

Luke 14: 25-33; The Cost of Discipleship I. The Consideration of Discipleship II. The Illustration of Discipleship III. The Call to Discipleship

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what does it cost to become a Christian? At first you might say- it costs nothing! Salvation is a free gift of grace- our life has been ransomed by the work of Christ alone. True- but what does it cost you to become a Christian? Well- that answer is a little more complicated! The fact is- to become a Christian will cost you everything! Your life is no longer your own- you now belong- body and soul- to Christ our faithful Savior! At this point in Jesus ministry, there were great crowds following Him as v. 25 opens. Our text today tests the heart and dedication of those would be disciples. Do you really want to follow me? Do you know what becoming a disciple will cost you? When Jesus is popular, it is easy to go along with the crowd. But obedience in the midst of opposition- it is then that you must count the cost of discipleship! Consider the state of the church during the reign of Constantine. After the edict of Milan, becoming a Christian was the popular thing to do. Or during the early days of our country- as in Delaware- only those who could profess faith were allowed to vote. When there are earthly privileges gained by joining a church, the numbers of that church normally increase. But would you join a church knowing that any connection to that church would cost you greatly? Well, today we find that Jesus Christ warns us to count the cost of discipleship because membership is costly. Over the past chapter we have seen that Jesus has some extreme words for us. Some high demands that He places on His people- like do not exalt yourself- and do not show kindness only those who will repay. Rather be generous to the truly needy and put the honor of others before your own. The Kingdom of heaven is not like the kingdoms of men- the thinking of this world is not like the thinking of the mind of Christ! So today Jesus gives a warning to his would-be followers- the cost of following Jesus is great. This really is a continuation of what we saw in Mt. 8 with Cristian's message- for those who say- I will follow Jesus- Jesus responds by saying- do you know what you are saying? Do not follow me if you are looking for an easy life. No- rather count the cost before you come.

I. The Consideration of Discipleship

When we remember the context here, we see that Jesus is not trying to convince us to stop following Him. Rather, this is a warning that rises out of a popular surge in his day. We know that Jesus continues to welcome true worshippers- as 15:1 continues. Jesus was warning against the social followers- thinking that they could go along with the crowd-

benefitting from the ministry of Jesus with little cost to their personal lives. However, Jesus starts in v. 26 saying that you need to consider the cost of following me- how becoming a Christian might affect your life and family. Note- it was the same Jesus that said- Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you- is now saying that you must hate your family and deny those closest to you. The word Jesus uses for hate is *Miseo*- meaning to hate or to love less than something else. The idea is this- when forced to choose one over the other- you will love the one and hate the other. So if we have to choose between family and Christ- if we have to make a decision concerning following and obeying my human loved ones or my God in heaven- I must without hesitation love God and hate my family. Consider the extent of this command. If you follow Jesus- in v. 26- if you come to him and are not willing to deny every member- to forsake every single family member- you are not worthy of Him. Father, mother, brother, sister, wife or child. Like Abraham, willing to sacrifice his only son because God had called to Him- commanding Him to do it! Are you willing to choose me over your family- especially if your family will hate you if you choose me! In Muslim circles, that is exactly what it means! If you become a Christian, your family will forsake you and they may even try to take your life! Jesus tells us to count the cost! It is costly to burn bridges with your family! To chose obedience to God over the natural pull of our human heart. To break a relationship and refuse to obey a beloved man- because that man was opposed to God! We must choose to obey God before man- always! Thankfully, many of us have Christian families that do not force us to choose. But if your family, friend or even dating partner tries to pull you away from Christ and His word- you have to be prepared to hate them and flee! To choose God over every earthly relationship! But this absolute obedience also applies to our self- to love Him even over our own psyche- over my own life or my personal wellbeing! Sometimes- it is obedience to God that puts my life in danger! Think of David- or Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego! Obedience to the Lord is what puts my life at risk! Even today, many Chinese Christians have to choose- consider the cost! Do I obey God or man? If I obey God, not only my family but my own life is put on the line! My own flesh may be cast into prison or tortured! Obedience is costly! Who do you love first? In whom do you trust? Is Christ your all- is He all together lovely and beautiful to you? Is His word more precious- His smile more wonderful than life? Then you will seek Him first and every other family member will be second. Now- to be sure- Jesus is not saying that you must forsake your family right now and have nothing to do with them. No, as I Tim. 5 says- you must take care of your family members and provide

for your household. Even Jesus took care of His mother. But the line of conflict often falls within the same house. As Mt. 10 says- Jesus came to bring a sword- brother against brother- child against parent. This truth led the disciples to say in Mt. 19- we have left all to follow you. To this Jesus responded, everyone who has left father and mother, house or lands because of me- will receive 100 fold and will inherit eternal life! Whatever we may be called to forsake- to reject and cast off in this life- will be returned with interest in the life to come! Jesus will surely reward those who follow Him- but this reward is kept in heaven for us! So count the cost- is your earthly family more important to you than your heavenly family? Are you willing to lose all earthly ties in order to be welcomed into the heavenly family of Jesus? To say this another way, the love that we have toward Jesus makes all other earthly loves pail in comparison. Consider this truth- do you think it is worth it? Did Jesus pay enough for you- to warrant His claim upon your life? If His blood is so precious- that nothing in our life -whatever we may be called to give up- compares!

