

Counting the Cost

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[0 : 00] One row.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a pastor in Germany Lutheran Church in the 1920s, 30s and 40s and as his country went through the turmoil of the rise of National Socialism Bonhoeffer grew increasingly concerned about an issue that he saw in his own church he saw that in the church while his country was being swept up in nationalistic fervor he saw that his church had begun to love something else more than they loved Christ he saw a church that was pursuing comfort and conformity over courage and faithfulness to Jesus he saw a church that increasingly went with the flow of the culture rather than being counter-cultural and following in the ways of Jesus so he wrote the book *The Cost of Discipleship* which is a great book I recommend it it's not all that needs to be said but what it does say is so important to be heard and so *The Cost of Discipleship* calling the church to consider whether this path that they are on is actually the path of following Jesus or not and before we think well that was a different time a different era we wouldn't do that we must stop and consider how quickly our hearts are turned away from Jesus we must consider how often we love other things more than following him how often we may love comfort and conformity over courage and faithful loyalty it's easy to get caught up in following the crowd it's actually pretty exciting this is why we have believers and eagle fans and all sorts of crazy things that people get caught up in because they love being with the crowd and being excited and being supported in what they do and we live in a world where there is a contest of loyalties where Christ calls us to himself and the world calls us to itself how do we navigate this how do we think about this how do we recognize our own propensities to fall into the same things that Dietrich Bonhoeffer was concerned about in his own church this leads us to our passage this morning we're in the gospel of Luke chapter 14 starting in verse 25 and as usual

I forgot to write the page number anyone want to 821 alright 821 in your pew bible hopefully we'll get you to Luke chapter 14 verse 25 if you're visiting this morning we are continuing a sermon series in the gospel of Luke this section runs from Luke 9 to Luke 19 and this section is dominated by Jesus at the end of Luke 9 turning his face towards Jerusalem turning his face towards ultimately the cross and his death and resurrection and facing and walking towards the greatest suffering that he would embrace and as he's doing that part of what we've seen is that though that was his purpose he was also collecting a great crowd there were many people who were following him some amazed by his power to heal diseases some hungry literally for food that he was producing for those who followed him in miraculous ways at times some eager to see him rise up and lead the nation of Israel in rebellion against the Roman control over them but many of them this crowd was caught up in in this sort of crowd mentality and Jesus has words for them and for us this morning and so this is where we come to in Luke chapter 14 starting in verse 25 let's read this together now great crowds accompanied him that is Jesus and he 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 whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple for which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost whether he has enough to complete it otherwise when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish all who see it begin to mock him saying this man began to build and was not able to finish or what king going out to encounter another king in war will not sit down first and deliberate deliberate whether he is able with 10,000 to meet him who comes against him with 20,000 and if not while the other is yet a great way off he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace so therefore anyone of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple salt is good but if salt has lost its taste how shall saltiness be restored it is no use either for the soil or for the manure pile it is thrown away he who has ears let him hear will you pray with me

Lord as we look at this text this morning we pray that you would give us ears to hear that by your Holy Spirit you would remove the distractions that are flitting through our mind right now that you would take the burdens and the anxieties that weigh us down Lord that you would keep us awake when our bodies are weary and tired Lord that you would help us to have ears to hear not only to hear your word and your call upon our lives but that we would have hearts that are ready to be not only hearers but doers also that we would respond respond to your call this morning by your spirit Lord I ask for your help this morning that you would be with me Lord and that you would be with us and that your word would speak to us this morning and we pray this in Jesus name amen amen as we look at this excuse me as we look at this text this morning

[8 : 13] Jesus has a very simple and striking message for us what he says is half-hearted followers are not really followers at all half-hearted followers followers of Jesus are not really followers of Jesus at all as he unpacks this he gives us a warning he gives us an instruction and he gives us a call so we're going to look through that Jesus warning Jesus instruction and Jesus call as we understand this very sometimes shocking message that half-hearted follower is not really a follower at all so first let's look at Jesus warning you heard it as I read through the text there was a refrain was there not in verse 26 and in verse 27 and again in verse 33 he says you cannot be my disciple and this is such a striking thing isn't it because we think

