

Count The Cost

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[0:00] In Luke 14, verse 25, the Lord Jesus is speaking and telling us of discipleship.

! Discipleship and bearing a cross and building a tower, sitting down, planning, being sure! We've got enough to finish it. And of a king going to war and then facing a much bigger force and desiring terms of peace.

Our Lord says we must count the cost. Talking tonight about the cost factor, the cost factor if you like, of being a disciple. And he calls unto us and he says, consider your ways.

Let's check in tonight with God. Check in tonight with God as to the standing of our devotion to Jesus Christ. How do we measure this tonight for ourselves? The cost factor.

Count the cost. Count the cost. Count the cost. Do we care about spiritual things?

[1:17] About spiritual power? About spiritual truth? About the visitation of God's Spirit? Do we care? Does it matter to us about souls in danger? Do we have a holy passion for the hell bound all around us? Do we care about what the words of Jesus are?

When He says, The thief cometh not but for to steal, to kill and to destroy. To destroy. I am come that they might have life. And that they might have it more abundantly.

abundantly. How abundant is your living? How is your discipleship? It's good to take stock tonight and I trust this will help you think of that and reflect on that. Do we know that life more abundant, that more abundant kind of life, that overflowing life that our Lord calls us to? Perhaps you might think tonight that you are not significant, as if your life doesn't count that much, as if God cannot use you. There's an African saying which sounds like it could just as easily have been said by an Aussie. It goes like this, if you think you are too small to make a difference, try spending the night in a closed room with a mosquito. Who's had that experience lately? I have. That little Aussie makes a big difference and friends, for you, as God's people, each one of us are significant and important. We have a significance in eternity and in the here and now. Sadly, it seems though that God gets crowded out of our lives when we get so busy that we stop, we scarcely stop and we so preoccupied. It's easy to be like that. How can we find this abundance of which our Lord speaks of this spiritual growth that our Lord calls us to? Discipleship. Discipleship.

Someone has rightly put it this way, to be like Christ is to be a Christian. It's being like Jesus, our Lord. It's being more like Him. How can we have more spiritual power that it's all about Him having more of us? Having more of us. How can we grow strong in the Lord when we come to that place of surrender? We must put up the white flag, as it were, and come to those terms of peace, just as that King with the army facing him, outnumbering him, and having to send an ambassador with terms of peace. And we must accept God's terms of peace to truly let God have His way in our lives. I love this quote. A renowned preacher of old said this, the greatness of a man's power is the measure of his surrender. It's how we measure power with God in terms of our surrender. As we give of ourselves to Him, as we surrender of ourselves to Him,

He can have His way with us. Friends, it's time to count the cost. To count the cost for each of us. Discipleship will cost you. Discipleship will cost you. In terms of relationships, in comparison with our love for God, our relationship with our nearest and dearest is to be as hatred. It's a strange concept to get our heads around really, isn't it? Just blows your mind. Our Lord talked to hating father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yea, and even our own life also. Discipleship will cost you.

[5:07] In that most profound relationship with God, that that is all-consuming. He tells of bearing a cross, of following Him. And he compares this life of living for God, this life of discipleship, as a light to someone launching a building project. Now we've got a builder in our midst here today, and I'm sure that he's got to do some estimating,

and he's got to do some measuring, and quantifying, and costing. And as any of us have, when we've had to build some structure, some home, or place, we've had to get our heads around, what's it going to cost? What's it going to cost? And our Lord tells us here in Luke 14, of someone intending to build a tower, you know, that had to, as it works these days, it had to go through all sorts of rigmarole. Someone was telling me this morning, how they've changed their shed at home, and changed it from a flat roof to a pitched roof, without telling the council, and all sorts of trouble. And friends, this is what happens.

You know, you've got to go by the book, you know, you've got to get the engineers record, and the footings, and all the, everything's just got to be just so, and costed, and you've got to get your head around, what's it going to cost? What's it going to cost you to be a disciple?