II. The Illustration of Discipleship

As Jesus continues, He gives us two parables that further reveal the cost of discipleship. He illustrates what this counting discipleship looks like. He is looking for true worshippers- faithful followers who are wholly committed to His way. In these twin parables, Jesus teaches us the need to consider the cost of beginning and persevering! What does it look like- to weigh the cost before you commit? Can we afford to be disciple of Christ- are you willing to pay what it will cost? Can you afford not to be a disciple of Christ- do you know what it will cost if you start and then give up? Both parables warn against a hasty decision to follow after Jesus and a half-hearted dedication. If you start down this path, there is no easy way to stop. Once on this train, you cannot jump off except at great peril to yourself! A common proverb of today says- only fools rush in. The first parable is one of construction in v. 28. It is reckless and foolish to begin without the means and the commitment to end. A half-finished project shows the builder's folly. I remember seeing a cement pad sit vacant for years- I always wondered what happened. Did they run out of money or loose commitment? Would you set the foundation for a new house without the means to put a roof on? In a similar way, do not start the Christian life without the means and commitment to continue it! Do not forsake the means of grace by which your life can be built up and fully mature! Plan for many years of Bible reading, prayer and spiritual growth as

well as years of trials and temptations- for that is the path of all of God's people! So do not make a quick, easy choice without serious and weighty thought. The Christian life is a life long commitment. You would not marry someone you met once- would you? The second parable in v. 31 speaks of a king going to war. The point here is that a king needs to weigh the best tactic for peace. In other words, make sure you have the means to finish the battle before you engage. Both parables are teaching roughly the same thing- that the end must be in view before you begin. Do not set out on a course without the destination in view! As many have said, the Christian life is a marathon and not a sprint! It is often hard and long. It demands much determination, commitment and dedication- which often puts us at odds with the spirit of this age and the mentality of this world. In China today- you had better consider the cost before starting a church or claiming the name of Christ! So we all must think- consider- ponder- Am I willing to give up everything I have to be a disciple of Christ? Jesus is saying- I would rather have a few good, faithful and committed friends than hundreds of fickle acquaintances. Am I willing to put in the time and effort to be a life-long follower of Christ? The rocks and thorns may choke the nominal Christian- but a true Christian will persevere and produce fruit!

III. The Call to Discipleship

The theme of this section is clear- even repeated by Jesus- if you do not count the cost you cannot be my disciple. 3 times He has said this- in v. 26,27 and 33- if you do not follow me with the correct attitude and commitment- you cannot be my disciple. As Jesus said in Mt. 10, if you deny Me, I will deny you. But if you deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me, then I will embrace you! Jesus is not discouraging true discipleship- rather He is warning against faint-hearted, cultural Christianity. If you say you are a disciple, you had better mean it! And before you say it, know what this confession demands! A comparative denial of everything earthly in order to embrace what is truly Good and perfect! To consider all as lost/ rubbish- to be willing to lose everything that is passing in order to worship Him who endures and to gain an inheritance that never perishes. The disciples in Luke 5:11- left all to follow Him. Yes, becoming a Christian is costly- it may cost you your earthly family and your even your own life. The fact is- you are not your own- you have been purchased. But in belonging to Jesus, you end up gaining what is truly great! Life and blessings forevermore! The cost is great today- but the reward is so much greater in the life to come! Jesus is not interested in

the superficial masses following Him. True Christianity and discipleship will never be a culturally popular thing. Who by nature will choose to deny themselves- take up their cross- die to themselves and hate their earthly families? That does not happen! It is only those who have ears as v. 35 says- only those enabled to hear by the Spirit- who are filled with the Spirit of God and have new hearts. These are the ones that Jesus calls- and His sheep hear his voice. So then, is it worth it? Is the cost worth paying in order to be a disciple of Christ? Only a true believer will say yes- where else will we hear the words of life? In the New Member's Course, I warn those who desire to make a profession of faith- that this profession should not be a routine or thoughtless deed! Committing your life to Christ is a life long commitment- and it will be costly! The pleasures and earthly pursuits suddenly take a back seat- as your dedication to Christ becomes central, first and primary. So do not enter this path lightly- know what it demands of you! To deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Him! You need to lose your life in order to find it- to sell your possessions and give to the poor- to give up titles and lands- to be willing to quit your job if you are called to be a pastor- to place every human relationship in subjection to this primary commitment- to be a disciple of Christ! Consider what it cost Jesus to obey His heavenly Father? It cost Him everything! So those who follow Christ must expect the cross to be carried on their shoulders as well. We have to be willing to suffer the scorn and shame as He did- knowing that if we suffer with Him today we will be glorified with Him tomorrow!

To conclude, Jesus is not some motivational speaker or some popular politician looking for votes. Jesus is not interested in lip service- in numbers on a roll or names on a list. So the church today as well should be committed to holy living and true discipleship- not just external numbers. Today Jesus is calling us to a real, devoted and dedicated life. He wants us to know and even acknowledge the cost- knowing that the cost is great because the commitment is total! When He calls, we will follow- no matter what! Jesus Christ warns us to count the cost of discipleship because membership is costly. He is Lord- meaning He owns and is master of my everything! Unless we have this kind of commitment, we cannot be His disciples! But praise God, that by His Spirit we might know and even embrace this calling to be followers of Jesus!