Jesus is love and grace to us and he has come to us and he has invited us to himself and how could it be possible that one who seems so warm and some who has been so committed to pursuing us and loving us and bringing us to himself would have words like this on his lips you cannot be my disciple and yet he does he exposes three different ways in which we turn our hearts away away from following Jesus with all that we have in verse 26 he talks about our relationships look with me again 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 his disciple now listen friends let's not be over over literal on this okay this is the man who said love your enemies let alone love your family honor your father and mother

Jesus is not talking about us and if you're a teenager here and you're like yeah I really do hate my parents and Jesus says it's okay that's not what he means what he does mean though is that this is a relative term Jesus is saying I want your heart to be so fully mine that it were as if in relationship to your love for me you hated even those who are most dear and most close to you Jesus is claiming a primary loyalty a primary identity saying even the most most intimate of our human connections mother father husband wife brother sister even the most intimate one of our very own lives he says this is these are to be hated in relationship to that is there to have no value in relationship to the value and the love and the devotion that you give to me it is both external the network of relationships that we live in and internal in our hearts we are to die to our self our self will our selfish pleasures our self determination our self salvation strategies whereby we seek to justify ourselves through our work through our play through our pleasure through everything we do and Jesus says you must hate these things in relationship to me or again to restate it you must love me so much that it is as if you hated these things when I was overseas I had the privilege of knowing a Chinese co-worker who worked in campus ministry when he came to faith in college he came through the witness of some friends and he went home and told his parents about his new found faith his parents kicked him out of the house said don't come back until you change your mind you have brought dishonor on this family you have brought dishonor on our culture by turning to this outside thing I knew him quite a number of years after this event he had still only been back to his hometown once he did not stay with his family he was not welcome there the last I had heard from him about his relationship with his family he had talked to his father once on the phone and it did not go well my friend counted the cost of knowing

Jesus many times during those years after his initial profession of faith he could have said this isn't worth it I love my parents too much I've lost my family and I don't know what to do I'm going back he could have gone back and said okay it's not important to me not as much as you are but he didn't we don't tend to face that in our culture in the same way and yet maybe more subtly you feel the pressure to be less than wholehearted in your following of Jesus and in your loyalty to him maybe you feel like you'd like to have one foot in Jesus camp and one foot that's kind of skating along doing okay maybe that's in your career path and with your colleagues maybe that is with your family at home maybe it's with your friends and peers at school Jesus says if you do not hate your relationships that are closest in relationship to me you cannot be my disciple not only does it

[14 : 57] Jesus call us this in relationship to our network of relationships but it also calls us to our way of life to thinking about this this is what I think Jesus is saying in verse 27 look with me again he says whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple now remember Jesus said this before his own crucifixion although we read it knowing that he was speaking knowing what was coming and he was instructing his disciples who would understand later the fullness of all that he was saying here but even they in that moment would have heard pick up your cross as a terrifying call to pick up your cross is to carry the cross beam upon which you would be crucified through the streets it signified great physical suffering crucifixion was terrifyingly painful but it also was a mark of shame it was not something that would be done except in the cases where they wanted to punish publicly make a spectacle of this person who was being crucified and executed it is of course a picture of heading to death and dying to self but it is a most humiliating a most painful way of doing so and Jesus says you must be willing to walk this path we have friends national

Christian workers that we know in Central Asia who sent a report last fall about a friend of theirs a young man who was staying at his relative's house at night three people broke into his house and attacked him they beat him with sticks kicked his head broke his jaw and injured his eyes they demanded that he deny Jesus and make a Muslim confession but he did not deny and they left him to die when he was taken to the hospital the doctor said he would not survive praise the Lord he did survive and now he and his family continue to believe in the Lord and pray for his complete healing they end with this please pray for this guy and his family who are being persecuted for their faith by the villagers this man wakes up every morning bearing a cross of physical pain because he would not deny Jesus he also carries the pain of knowing that his family every day is potentially in danger because of their profession of faith

