

The Cost of Discipleship

Luke 14:25-35

Prayer:

Intro:

Casas por Cristo – Materials Prepped

Every year, Redeemer takes a group of people to Juarez, Mexico and we build a house for a family because of Jesus. We'd love to have you come with us, and you can sign up at redeemerchristianchurch.com/Mexico! But when we get down there, we show up to a job site with all the materials assembled by the Casas por Cristo staff. They have every bit of lumber, of OSB board, of blackboard, the right amount of sand for the stucco, the correct amount of windows, the correct lengths of chicken wire, and sheet metal for the roofs. All the Romex and light switches. They have the paint and enough nails. All of it is organized and there. They have thoroughly counted the cost of building the house for the people they are seeking to bless and share the gospel with. As labor, we get to show up, follow instructions, have a good time, and have gospel conversations with the family. We don't have to go back to the hardware store because we didn't buy enough lumber. It's a good thing too because we'd have to cross the border back into the states if we had to. If we did that enough times, we'd run out of time or break the budget for building the house and not accomplish the task. But as it is, we get to hand the keys to a completed home to a family and pray for them and give them a Bible and introduce them to a local pastor.

By contrast, I can't change a light switch with less than three trips to Home Depot. I do a bad job of counting the cost of my little tiny weekend warrior project, partly, because I'm not a

professional. I'm at best a hobbyist. It's not the most important thing in my life. I don't care that much. And therefore, when I set out to start that project of changing a light switch, I don't count the cost.

Following Jesus is similar. Following Jesus is a costly endeavor. It takes some sober reflection about what it means, what it will cost us to follow Jesus in terms of relationships, the suffering we may endure, the possessions we have to hold with an open hand, in case they are asked to give up for his sake. But much of the time, myself included, we don't count the cost. We don't care. We don't think about it what we may have to give ups or prepare our hearts to surrender those things. We're hobbyist, weekend warriors for the kingdom of God as it were, half-heartedly, and emotionally, almost on a whim making decisions that have eternal implications.

Cost of Loving Jesus More Than People

But it is exactly this half-hearted commitment to the task of discipleship that Jesus was confronting in the crowds that were following him when he, verse 25, **Turned and said to them '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.**

First of all, what? I thought, Jesus, that we were supposed to love our neighbor? Isn't that just a few chapters back in Luke 10, in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, that we are supposed to love our neighbor more than ourselves? Isn't that what you were telling us? This is a jarring statement from Jesus, and I think that's why this pericope starts there. Jesus wanted his crowd to perk up a little bit, to scoot up to the edge of their seats. What? Hate our mom and dad? This is strange to us, but in a traditional culture that valued family above almost everything else in the world, this was deeply offensive.

But Jesus isn't calling us for some sort of violent, unhinged hatred toward our mothers and fathers. He is telling us that as his disciples, we must love Jesus so much that our love for our families pales in comparison. The book of Matthew in 10:37 clarifies this statement when he paraphrases Jesus as saying, "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." Okay! Maybe that makes more sense. I must love Jesus more than I love my parents. More than I love my wife. More than I love my children.

But do I? Do you? Do we love Jesus so much that we would give up those relationships if that were the choice put before us? There's a couple of ways this can play out. I was in Lubbock with some of our friends from the Redeemer Church in Lubbock, and one of their staff members was telling me about a woman who had come to Christ while they were ministering to her. She was a Tech student. No word yet on how she felt about last night. Typically, if you come to Christ in Lubbock Texas, the costs are minimal. You may experience friction with your family if they themselves are not believers, sure. You may not get invited to all the events and things where people will choose to live in ways that are opposed to the kingdom, or you may need to avoid those things yourself. But her situation was different. She was a Chinese national who had to return to China.

What's more, is that she had family connections to the State Police who are actively opposing Christianity right now. She has to consider a cost to her familial relationships by virtue of following Jesus. Are we prepared to stand for Christ when it may cause us strife with our family? Will we stand for our convictions if our children decide to rebel or a spouse walks away

from the faith? Our lives may not be on the line, but there are real emotional costs to following Jesus that we need to consider.

