. Food. hobby. A place. A thing. A place. God wants to be our all in all.
3. *What disappoints or frustrates you the most?* - What happens when we lose something life - like a game, a job, a relationship, a possession, investments.... Have we gotten out of balance in our lives?
4. *What is it that really gets you excited?* - what is it that really pumps you up? Sports, music, work, appearance, working out, cleaning, decorating?

“Could it be that things that excite us or disappoint us point to that which is more important to us than Jesus? Could it be that these things, all of which are fine and good, are robbing God of our whole heart?” (Not a Fan. *Becoming a Completely Committed Follow of Jesus*. Kyle Idleman. © 2011 Kyle Idleman. Ch. 4 “One of Many or Our One and Only?” pp. 55-68)

Are you a Fan or a Follower?

Is Jesus your One and Only?

Will you decide to Follow Jesus?

Have you stopped to Count the Cost?

John was a church leader in Romania during the communist era. Speaking at a Mennonite Seminary a few years ago, he described how it was at that time:

‘During communism, many of us preached... and people came at the end of a service, and they said, “I have decided to become to follow Jesus.” We told them, “It is good that you want to become a Christian, but we would like to tell you that there is a price to be paid. Why don't you reconsider what you want to do, because many things can happen to you. You can lose, and you can lose big.’ He said that a high percentage of them chose to participate in a three-month class to better understand the decision of following Jesus.

'At the end of this period, many participants declared their desire to be baptized. Typically, I would respond, "it's really nice that you want to become a Christian, but when you give your testimony, there will be informers here who will jot down your name. Tomorrow, the problems will start. COUNT THE COST. Christianity is not easy. It's not cheap. You can be demoted. You can lose your job. You can lose your friends. You can lose your neighbors. You can lose your kids. You can even lose your own life."

He simply wanted people to be at the place that following Jesus was so important to them, that if they lost everything it would still be worth it. (Not a Fan., Idleman, p. 66)

If following Jesus cost you everything, would it still be worth it? (Idleman, p. 66)

Are you a Fan or a Follower?

Is Jesus your One and Only?

Will you decide to Follow Jesus?

Have you stopped to Count the Cost?

There are Fans and there are Followers.

"Some of us *admire* church buildings, stained glass, outreach programs, Bible Studies, worship services, music, and yes, even Pastors. We love it all! and we come faithfully and enthusiastically week after week! (Idleman)

And many of us believe in Jesus. But the question is, are you willing to follow Him at all costs?"

Luke 14. 25,26,33

"If you want to be my disciple, you must love Me more than—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. (v. 26)

"But don't begin until you count the cost. (v. 28)

"So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own. (v. 33)

Are you a Fan or a Follower?

Is Jesus your One and Only?

Will you decide to Follow Jesus?

Have you stopped to Count the Cost?

Jesus calls us to be His followers.

Some of us are more like Fair Weather Fans.

Sometimes we choose to follow no matter what the cost.

Before committing to Follow Jesus, we must Count the Cost.