Jesus says following me is a disavowal of a commitment to our life of comfort to a life of ease to a life of avoiding suffering and pain how can you choose to pursue Jesus in this way what are the ways that you can step away from our cultural movement towards everything being safe and everything being provided and everything being comfortable and everything being easy how can you step away from that and pursue Christ now look Jesus doesn't call us to be stupid he doesn't call us to flagellate ourselves to create suffering on our own in order to feel like we're walking the walk of Christ but maybe there are ways today where you could ask yourself have I been more committed to being comfortable than to being faithful to Jesus are there ways that I have been more committed to going with the flow than actually bearing consequences for following Christ in my own personal disciplines in my own personal habits am I choosing faithfulness or am I choosing ease the third thing that Jesus says is in verse 33 after he tells the two parables that we'll get to in just a minute he comes back to this refrain again he says so therefore if anyone if any one of you therefore anyone of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be in my disciple what about your stuff your earthly possessions your wealth what about your reputation your place in society your place in your community Jesus never says you can't have these things it is so clear in the new testament in the first century there were people who had things even the apostle Paul would claim his Roman citizenship at times for the sake of the gospel but fundamentally he had disavowed that as being the most important thing about him this is the question for us who live in an extremely materialistic culture who live in a culture where we are constantly looking for the next Instagram photo or Twitter feed or something to help us know where we fit in the world Jesus says will you renounce those things and follow me will you forsake the shame that you feel for the things that you don't have in this world will you recognize that that shame can be replaced by the full acceptance and glory of being God's child it does not matter what you have in this world when you have Jesus are you willing to give what you do have and recognize that everything that you have has been given to you and is ultimately at Jesus disposal this is not a Marie Kondo moment where you're just decluttering your life to make it more comfortable and a little cleaner it is sacrificially giving the things that you would rather keep for the sake of following

[21 : 59] Jesus friends Jesus says if you're going to be a follower of me you must surrender all to me or you cannot be my disciple so this is the thrust of his teaching and then in the middle he embeds these two parables his instruction on how we are to think about this and fundamentally both parables have one point this is in verse 28 through 32 the parables of building a tower and going to war the one point is count the cost if you're building a tower why would you begin not knowing if you had the resources to finish it now I know when I lived in China for a few years during

the housing boom and the economic boom there were lots of people who built buildings like this and they didn't feel very ashamed about it it didn't seem like but it seems that in the first century when you look at the parable and how

Jesus says the people began to mock him when he could not finish it what kind of businessman are you when you start a project and you don't have a plan you haven't counted what the cost should be and therefore you cannot finish it shame on you Jesus seems to be pulling on that to say it is disgraceful to not count the cost then he goes on he talks about war if a king has these resources and he goes to war against this guy who has double the resources he's got to think through can I win this war and if he sees that he can't then he should be responsible and sue for peace to avoid bloodshed and his own army being completely destroyed for that king to not count the cost to not look ahead and see what it would mean for them to go to war and to address it at its core Jesus is saying to not count the cost is foolish is foolish in the most biblically weighted way of not just silly and immature but foolish in the sense of being wrong being irresponsible acting without regard to your responsibility before God when Jesus says these things he has I think two audiences in mind because for one one of his audiences is this crowd remember we talked about at the beginning Jesus was collecting a big crowd of people and they may be coming for all sorts of reasons and Jesus doesn't do what the church in the 20th century has at least been tempted to do which is to water down the gospel call and the bar of what it means to follow Jesus come to Jesus no matter what because he's going to make your life easy and we don't want you to think that there's going to be anything asked of you in this so it's not going to cost you very much come and be a part of this come be and we love to build an organization or a movement or a crowd or a mob of people who get really excited about church but who haven't necessarily counted the cost of following