We've got to sit down and count the cost. There's a cost factor. Our Lord tells of a king setting out to make war, and he sits down first with his army heads, his chiefs of staff, and he strategises, how are we going to tackle this crowd here?

They're outnumbering us. I think we'd be better off sending an ambassador, and rather than confronting them, let's send someone ahead to broker a peace deal, to broker terms of peace.

And our Lord uses these analogies to picture how, for us, we need to make peace with God. And friends, when you go to make peace with God, it's not on your terms, it's on his.

[7:10] It's on his terms. Verse 33 of Luke 14, he says, So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath cannot be my disciple.

That's brutal, isn't it? That's confronting. That's an in-your-face kind of picture, this forsaking of all that we have. And he goes further. He says, And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

He says, for you to be his disciple, to learn of him, to be of his, it means a cross for you. Your cross. That's graphic, isn't it?

The sight of a man bearing the instrument of his death. Carrying that instrument of his own death to that very place of his own execution. What a graphic picture.

That's the picture of discipleship. Discipleship. It's about being willing to pay the price of the letting go of those things we tightly clutch and hang on to.

[8:15] It's about living the crucified life. What about you? Has your flesh been nailed yet? Nailed down.

Have you been crucified? What a picture. It's graphic, isn't it? It's ugly. It's horrific. It's brutal. People who are crucified with Christ.

It's been said, have three distinct marks. They are facing only one direction. When you're on a cross, you can't turn around and move about.

You're stuck. You're in one direction, facing one way. When you're on a cross, you can never turn back. And when you're on a cross, you no longer have plans of your own.

Have you come to that place where there's one direction? There's no turning back. And there's no plans of your own. Discipleship.

[9:17] It's got to cost you. Do we know this surrender? What is it that controls us? Have we relinquished our life into God's hands? Friends, it starts with the will.

The will. It takes a decision. Many lack willpower these days. Willpower even to do smart things for themselves that will help their health. Try as they might.

They go through everything that they can think of. And they still end up doing that which is death by installments, isn't it? You know, willpower.

Can't even give up this little piece of tobacco. Simple things can be hard for us to have the intestinal fortitude to deal with.

Let alone spiritual things. Spiritual decisions. Spiritual things. Like one preacher put it, challenging complacent Christians one day. He said this.

[10:17] How can you pull down the strongholds of Satan if you don't even have the strength to turn off your TV? Now, there's good and bad on TV.

But when there's bad, we've got to use the off button, don't we? How much more important is it that we get spiritual things right? That the Holy Spirit will motivate us to do that which will help our soul. It's willpower then. That God helping us. God making us succumb to His will, really. That we crumble before His awesome greatness in surrender.

Here's what a preacher said. Surrender is not the surrender of the external life, but of the will. When that is done, all is done. There are a few crises in life.

The greatest crisis is the surrender of the will. The surrender of the will. It takes that surrendering, that decision to surrender. To be willing.

[11:20] To be willing to step over the line. Willing to put our words into action. You know, if we got our songbook and honestly sung one of these songs, we'd be saying, I surrender some.

Wouldn't we? I surrender some. Those things that I can get by without, I'll surrender those. But I want to hang on to a few of those other things.

I surrender some. The great crisis is the surrender of the will. There's no holding back when you're a disciple. That's what our Lord wants for us.

That's the abundant, the more abundant life. This is not to condemn. This is to exhort you to aspire to this. Amen. I don't think I've arrived there yet.

But God willing, I pray I'm on the road. No holding back. Here's a story of a lady called Betty Scott who became Betty Stan. She grew up in China.

[12:20] Her parents were missionaries there. In her years of college in preparing, she penned a prayer that has become the petition of many other believers who longed to live a life of unconditional surrender.

It goes like this. Lord, I give up my own plans and purposes, all my own desires, hopes and ambitions, and I accept thy will for my life.

I give up myself, my life, my all utterly to thee, to be thine forever. I hand over to thy keeping all of my friendships, all the people whom I love, are to take second place in my heart.