Some of you will have this experience: your children will grow up, and they will take the “Go” portion of the great commission, to “Go and make disciples of all nations” very seriously. Will you let them? Will you be prepared for your child to go overseas, plant roots in a foreign land, and maybe even buried there, for the cause of Christ? I don’t know if I am yet. I need to pray more that God would soften my heart to the idea that my children may die on the mission field someday. But I know this; if I love my family more than I love Jesus, I actually will not love them well at all. I will only love them well if I love Jesus to release them to God’s sovereignty. The trick is that at times, my love, if rightly ordered, will look like hate. It will look like I've renounced my family because I hold them open handed for Christ.¹

The Cost of Suffering for Christ

What’s more, Jesus tells the people following him that verse 27, **Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.** This is no small task. Jesus is saying you have to be prepared to suffer and die on my behalf. And dying on a cross was not a noble way to die. Heroes don't die on crosses. Criminals died on crosses. They would be hoisted up so as they asphyxiated to death, over the period of often several days, exposed to the elements, often naked, the crowds could come out and mock them. Spit on them. Ridicule them. Say this, is what you had coming to you. Jesus is saying, “hey, if you’re one of my disciples, are you prepared to die, to be mocked, to be humiliated for my namesake? For my glory?” This should

¹ Robert H. Stein, [Luke](#), vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 397.

poke at us as 21st Century Americans. Our highest value is safety. The number one question we ask about a new car is not what does it cost, but is it safe. We want our kids to be safe from every germ that floats through the air. We want to be safe from being offended. I'm all for best practices. One of our jokes on staff is that I'm the guy who makes sure the OSHA regulation about wearing closed-toe shoes while moving heavy stuff is followed. We practice good workplace and international safety when we go to Mexico to build a house. But I sometimes worry that our cult of safety might prevent us from taking Kingdom Risks. We may value life and limb and now our emotional safety so much that we are risk-averse in ways that do not make good disciples on Jesus Christ. But Jesus was never on a safe mission, and it is not to a safe mission that he calls us. When Jesus said these things, he was on his way to Jerusalem to bear his own cross, a cross he did not deserve for the sake of God's kingdom. He was going to rescue us from our sin and reconcile us to God by carrying his cross up Golgotha. This was not safe. He was going to suffer physically, to be abandoned by his friends, to be mocked. There was no safe place for Jesus. He was going to die. But that was the mission the Father deployed him on, and he carried it out. He merely asks us to follow a course that he has already charted.

The Cost of Possessions for Following Christ

Finally, Jesus challenges us in verse 33; **therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.** Jesus is asking us to be open-handed with our possessions. Do we own things that we can then turn over to Kingdom use, or do our things own us? There has not been a time in human history where we have not tried to put our hope in what we store up in the barn. This was a problem for people in the Old Testament, this was a problem for people in Jesus' day, and it's a problem for us. We look to things, to material

acquisition to satisfy us. By the way, the question of how much stuff can people get is a question that dominates both sides of the political spectrum. The question is mostly how do you get it. But when we idolize our stuff, we are investing in something that will not follow us into heaven. It will burn. It will end up on the trash heap at some point.

Now, I want to make sure that you don't hear what I'm not saying. I'm not saying you shouldn't have a nice big house. I don't fault you for having a nice big house. I don't want you to feel guilty about that — not my complaint. But if your nice big house keeps you constantly working just to afford the payment so much that you can't invest time in other Christians, maybe, rethink if that mortgage payment is worth it. It might be the responsible thing to downsize and then work fewer hours so you can invest time with other believers.

Or let's say that nice big house sits empty most of the time. You can afford it, but it is kind of a shrine for your stuff. Well, I'm the community group guy at Redeemer. Let me just ask you to host a Community Group. Open your house to people so they can gather and study the Bible together. You may have a kid puke on your carpet someday, but so what? That carpet isn't going to heaven. Let's not store up treasures on earth where rust and moth and thief can destroy them. Let's use the nice things that God has given to us so that we can bless other people and advance the kingdom. That means our stuff isn't something we should clamor for, but an asset to use in the spiritual war we are fighting. Got a big car? Bring someone to church? Got a nice set of tools? Help fix an elderly person's fence. Someone helped me add some can lighting to our weirdly dark living room in order to make Community Group more enjoyable at my house.

Our stuff is by itself value neutral, but if we aren't willing to hand off or use our stuff for God's glory, but more for our comfort, we are guilty of committing idolatry. We are worshipping our things more than Jesus.

Now in any of these areas, if we will not give up our relationships for Christ sake, if we will not endure suffering for Christ's sake, if we will not be ready to give up or use our possessions for Christ's sake, we are like salt that has lost its flavor. Verse 34, Jesus says, **"Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? 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."**² It would be possible for salt from the Dead Sea to be combined with a bunch of calcite and things like that, and if they didn't process it correctly, it would end up flavorless and gross.³ It would be useless. Salt that doesn't taste good doesn't enrich the thing you put it in, so what's the point. You can't use it as fertilizer. You can't put in your field or put in the compost pile. It's less useful than dung. For Kingdom purposes, a person who has their loyalty and allegiance to someone other than Jesus isn't going actually to be helpful in advancing the kingdom. In fact, they make it harder to advance the kingdom.