Jesus friends this is why the prosperity gospel is so dangerous because it promises that Jesus is calling you to find in him your best life now the fulfillment of all of your human materialistic dreams and that God wants you to be comfortable and that God wants you to be happy in your own definition of what that means and Jesus says something very different Jesus says if you want to follow me count the cost of leaving everything behind in this world to get everything you ever really wanted in me Jesus message is the call for you to follow me is to go through a Copernican revolution where the world before Copernicus thought that the earth was the center of the universe and that everything revolved around the earth and that's what we do in our sinful selfish hearts we think it's all about us and the call for Jesus and the call of the gospel to believe in Jesus is not Jesus coming and aligning those worlds a little bit more fortuitously for us but it is completely reworking our understanding so that the sun is in the middle of our solar system and we are orbiting our lives around him and he is the centerpiece and as the centerpiece he is the life-giving power that brings all that we need to flourish in the way that God created us to but only as we reorient ourselves in that way remember that this comes right after the passage that Greg preached on last week where Jesus told a parable of inviting people to a great banquet table and this is what Jesus is doing is he's calling us he's saying it's going to cost you everything but you're going to come and eat at the banquet table of the savior and of the creator of the world you're going to come and find in life in relationship to me you're going to find a great joy and abundance

[27 : 54] Jesus call to the crowd was don't be a believer in following me don't be a shallow excited follower of me but count the cost recognize it will cost everything Jesus audience wasn't just the crowd though it was also his disciples who were with him those who had already begun to leave certain times you see this through the gospels there's this powerful moment at the end of John 6 where Jesus begins to teach about his own death and about the need for them to be joined with him in his death using the pictures of eating his flesh and drinking his blood as an image of what that means to be joined with him and then people are turned off they're like that's gross I don't want to do that what in the world this guy is crazy and many people stop following him and he turns to his disciples say what about you are you going to go to and they look at him and they say where else can we go you alone have the words of eternal life

Matthew 19 similarly Peter says haven't we left everything to follow you and they had and yet they continued to learn ongoing in an ongoing way what that meant it's not just the entrance I've renounced it all the first time when I walked in but it's an ongoing thing some of you have walked with the Lord for a long time in this congregation and you have seen the temptations that rise up not in the first five years when you're trying to forsake what you used to have but now that you've been

in life for a long time you see the new ways in which your heart begins to latch onto other things my grandchildren my retirement my health and these things become the thing that we start to live for and Jesus says will you surrender them to me now look we need to be clear on this it is not a matter of perfection the apostle

Peter himself who was one who said we've left everything to follow you was the same apostle who on the night when Jesus was arrested denied him said I don't know him it is not about us being perfect in all of our choices and being perfect in our loyalty this is not the true mark of a disciple what it is is when the Lord puts his finger on something in our lives and he says will you give me this when the Lord reveals something and friends let's be clear Jesus isn't talking about sinful things he's already called us to forsake sin so it's not that we need to give up our porn addiction or we need to give up our embezzlement or we need to give up our bitter spirit that's not what Jesus is calling us to hear Jesus is calling us to give up good things right things that we normally should be able to enjoy but how easily our hearts latch onto them and when

Jesus says will you give me this will you give me this will you surrender this that's when we count the cost you know it it strikes me that one of the deepest ways when I see people when I see some of you counting the cost has to do in relationships some of you are single some of you are single on the earlier end hoping to be married some of you are single further on in life maybe for a second time maybe still hoping to be married or maybe not hoping to be married but I have seen you pursue faithfulness in Christ and counting the cost I have seen you swim against the tide of the current of our culture which says you deserve to be happy go and express yourself there's nothing wrong with that you have chosen faithfulness to

