

49. Jesus Taught About Counting the Cost

In our last topic, we saw that we want our physical and spiritual children to understand why Jesus said that many that are proud will reject the invitation of Jesus to enter the kingdom of God. In contrast, we saw that Jesus said that many poor and needy and many Gentiles will respond and become a part of the kingdom of God. Later, Jesus continued on His journey toward Jerusalem. A large crowd traveled with Him. He took the opportunity to remind this crowd that it is important for each individual to count the cost of what it will mean in their lives to become a disciple of Jesus.

Jesus talked to the people in the crowd as they traveled along the road. Luke 14:25-27 says, “Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.’” When the Jews traveled from Galilee to the various feasts in Jerusalem, they often traveled together in large crowds. This gave them opportunities to talk with friends and relatives as they walked along the road. It also gave Jesus many opportunities to teach along the way.

As Jesus came close to the time for His crucifixion and resurrection, He wanted to make it clear to any that chose to follow Him that there would be a cost. This large crowd gave Jesus an opportunity to help the people realize that they should count the cost before they chose to follow Him. Jesus wanted all of His true followers, including us, to realize that there is a cost to follow Him. The word translated “hate” can mean either to hate or to have a lesser love for one thing than another. The first meaning is seen in Matthew 5:43-44 where we read, “‘You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.’” In this verse, we see that we are to do good, even to those who hate us.

The second use of “hate” is shown in Luke 16:13 where we read, “‘No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.’” The word “mammon” means *riches*. Here, we see that a person will either love God more than riches or he will love riches more than God. He cannot have the same love for both. This is the way that Jesus used love in Luke 14:26. Christ said that in order to be His disciple we have to love Him more than we love our father, mother, wife, children, brothers or sisters. In fact, we have to love Jesus more than we love ourselves. We must love Jesus more than any family member to be a disciple.

Then, Jesus said that we must bear our cross and come after Him in order to be His disciple. Jesus went to the cross and died to pay for our sins. Here, He has just said that we must love Him more than we love ourselves in order to be His disciple. “To bear or carry our cross” means *to be willing to die to the desires of self and live for Jesus*. Galatians 2:20 says, “‘I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I

live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” “To come after Jesus” means *to follow Him instead of following our wants and desires.*

Jesus does not want people to follow Him without thinking through the cost. Jesus made this clear with the following illustrations. Luke 14:28-30 says, “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has *enough* to finish *it*--lest, after he has laid the 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.”” If a person decides to build a tower, the first thing that the person does is sit down and figure out how much the tower will cost.

One of the things that the people sometimes did was build a tower in their vineyard where a watchman could see in every direction. This is illustrated in Mark 12:1 where we read, “Then He began to speak to them in parables: ‘A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around *it*, dug a *place for* the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country.’” Here, we see that such a tower was built. However, Jesus said that any wise person would sit down and figure out the cost of the tower before he started to build the tower. That was done to make sure that the person had enough money to finish the tower.

Otherwise, a person might get the tower started but not be able to finish it. Then, the other people would mock and make fun of that person. Jesus gave this illustration to remind the people that they needed to count the cost before saying that they wanted to become His disciple. Jesus often told people to count the cost when they said they would follow Him. Luke 9:57-58 says, “Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, *that* someone said to Him, ‘Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head.’” People often said they would follow Jesus, but for the wrong reasons. When Jesus told them that there would be no selfish gain for themselves, some quickly changed their minds and did not follow Him.

Jesus went on to give a second illustration of the need to count the cost. Luke 14:31-33 says, “Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.” In this case, Jesus used an illustration of a king going to war. Before he goes out to fight, he must think about the fact that he only has half as many soldiers as the other king. Such a king must decide whether his soldiers are that much better than the soldiers of the other king or if it would be foolish for him to go to war.

If the king realizes that he will not likely be able to defeat the other king with half as many soldiers, he must make a decision while the other army is still a long way from the place. If that king realizes that his army will be defeated and many of his soldiers killed, he will send a small group of leaders from his country to ask the other king what conditions the other king will require in order for the country to have peace. Then, that small group of leaders will agree to the conditions that the other king gives so that their country can have peace.

Jesus then explained to the crowd of people what He was telling them by using these two illustrations when He said, “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.” Christ wanted to make it clear that a person is making a life-changing choice when they make the choice to become His disciple. A disciple is one who follows and obeys the teachings of a leader. Jesus told His disciples in John 14:15, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” One of the things that we must realize is the fact that salvation is the work of the whole Trinity. We do not make people Christians by our manipulation.

John 16:8-11 tells us that the Holy Spirit convicts. Those verses say, “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” Then, John 6:44 tell us that it is the Father who draws. That verse says, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” Then, Jesus said in Luke 19:10, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Here, we see that it is Jesus who seeks and saves. Our part in the process of salvation is explained in Ephesians 4:15, where we read, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--.” First, we see that we are to speak the truth. This means speaking the Word of God, instead of giving our own opinions. Second, we are to speak that truth in love. Third, we are to pray for the Lord to work in the hearts of those with whom we share the Word.

Jesus went on to say in Luke 14:34-35, “Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, *but* men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” True disciples will be those who follow Christ and obey Him because then our lives will become like salt. Matthew 5:13 says, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” Mark 9:50 adds, “Salt *is* good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.” Then, Colossians 4:6 says, “Let your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” A true disciple will hear and respond while the multitude will hear, fail to understand and then forget.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children become effective disciples of Jesus. This means that we will show them by our example how to be like salt that is good. We will show them how to share the Word of God with love and grace so that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit can each accomplish their ministries in the lives of those who are not yet Christians. We will also show them how to have peace with one another as Christians so that our lives are like good salt. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to be the salt of the earth.