If you're sitting here and you're thinking to yourself, I want to be willing to suffer. I want to love my family better by loving Jesus more; I want to be more open-handed with my stuff. But it's hard. I need help. If that's you: guess what, me too! It isn't easy to surrender our lives, but if you are a Christian, your desires will be reshaped. That may be a long process, but remember, our salvation isn't contingent on if we host a community group or are rejected by

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Lk 14:34–35.

³ Robert H. Stein, [*Luke*](#), vol. 24, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 398.

our family. Our salvation is a free gift of God, Ephesians 2 tells us. But our salvation produces in us an allegiance to Christ that begins to override our other concerns. If being generous is scary, but you want to learn, great! Don't here feeling guilty. Leave here encouraged that Jesus is going to keep working on your heart. There will be plenty of opportunities to practice being generous, and we get to be generous because Jesus was first. We get to put our human family in proper perspective because Jesus has made us part of his family. He was not ashamed, Hebrews tells us, to call us brothers, to bring many sons to glory. We may suffer, but we can endure because Jesus first bore his cross up Calvary and suffered in a way he didn't deserve so that he could seat us with him in the heavenly places, Ephesians 2 says so that we would be more than conquerors in Christ according to the Romans 8:37. If you are a believer, reading these hard words, leave with hope. The Holy Spirit of God who is in you will help you. He will sustain you. There is great grace for imperfect disciples.

Jesus says these hard words not for the believer, but for those who are following Jesus because they think he can deliver to them their priorities. Jesus isn't about our priorities. If you're here because you want Jesus to make your life easier or to give you social standing or to enrich you, Jesus wants you to do some soul searching. He wants you to prayerfully consider whether or not Jesus is worth following for you. He's promising hardship on this side of eternity. And yet, Jesus, if he is to be followed, as a disciple, he demands and deserves every bit of our loyalty. I started with Jesus' building analogy when it comes to counting the cost of following him. I'll end here with his war analogy. He says, **"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? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.⁴

In the first analogy, Jesus wanted us to count the cost of following him. In human, earthly terms, that cost is steep. But the benefit, the gain is eternity. In the second analogy, Jesus wants us to count the cost of rejecting him. He is the far off king come to conqueror. He is advancing his kingdom into this world. We have a choice to make. We can take the cost of following Jesus, small in eternal terms and gain eternity, or we can decide that we will resist Jesus, and that our priorities are greater. We can cross our arms and say, No. My family is more important than Jesus. My comfort and safety is more important than Jesus. My things and stuff is more important than Jesus. Jesus in the Gospels makes no secret of the idea that there is a place called hell, where people who reject God go and are separated from his love and grace. They have chosen their own path and rejected God. You may be angry at me now because I have poked an idol in your heart, something you love more than Jesus. I don't really care if you're angry at me for it. I still have to preach it. Jesus was trying to clear pews with this saying.

But if you're angry now that Jesus may bring strife into your family, or ask you to take risks for him, or ask you to sell all that you have – or even just let some kid at Community Group puke on your carpet, I want you to know that this story of a conquering king is still filled to the brim with grace and love for you. Jesus is saying there is time still. Let's make peace. Jesus will ask for unconditional surrender, but here's the deal, we get to be with him forever. We get to have a home in heaven forever; we get a new family, we get honor in exchange for our shame. My plea with you today is, while you still have breath, before the king comes, make peace. He is

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Lk 14:31–32.

ready and waiting to receive you with wide open arms. He will ask for everything you have (your family, your pride, your stuff, your sin) to be his, but in exchange, you get everything he has. You get him, the eternal God and all of his righteousness and eternal riches.

1. Read and summarize Luke 14:25-23.
2. Family is an important and good thing, but how might family compromise your discipleship? How might Jesus ask you to count the cost of family?
3. How could you be called to “bear your cross” or to suffer as a disciple of Jesus?
4. What possessions are the hardest to think about giving away for the kingdom? How could you make a plan to steward those things specifically for kingdom purposes?
5. Jesus said this hard thing to keep people from following him who just wanted Jesus to give them what they wanted. How can this hard saying also be Good News to its hearers?

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