Christ and said I will pursue purity I will pursue healthy relationships I will pursue serving others I will pursue a stewardship of the freedom that I have in this season of my life to be a blessing to others rather than allowing yourselves to wallow in self pity or run off after fleeting pleasure I have also seen some of you who are married count the cost and follow Jesus persevering through disappointment when your life hasn't looked like what you thought it would when you first entered into marriage when your spouse has been a greater disappointment in ways that you never saw coming and I've seen you choose faithfulness to Jesus over selfishness over bitterness over recrimination and fighting and anger

[33 : 43] I've seen you stay in and seek to love and to serve your spouses for the sake of Christ and it's humbling to see you do this these are some of the ways that we count the cost how can we do it well friends there's only one way that we can do this we can only count the cost because as the parable that Jesus tells in Matthew 13 because there is a treasure in a field that is worth selling all that we have in order to gain the reason why we can count the cost and lose it all to follow Jesus is because he went ahead and did this for us Jesus in Philippians 2 forsook the privilege and the prerogatives of divinity to come and take on human form he identified with us in our humanity and he identified with us in our weakness and our frailty and he identified with us by taking our sin upon himself bearing responsibility for that which was not his and headed towards the cross dying in our place for that

Jesus gave up everything even his very own life to be our savior and to rescue us from our sin friends this is the treasure is to be loved by a savior like that to be in relationship to a savior like that to know that this is the God that we are selling all that we have in order to gain this is what the apostle Paul was writing about in a passage that we read earlier from Philippians to count all these things as lost for the sake of knowing Christ being found in him because being related to Christ is the most glorious and most wonderful gift that God has ever given us we who don't deserve it we who have rebelled and run away from it he has come so that we might return and yes there is a cost he says sell it all in order to follow me you cannot be half hearted in this you must be fully in or you are not in at all but to be fully in is to get it all all that

God has for us this is what the good news of the gospel is and this is what the call of the gospel is to believe in Jesus Christ is not to add on a nice thing into our existing life but to believe in Jesus Christ is to go through this revolution whereby everything we have is given to him and we throw ourselves then onto his mercy and his grace and find in him a life of following him that is beyond what we could ever imagine and this is what Jesus does in the last two verses of our passage this morning Jesus call is to be true salt to be a full hearted follower of Jesus so he uses the image commentators have a fun conversation about salt and whether salt can actually lose its saltiness and what kind of salt it was some people say salt never loses saltiness this is just an image it is kind

of hypothetical other people say the dead sea salt was salt that had impurities and over time it would actually decay and become useless

I don't think it matters to be honest with you it is very clear what Jesus is saying salt is worthwhile when it is salty because that saltiness makes it useful it gives flavor to our food and it preserves the things that we rub into it this is why salt is worthwhile and if it is lost those properties it is nothing but a useless rock and the only thing to do with it is to throw it away in the trash heap you can't even use it in your fields or in your fertilizer you have to throw it in the trash because it's useless and this is what Jesus wants to bring home to us if we claim to be a disciple of Jesus that is a follower one who is identified with you guys know right this is what it means to be a

Christian a Christian is someone who is identifying themselves with Christ this is why Dietrich Bonhoeffer was so concerned as those who were Christians were aligning themselves with national socialism as their highest loyalty for us if we are called to be Christians then we must surrender all to Christ everything we have must be his we must make him the priority over all of our relationships over all of our dreams and hopes over all of our belongings and possessions he calls us to have a different orientation of our life where all we do is look to him and follow him and all these other things that the world will say that our hearts will long for and reach out for all these things fall to the side so that we can focus on Jesus and follow him and walk after him and then they find themselves then they find new places in this life potentially sometimes we forsake them and they're gone forever other times