Fill me now and seal me with thy spirit. Work out thy whole will in my life at any cost. For me to live is Christ.

Amen. Betty completed her schooling and she returned to China as a missionary. She married another missionary worker in December 1934, just weeks after the birth of their baby girl.

[13:23] Betty and her husband were taken hostage by hostile communist soldiers. And within a few days they were beheaded. Betty was 28 years old.

When she wrote, work out thy whole will in my life at any cost, she had no way of knowing what that full surrender would cost her.

Although some might consider the cost extremely high, we can be confident that Betty, having laid down her life for Christ, would not think the price too high.

Now, thankfully, I was reading another reference to this, that she left her little baby in the hut and the baby was saved.

And amazingly. But Betty paid a price. There was a cost. A cost. And we should count the cost today.

[14:21] One of the keys for us is that there'd be no holding back. No reserving things, those cherished things, that we will not let go. Forsaking all that we have.

And receiving all that he is. Here's another story to illustrate. Another example. Here's a man called Maia.

And one time he was at a crucial point in his ministry. He sat dejectedly. He said, my ministry is unfruitful. I lack spiritual power.

And suddenly it seemed to him as if Christ was standing by him. Saying, let me have the keys to your life. Christ said, let me have the keys to your life.

And the experience was so realistic that Maia reached into his pocket and took out a bunch of keys. Are all the keys? Are all the keys here? Yes, Lord.

[15:23] All except the key to one small room in my life. And it was as if Christ said, if you cannot trust me in all the rooms of your life, I cannot accept any of the keys.

And Dr. Maia was overwhelmed with this feeling as Christ was moving in his life. That he cried out, come back, Lord, and take the keys to all the rooms of my life.

Take all the keys. God's terms of surrender are unconditional. Let us not give the devil a foothold. Let us not hold back. Let us come to God on God's terms. Unconditional surrender. When Stanley found the missionary Livingstone in darkest Africa, the great missionary who spent 30 years there, Stanley wanted Livingstone to come back to England with him.

But Livingstone refused to go. And after this meeting, two days later, Livingstone wrote this in his diary. March 19th, my birthday. My Jesus, my King, my life, my all, I again dedicate my whole self to Thee.

[16:43] Accept me, I grant, O gracious Father, that ere the year is gone, I may finish the work, I may finish my work. In Jesus' name I ask it, Amen.

A year later, his servants found him on his knees, dead, in a posture of prayer. My Jesus, my King, my life, my all, I again dedicate my whole self to Thee.

What a prayer. We could say all of these things and I could say, well, you've heard this pleasant story, this pleasant dissertation about discipleship, of counting the cost.

But I cannot leave it there. Every message must have this element, personal application. Personal application. What of your life?

Your life. You, in your shoes. Perhaps you may say, I'm not significant. I don't matter much. I'm not able to amount much for God. I'll just settle for a kind of make-do Christianity.

[17:58] Where my Christianity is just some kind of sideline, side interest. And it's easy to like a Christianity just like that.

That makes little demands on our life, on our time, on our lifestyle. And it's quite true to say, as someone has said, I can't live a holy life, but I can decide to let Jesus make me holy.

We can resign to that. Let Jesus make you what he wants you to be. We can all settle for that comfortable kind of Christianity.

As if we just toy with it. It's just something we play church every once in a while. When we can accommodate it.

When it's convenient. Or is it something truly life-changing? This faith. This life. This more abundant life. Is it something truly life-changing for you?

[19:04] That it means something to you. Means something to you. What a sacrifice today. We've heard it. In other lands, sacrifice means shedding your blood.

What of us? And what's the big sacrifice for you this week ahead? Maybe I'll attend another meeting more than I normally go to. Oh, it's really going to cook me out.

What a sacrifice I've got to make. I'm going to sacrifice for Monday night and come and pray. Oh no. What a sacrifice that's going to be. Is that something that you have notions of?

