

# Following in the Footsteps of Jesus

## COUNT the COST

Matthew 16:24-25

April 16, 2022

Have you ever asked this question, "*How much is this going to cost?*"

Before buying a car....

Before investing in that cruise....

Before getting those Solar Panels....

Most of us don't like to be surprised by the bottom line. We want to know **UP FRONT** how much that big purchase is going to cost.

I have a personal pet peeve ---- companies who don't put pricing on their websites. You know the ones... "*Here are all the things we offer, now give us your contact information and a representative will get with you shortly to schedule a tour of the facility.*" They do this intentionally so that you are forced to listen to their sales-pitch before they drop the price bomb on you. I hate that!!!

When it comes to Christianity, it seems like most of us don't even consider the question of cost and it's certainly not something generally discussed at the annual evangelistic series.

We stick with the tried-and-true talking points that will get people in the tank and boost numbers - but no one ever talks about what it will cost to follow Jesus.

Why not? Because it's an uncomfortable conversation to have. So, we stick with what's easy.

We are impressed by mega-churches that can seat 20 thousand people. We are impressed by full parking lots. We are impressed with activity.....

These things, however, did not seem to impress Jesus. As a matter of fact, scripture leads us to the conclusion that he deliberately tried to **thin** the crowds:

- **Matthew 8:18-20** - Now when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to depart to the other side. <sup>19</sup> And a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go." <sup>20</sup> And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."
- **Mark 8:34-38** - And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. <sup>35</sup> "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospels shall save it. <sup>36</sup> "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? <sup>37</sup> "For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>38</sup> "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."
- **John 6:53-66** - Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. <sup>54</sup> "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>55</sup> "For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. <sup>56</sup> "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup> "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. <sup>58</sup> "This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate, and died, he who eats this bread shall live forever." <sup>59</sup> These things He said in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum. <sup>60</sup> Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard *this* said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" <sup>61</sup> But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble? <sup>62</sup> "*What* then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before? <sup>63</sup> "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. <sup>64</sup> "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. <sup>65</sup> And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father." <sup>66</sup> As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore.

Now why would He do that? Jesus knew that most of the crowds followed Him for the wrong reasons:

- because it was popular
- to see what miracle He would do next

- to get in on the ground floor when Israel was finally restored to its rightful place on the world stage.

He needed them to understand that there is a cost involved with discipleship. He wanted them to re-evaluate the reasons they were following Him.

**Luke 14:25-32** - Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, <sup>26</sup> "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.

- Jesus is using hyperbole - or exaggeration - for the purpose of making a point. Love for Him must be our first priority. Devotion to Him must far exceed devotion to anything else - family, job, etc.

"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

- A person in Jesus' day would not have had to look far to get examples of what it meant to "**Carry his own cross.**" Crucifixions were a daily occurrence and crosses were everywhere. They would have seen how those being crucified were treated. Following Jesus was going to be life changing, but not in the way they had hoped. Instead of national pride and unending food, following Jesus would involve Submission - Rejection - Suffering.

It was time to go deep or go home - It was time to count the cost.

To further His point, Jesus told 2 stories:

"Listen, which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'"

"Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and take counsel whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks terms of peace."

Notice that Jesus said, "**sit down**" - Don't make a rush decision. Take your time. Think about it. Study. Consider every angle. Decide **FIRST** if you are willing to pay the price of discipleship **BEFORE** you decide to follow Me.

Jesus' idea of discipleship is costly. It requires a complete change in priorities which will shake us to our very foundations. Choosing Jesus will pit us against friends and family and mark us as enemies of the world because He is asking for 100% - all or nothing.

- **Matthew 10:22** - All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.
- **Luke 21:17** - All men will hate you because of me.
- **John 15:18-19** - If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. <sup>19</sup> If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.
- **James 4:4** - You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.
- **1 John 2:15** - Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
- **Leon Morris** - Devotion to Christ cannot be less than whole-hearted. Discipleship is not periodic volunteer work on one's own terms and at one's own convenience.
- **John Walker {Costly Grace 35}** - His call is a command for you to *comprehensively* and *absolutely* walk away from the way you do life now so you can follow him down an *exclusive* path through the *narrow* gate that leads to the kingdom of heaven.

Conflict always arises when the gospel is faithfully preached.

- **Luke 4:21-30** - And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." <sup>22</sup> And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?" <sup>23</sup> And He said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your home town as well.'" <sup>24</sup> And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his home town. <sup>25</sup> "But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; <sup>26</sup> and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, *in the land* of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. <sup>27</sup> "And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." <sup>28</sup> And all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; <sup>29</sup> and they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. <sup>30</sup> But passing through their midst, He went His way.
- **Acts 4:1-3** - And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple *guard*, and the Sadducees, came upon them, <sup>2</sup> being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. <sup>3</sup> And they laid hands on them, and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening.

- **Acts 16:22-24** - And the crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them, and proceeded to order *them* to be beaten with rods. <sup>23</sup> And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; <sup>24</sup> and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks.
- **Acts 19:23, 29** - And about that time there arose no small disturbance concerning the Way..... <sup>29</sup> And the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia.

Which is why, in the early church, there weren't many cultural Christians - identifying with Christ was just too costly.

But that is not the case today. There are **LOTS** of cultural Christians. People who claim to be Christians for one reason or another, but who have no intention of actually paying the price of discipleship with Jesus.

More harm has been done in the name of God by people who claim to be Christians, but who live lives that make it impossible to tell them apart from the people firmly attached to the world.

Jesus has told us, that before committing to Him, it is important to count the cost, because choosing Him will mean losing everything this world says is important. But, more important still, it will mean a cross with your name on it. So, He said, count the cost **FIRST**. Decide **FIRST** if loyalty to **HIM** will be worth it to you in the end.

Have you ever considered what following Jesus really means? Have you counted the cost? Are you a cultural Christian rather than a follower of Jesus?

I recently heard the following from Ken Burns, the great American documentary film maker, speaking about his new series on the life of Benjamin Franklin..... ***"We have become focused on the transactional rather than the transformational."***

His words really struck a chord in my thinking about discipleship. Don't we have this same mentality as Christians? What's in it for me? Even Peter asked that question:

- **Matthew 19:27** - Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"

Which is why Jesus said to consider the cost first. Because life with Him is not transactional its transformational.

- **JC Ryle {HOLINESS}**: In conclusion, let every reader of this paper think seriously, *whether his religion costs him anything at present*. Very likely it costs you nothing. Very probably it neither costs you trouble, nor time, nor thought, nor care, nor pains, nor reading, nor praying, nor self-denial, nor conflict, nor working, nor labour of any kind. Now mark what I say. Such a religion as this will never save your soul. It will never give you peace while you live, nor hope while you die. It will not support you in the day of affliction, nor cheer you in the hour of death. A religion which costs nothing is worth nothing. Awake before it is too late. Awake and repent. Awake and be converted. Awake and believe. Awake and pray. Rest not till you can give a satisfactory answer to my question, "What does it cost?"

God does not want blind, deaf or mute followers because being a Christ Follower is serious business. It is not for the faint of heart. It is not for fair-weather types. It is not for those who expect reward or position or popularity. It is for those who have weighed the earthly consequences and decided that they would not have it any other way. It is for those who have decided that Jesus is enough. That in Him they have found everything, no matter what it costs them.

- **Philippians 3:7-8** - But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.