[40 : 04] God gives us new places for them to fit but they fit within a clear uncompromising wholehearted loyalty and faithfulness to Jesus Christ himself one of my heroes of the faith is a 19th century woman missionary named Amy Carmichael if you haven't read A Chance to Die it's my other book recommendation for you this morning A Chance to Die written by Elizabeth Elliot she was born in the latter part of the 19th century to a wealthy family while she was a teenager her family business went bankrupt and she was broke her father soon died tragically after that she spent her late teens and early 20s caring for her family working to provide for her widowed mother as she also then grew in her faith in Jesus and her ministry to some of the working class women in her neighborhood she suffered from a form of myalgia experiencing weakness and pain in her limbs that was a constant companion for her and yet one night at a meeting she heard

God speak to her in an audible voice saying go overseas as a missionary and the cost was great to all around her who would take care of her mother who would continue the ministry but she knew that the most important thing was to obey God's will for her and she said nothing is too precious for Jesus so she gave up those things she went to Japan for a couple of years and had a very difficult ministry experience there she came home and then was reassigned she went to India found a place of ministry among women but even there she found herself outside of the normal missions patterns outside of the normal missions strategies particularly as young girls who were fleeing from temple prostitution in the Hindu temples started to run to her house and say please help me and she began a whole ministry to these girls she was one of the original warriors against sex trafficking in the Christian church she wouldn't have called it that but that's what she was doing she did this for the rest of her life ten years into her ministry in India she had a fall she broke her spine and her hip she was bedridden for the rest of her ministry literally and yet she stayed for another 15-20 years she died where she ministered she's buried there today Elizabeth Elliot writes this about her attitude with all her heart she determined to please him who had chosen her to be his soldier she was awed by the privilege she accepted the disciplines loneliness was one of those how the modern young person always wants to know did she handle it

Amy Carmichael would not have had the slightest idea what the questioner was talking about handle loneliness why it is a part of the cost of obedience of course everybody is lonely in some way the single in one way the married in another the missionary in certain obvious ways the school teacher the mother the bank teller in others but as Amy wrote when I consider the cross of Christ how can anything I do be called sacrifice she knew what God had made her in Christ and she gave all that she had to live for his glory some of you may be called to give up all to go somewhere else to serve him in a missions manner many of you will be called to stay where you are and to live for him in a missions manner for you to think about the wholehearted commitment sometimes it's actually easier to be a missionary because your whole life and job is oriented towards this I feel like this sometimes as a pastor it's very easy for me and I look at some of you and I know how challenging it can be and yet I want you to hear the clear call of Jesus make him first if you love

anything more than him you cannot be his disciple when I survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died my richest gain I count but loss and poor contempt on all my pride the end of that hymn says love so amazing so divine demands my soul my life my all friends this is what Jesus calls he calls us to faith and belief in him and to follow him wholeheartedly we're gonna go to prayer and as we go to prayer the music team will come up but I want to invite you to spend a minute is the [46 : 00] Holy Spirit this morning putting his finger on something in your life today is he saying will you surrender this to me will you give this to me maybe you're here this morning and you've never actually said Jesus here's my whole life maybe you haven't ever surrendered to him in faith maybe he's calling you to do that this morning so we're just going to spend a few minutes in quietness and then I will pray and we'll transition to singing so let's pray together Lord how easy it is for our hearts to already be turning to other things help us to hear your voice now

Lord Lord Lord if there's anything you are putting on our hearts any things that you are calling us to surrender to you any ways that you are showing us the hardness of our hearts where we have not forsaken all to follow you Lord if you're calling some this morning to put their faith in you for the first time and to give up the things that they're afraid to lose help us to hear your voice this morning help us to respond Jesus all that we have it's come from you you're our creator you've given it all to us Lord will you give us the faith to give it back to you to surrender all to follow you to set our hearts not on our own comfort or ease of life but Lord to courageously say that we will follow you and our lives will be for your glory that you we would make you our everything help us Lord we pray in Jesus name amen as we continue to worship let me invite you to stand and sing I will glory in my redeemer whose priceless blood has ransomed me mine was the sin that drove the bitter land prince d bring