

“Count the Cost”
(Luke 14:28-35)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

This morning, we saw
That as the crowds were following Jesus,
He turned to them with a challenge
That was calculated to sift the wheat from the chaff –
The believers from the unbelievers –
He told them what must be true of them
If they would be His disciples/Christians –

The same must be true of us:
That we love Him far more
Than family,
Than comforts,
Even than our lives.

But we also saw
That what He requires,
He also gives through the Gospel:

He knows we can't do these things –
That's why He came into this world –
That He might give us this kind of love.

He's challenging us
To take a step back and look at our lives
To see if this love is there.

If it isn't, we need to come to Him.

If it is, we need to strengthen it.

B. Preview.

This evening, Jesus continues to probe the crowd –

Asking them to count the cost;

Whether they're willing to pay.

This evening, He asks us the same:

What is that cost?

If we would be His disciples we must:

1. Be intent on finishing what we start,
2. On fighting until we win,
3. And on giving all we have to Him.

II. Sermon.

A. First, we must be intent on finishing what we've started.

He asks, "For 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'" (vv. 28-30).

What would our neighbors think of us

If we started to build a house,

But gave up after the foundation was poured,

Of after we had nailed a few two by fours together?

They'd wonder whether we really

Wanted to build it in the first place.

Jesus tells us the same is true

When it comes to the Christian life:

If we start what He calls us to

And then give up,

Did we ever really want to finish?

It's better not to start,

Than to start and not finish –

Before we start,

Jesus says we need to count the cost:

Whether we have what it takes

To make it to the end –

Satan always hides the cost

When it comes to following him –

Thomas Brooks reminds us,

The devil is a master fisherman:

He knows what bait to use

That will most likely make us fall –

But he hides the hook –

The real cost –

Eternal judgment/hell –

Because he knows we would never follow him.

Jesus doesn't do that:

He shows us the cost upfront

And asks whether we're willing to pay it.

Are we willing to pay?

What is the cost? Is it:

A willingness to pray the sinner's prayer?

To come to church every once and a while when we feel like it?

To throw a few dollars in the offering now and then?

Otherwise, to do what we want, when we want,

For the rest of our lives?

This is how many well-meaning churches

Represent the cost of discipleship today.

No: the cost is higher:

It's the willingness to deny ourselves –

Our families,

Our friends,

And our comforts –

To give up all our sins –

Even those we love the most,

Those we've a hard time admitting are really sin –

And to do what He calls us to do in His Word,

Even if it costs us our reputation,

Our possessions,

Our freedom,

Or even our lives.

Are we willing to follow Jesus at this cost?

Are we willing to finish what we start?

B. Second, will we fight until we win?

Jesus continues, “Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider 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 for terms of peace” (vv. 31-32).

Every king, before he enters into battle,

Has to consider whether he has a chance of winning

With what he has at his disposal,

Or whether he must make peace with his enemy.

Jesus wants us to consider the same:

Do we have what we need to fight our enemies?

Will we fight them until we win?

Will we fight against our flesh –

That moral corruption in our souls

That constantly draws us away from the Lord,

And into the sin that weakens us?

That’s what we must do:

Paul writes, “If you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Rom. 8:13).

Will we fight against the world –

Against our love for the things

That are against God’s will?

We have to if we would follow Jesus:

John writes, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15) –

Will we resist the devil –

Who works with our flesh

And through the world

To try to get us to fall into sin –

That what Jesus calls us to do:

Peter writes, “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world” (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Or will we make peace with our enemies –

Have we made peace with them?

C. Finally, will we give everything we have to Jesus?

Jesus says, “So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions” (Luke 14:33).

If we are to follow Him,

We need to recognize

That not only our lives,

But everything we have

Belongs to Him

And is at His disposal.

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure

And the Pearl of Great Price teach us

That’s what we must be willing to pay:

Jesus says, “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and

buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Matt. 13:44-46).

He’s not necessarily saying

That we’ll have to liquidate all we have

And give it away –

But He does mean

We will see ourselves as His stewards

From this point on

To use what He’s given us

For His purposes.

Moses gave up the wealth of Egypt,

And turned his gifts and energies

To leading God’s people out of slavery and into the Promised Land,

When the Lord called him:

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward” (Heb. 11:24-26).

That’s the price:

Are we willing to pay it?

D. Jesus tells us to count the cost:

If we don’t love Him –

As many in the crowd did not –

We won’t be willing to pay –

If that’s the case,

Jesus leaves us with this warning:

“Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Luke 14:34-35).

It’s a warning against apostasy –

Against beginning the Christian life,

But not finishing it;

Against taking up the warfare,

But making peace with our enemies;

Against seeming to come to Jesus,

But not being willing to give all to Him.

It’s the same thing the author to the Hebrews warns against in chapter 6:4-8,

“For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.”

The Jews were enlightened –

They had God’s truth;

The Scriptures were read every Sabbath;

They had Rabbis to teach them –

They had seen their fulfillment in Jesus –

They had been partakers of the Spirit’s ministry:

Convicting and convincing them of their sins,

Giving them an even clearer view of themselves
And their need for Jesus.

And yet with all these privileges and blessings,
They still didn't believe –
Some claimed to for a while,
But they eventually fell away –
Some without remedy.

There does come a point
When the Lord has given enough –
When He finally abandons someone
And leaves them in their sins.

This is what Jesus warns them of here –
And what He warns us of tonight,
If we haven't found it in our hearts
To accept His terms of discipleship –

There is a point of no return –
That everyone who hasn't come to Christ
Is in danger of reaching.

If you haven't trusted Him,
Trust Him now.

But He also wants us to know,
If we have found this love –
Even if it's very imperfect –

If we're willing to:

Put Him before comforts, family, and life;

If we have picked up our crosses –

If we've set our goals aside to follow Him,

If we're willing to bear up under the difficulties –

If we're willing to

Finish what we start;

Fight until we win;

Give Him everything we have;

Then we have come to Him,

We are His disciples.

We are –

As Jesus calls His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount –

“The salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13) –

The preserving influence

He's put in this world to restrain evil –

And so we are to be this salt –

By following His example,

And by sharing His message.

We can only do so by drawing near to Him.

May the Lord give us His grace to do so. Amen.