

Count the Cost

† in relationships (vv.25-27)

† in resources (vv.28-33)

In the name of Jesus, the Master of our bodies and souls, dearly redeemed fellow disciples:

What did people see in Jesus that got them so excited? These were not the critical Pharisees from early in Luke 14, nor the excuse makers that got the master so angry in the verses before our text. He ordered his servants, ***“Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.”*** (14:23) Now Luke reports that ***“large crowds were traveling with Jesus.”*** Why would He say these things that sound so discouraging? They wanted to be His disciples! Don't we?

Then again, how determined are you? Are you a child like I was at one time, only going to church because your mom and dad make you? Did your spouse drag you along today? Or did you have to drag yourself out of a nice warm bed and brush the cobwebs from your head? What seems like a blink ago people were saying, “This is the nineties!” Twenty years later, is it worth it to follow Jesus? And if you say it is, are you sure you have what it takes? Do you realize what Jesus is asking? **Count the Cost...**

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Is this for real? ***“Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.’”***

Just as loving God is a decision powered by the Holy Spirit in the Gospel, so this hatred is real and Gospel-powered, not malicious or evil. Holy hatred consciously rejects natural affections for the sake of Christ. If anyone gets in our way of following Jesus, it does not call for dislike or meanness. Jesus says holy hatred is for ***“father and mother...wife and children...brothers and sisters.”*** God help us!

Look at Jesus. Remember what He said to His mother Mary telling Him to take care of the wine at Cana's wedding? Literally, ***“Woman,...my time has not yet come.”*** (John 2:4) When Mary and her other sons came to take Jesus away because they thought He'd lost His mind, Jesus looked around in the crowded house and said, ***“Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”*** (Matthew 12:49f NIV84) What is the Father's will? Jesus said on another occasion, ***“The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent....For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”*** (John 6:29,40 NIV84) Jesus' closest disciples needed training in holy hatred. One time lead disciple Peter was scolding Jesus about dying on the cross, and Jesus answered, ***“Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”*** (Matthew 16:23 NIV84) Whatever Jesus asks of us, He has already done for us.

Remember Samson, the Old Testament judge? Before Samson got in trouble with Delilah, he married a Philistine woman who was not happy on their honeymoon. ***“Samson's wife threw herself on him, sobbing, ‘You hate me! You don't really love me. You've given my people a riddle, but you haven't told me the answer.’ ‘I haven't even explained it to my father or mother,’ he replied, ‘so why should I explain it to you?’”*** (Judges 14:16 NIV84) He should have said, “You're right. If I have to choose between you or God, I choose God.” Later his wife was given to his friend, then burned to death along with her father by the Philistines. Putting human relationships before God never works.

“Love-hate relationships” are common in psychology. A person may love his mother as a mother, yet at the same time hate his mother as one who stands in the way of discipleship. God Himself loves and hates, not just the sin, but the sinner (Psalm 5:5) at the same time. Jesus also as God **“loved righteousness and hated wickedness.”** (Hebrews 1:9 NIV84) As God restores His image in us by His Word and sacraments, our emotions echo God’s holy love and holy hatred. The Gospel increases our love for what is good and our sanctified hatred for what is evil. So Jesus warns, **“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”** (Matthew 10:37) But don’t think you’re losing. **“I tell you the truth,” Jesus said, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.”** (Luke 18:29f)

In Christ-like purity a husband with a hardened, unbelieving wife will keep loving her as Christ loved the Church. A wife will not let her husband get in the way of her relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Even your relationship with yourself calls for holy hatred because Jesus says, **“The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life...”** (John 12:25f) **“Life”** here is *psyche*, the self, where decisions and choices are made. “My way or the highway” is a quick trip to destruction like a bear waddling down the trail. He spots a blob of blubber that looks so good. But he doesn’t realize some Inuit hunter has wrapped a piece of sharpened bone inside. Down goes the bear candy, and before long, so does the bear – from internal bleeding. Sins of self may taste so sweet to the tongue, but **“anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me,”** Jesus says, **“cannot be my disciple.”** A Christian church is not a lodge with a cross on top, preserving “faith traditions.” We’re in a battle zone where we need to **Count the Cost in relationships** and...

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Part of you really wants the candied fruit of sin. And Satan stands there holding up the fat morsel while the world gathers around to cheer you on to enjoy what God forbids. As soon as you follow Christ, you have a whole army coming at you, hiding hell’s hatred behind their smiles. How will you stand?

Our whole life as disciples of Jesus is meant to be a beautiful monument to God’s glory. How many Christians have started building this monument only to run out of **resources**? Jesus again: **“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’”** What will you do when you grow tired and weary? When your heart is faint? When your faith is weak? Half-hearted discipleship won’t work any better than half the money to build a house or a tower.

“Suppose a king is going to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”

You can’t stand against your own heart, much less the devil and the world. Come to Jesus and **“ask for terms of peace....”** God’s *peace* guards our hearts and minds, stills the storms inside a sinner’s breast and soothes away our guilty fears with God’s forgiving grace. Without God’s *peace* sinners do wild and foolish things trying to win life’s battles. But they only destroy themselves. **“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.”** (Isaiah 26:3 KJV) **“Fight the good fight of faith.”** **“Put on the armor of God.”** (Ephesians 6:10-17) Jesus’ disciples left all to follow Him. Paul lost everything, but was still convinced he had everything for time and eternity in his Savior Jesus Christ. In my heart of hearts only my Lord Jesus really belongs. He has loved me with an everlasting love. He sanctifies my feelings so I love and hate like Him. Christ Jesus with His merit is all I need for guilt-free living and the new life freedom to love as I’ve been loved and forgive as I’ve been forgiven. **Count the Cost.** Lay it out in the ledger of your life. Let all else be lost. You have Jesus. You have everything for time and for eternity. Amen.

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