That sacrifice is something for others. In other places. In other lands. In other nations where others will shed their blood. And stand and be counted and sacrificed.

That sacrifice is something that others do. But it's not for you. It would be too hard for you. You might say, as it says in the heretical version.

[20:05] Here am I Lord. Send Fred. Here am I Lord. Send Joan. Send somebody else. Anybody else. Anybody else but me. Here am I Lord. Sacrifice.

But our Lord speaks to you. To me. To us. To the very core of us. To each of us. Personally. Personally. Personally. He comes. And he wants all the keys.

Amen. There's a cost factor there, isn't there? What? Yeah, I can give God this, that. And what? Don't know about that. Yeah. Just want to cherish that little area that's mine.

But a complete abandonment that he calls for. That's a cost factor, isn't it? Maybe that's too high a cost for you to pay. Whoa, you've done your sums.

You've done your, you know, what's the return on investment? You know. Oh, I've got to calculate this. And, oh, I think that's a bit much. Discipleship will cost you.

[21:03] Cost you. Cost you everything. Everything. Everything that you are. Everything that you have. Discipleship will cost you. In terms of relationships. But everything else pales into insignificance.

As much as it boggles the mind. As to your love for God. That is preeminent. Discipleship will cost you. It will take you to a cross. And you'll carry that very cross to your execution.

It's a one-way journey. Where you give your life wholless, wholless. No turning back. Sit down and count the cost tonight. Think, as it were, of that building project.

Wow. That's cost me a bit more than I reckon. You know, when you start a building project, you can reckon there's all those hidden things. That you think, wow, where did that come from? And so it cost me a whole lot more than what I reckoned it would.

Discipleship's going to cost you everything. Everything. There's a cost factor. Discipleship. And it's like that picture of terms of peace. The terms of peace are God's terms of peace.

[22:06] And they are unconditional. Unconditional. Unconditional.

Surrender. Surrender. Surrender. That's a cost factor, isn't it?

Discipleship.

As someone has said, described it, when a ship is sinking, the crew think nothing of casting overboard the precious cargo. Where's those gold eggots?

They're heavy. They're heavy. Tuck them over. You know? Where's those precious treasures?

Those precious pieces of furniture?

That artwork that's worth so much? It's heavy. Throw it overboard. Cast it overboard. Get it off. Get it off. You'll think nothing of casting overboard the precious cargo when the ship is in danger of sinking.

And when your limb is mortified and it's green and stinks and it's bleeding and pussy, you'll say, yes, cut it off, doctor, please. Cut it off.

[23:05] Cut it off. You'll submit to that severe operation, even to amputation, to save your life, wouldn't you? Yes, you would. And surely a Christian should be willing to give up anything that stands between him and heaven.

Christianity without a cross will be without a crown. What am I saying tonight? Am I saying works? No, I don't want to give you that wrong impression tonight.

I'm talking about discipleship. It's about sanctification. It's about you're saved and you want to live like it, don't you? You want it to count, don't you? Don't you want your life to count as a Christian?

Yeah, sure, you can go the easy route and just pretty much ride the glory chain and you've got your free ticket after all.

But this is about discipleship. If you love him, won't you want to hear him? Won't you want to follow him? Won't you want to put yourself out? Now, if you're truly a disciple, won't it be that it's going to cost you something?

[24:15] Rather than being just a nominal Christian. It just kind of makes an impression that you're a Christian tonight. There's much we could say.

But how will you answer the call personally tonight? It comes down to this. There's a decision point. Where are you now in your Christian life and walk?

What will it be? Where are you now? Take stop now. Where are you standing now? Where you are now? What of the rest of your life? The rest of your life. Florence Nightingale at 30 wrote in her diary, I am 30 years of age.

The age at which Christ began his mission. Now, no more childish things. No more vain things.

Now, Lord, let me think only of thy will. And years later, at the closing part of her heroic life, Florence Nightingale was asked for her life's secret.

And she replied this, Well, I can only give one explanation. That is, I have kept nothing back from God. I have kept nothing back from God.

[25:27] Jim Elliot was killed as a martyr by the Orca Indians to whom he went as a missionary. And he wrote this, God, I pray thee, light these idle sticks of my life that I may burn for thee.

That I may burn for thee. Consume my life, my God, for it is thine. I seek not a long life, but a full one like you, Lord Jesus.

Of course, we know he was so spared to death. It's good for all of us to take stock. To stop and think. To sit down and weigh it all up.

To sit down and count the cost. How is your Christian life? You know, I'm getting a bit personal here. You know, it is personal.

I don't know where you're at spiritually here today. Only you can answer that for yourself. Here's your claim of Christ. Your claim of faith. Just a carefree, casual interest.

[26:35] It's like, yeah, I do stamp collecting and I'm a Christian. It's sort of in that category. Yeah, I collect rocks. I used to do that as a kid.

And I threw it all away. What a load of junk. You know, Christianity is not some part-time kind of hobby. Some passing fancy that occupies our mind a little.

Occupies our interest every once in a while. It's a life-transforming passion that has set us ablaze. It's a life-transforming passion that we're going to do.

And that we'll never be the same again. As one preacher put it, life is too short not to spend it doing what God wants us to do.

Life is too short not to spend it doing what God wants me to do. What do we care about? Are we preparing our soul for God's service?

[27:39] For His praise? When we sit down and count the cost, there's a cost factor here. Do we stop and think of eternity? Eternity. That word.

The word. Eternity. The word. Eternity. Eternity. Or is our life just consumed with what am I doing today? Tomorrow?

Is our life just consumed with the day-to-day? A preacher said this. You are placed here to train for eternity. To train for eternity.

It boils down, friends, today. I urge you, you, you, you, personally, personally here today. It boils down to you and God. You and God.

That's what we're talking about here. You have to make peace with God. On His terms. Thankfully you can. But still, for a limited time only.

[28:40] It must be on His terms. And His terms are unconditional surrender. How would you rate your heart today? Your relationship? What? A preacher said this.

The secret of Christian holiness is heart occupation with Christ Himself. What is your heart occupied with? Your heart. An old-time preacher wrote about holiness and of the practical dimension of it.

And he says it extends to every part of our persons. It fills up our being. Spreads over our life. Influences everything we are or do. Or think.

Or speak. Or plan. Small or great. Outward or inward. Negative or positive. Our loving. Our hating. Our sorrowing. Our rejoicing. Our recreations. Our business. Our friendships.

Our relationships. Our silence. Our speech. Our reading. Our writing. Our going out. And our coming in. Our whole man. In every movement. Our spirit.

[29:40] Our spirit. Soul and body. This is truly. The spirit filled life. Don't we want to be filled. Filled. If we would be filled.

Spirit filled. Truly spirit filled. We must be empty. Yeah. We must be empty. how is your love for God? Our Lord commands us in Mark 12 and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart all thy heart we can say that so glibly can't we?

all thy heart and all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy truth this is his first commandment Christ should be preeminent that we're so preeminently preoccupied with the kingdom of God that that is predominant in our decision making that doesn't matter what the culture all around us is dominated by with its ungodly appetites our devotion is to this the cost factor the cost factor it's about priorities it's about getting first things first but seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you let's realise we're living in a pagan land filled with idol worship and idol worship yes, idol in both both meanings idleness and idolatry preoccupies our land idol worship we're idol in the sense of not doing anything and there's idol worship in the sense that there's false gods all around us and we've got to realise these things discipleship will cost you sit down and count the cost it's counter cultural it means a letting go of everything everything that gets in the way all our idols all our false gods that drag us away from God's will we're surrounded by false gods in Australia they're not painted in metal or wood they're false gods the false gods of our land you know Moody the preacher the evangelist said you don't have to go to heathen lands today to find false gods

America is full of them you could say just as well Australia is full of false gods whatever you love more than God is your idol think of that what do you love more than God shouldn't be anything that we love more than God we've got to come to that gut wrenching place I know Adam loves this scripture Romans 12 I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice holy acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service and be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God that's radical isn't it now I mentioned it this morning we need to get radicalised you know radicalised as Christians as it were not meaning we're going to go doing crazy things but but we need to believe in what it says and put it into our shoes and live it friends a preacher said this there's a common worldly kind of Christianity today that many have and think they have enough a cheap Christianity which offends nobody and requires no sacrifice which costs nothing and is worth nothing end quote are you in the will of God in the will of God wow that's a big question isn't it

I know I could reflect on that of the things that I should change what's stopping you if not like one preacher put it I'd rather die in the will of God than to live outside of it I'd rather die in the will of God like these folk have given their life's blood in reality in his will than to miss his will to be outside of his will and so friends let's consider this today what will we do will we say amen to this sermon will we amen better yet will we apply apply this sermon will we amen I pray so I pray so I pray so for me we don't have to wait to try and fail till our next opportunity for a new year's resolution you know usually you wait and try and then you fail with those things resolutions but you can make the changes today because today is the only time you have choose you this day this day whom you'll serve

[34:37] Joshua 24 it's someone put it like this what we do today is more important than what we plan to do in the future isn't that true you know what big plans big plans spiritually what I'm going to do in the future yeah this is what I'm going to do one day what we do today today is more important than what we plan to do in the future to wrap up to sum up our Lord tells us count the cost discipleship this is life more abundant this is wow this is something too good to miss this is not something dreary and drab and dull and boring our Lord says you must count the cost you have a significance a significance in the here and now and in the hereafter let's make today count let's grow spiritually and know that personal victory there is a cost factor for us and it starts right here between our ears with the will it starts with the will of course our will conforming to his will of course him having the predominance the preeminence and we're just basically falling to our knees before his will but we must have that decision point and realise as we sit down and count the cost there's a cost factor to this wow this is going to cost me more than

I thought it would it starts with the will and it takes us to the cross and there's no holding back the terms are full surrender how will you answer the call how is your Christian life have you this life more abundant do you know the reality of the spirit filled life are you growing or stagnant how is your heart what sacrifice is that just for others in other places sacrifice what you mean I actually have got to give up something you mean I've got to give him that kid that kid how is your heart how are your priorities I urge you weigh things up and count the cost choose you this day whom you will serve been talking about the Christian life I'm preaching to Christians here if you've yet to trust him for the first time this means nothing to you you can do all kinds of religious acts and you can crawl over streets of glass broken glass go on pilgrimages and fasting and miss heaven this is not about religious works to save him it's about his work that was done done for all time it's not a doing but it's his done it's not a trying but a trusting of him and his work

I urge you tonight if you've yet to trust him simply crumble at his knees tonight and call upon his name in simple faith call upon him ask him to save you and he will by his mercy and grace he will receive that prayer if you will but call upon his name let us pray heavenly father we thank you we can call on you to know you as saviour in Christ at the cross we came he gave you all Lord the cost was gigantic beyond our reckoning beyond any human counting the cost of the cross what it cost you Lord in the cross to give everything for us to give your only begotten son Lord we thank you for the cross tonight we pray Lord help us each one as we trust you as we grow as Christians help us

Lord help us Lord to count the cost to consider the idols the idleness to consider the laxity the slackness to consider the carelessness the complacency help us Lord to reckon and count the cost tonight help us Lord to come to that place of emptiness that you can fill us that you will be glorified Lord help us to be stirred by these examples of men and women that have given their all for you that we likewise might forsake all that we have all that hinders all that holds us back and enter in into that fullness that you call us to Lord help us to live that victorious Christian life and that this just not be some quaint lecture that just tickles our fancy but Lord let it be something that we think yes I'm going to take action tonight I pray that people will take action tonight in Jesus name Amen