

# 16. The cost of discipleship

October 7, 2007

It has been a difficult year for the Lutzers' farm. Due to the summer draught and illness in the family member, their finance was getting tight. One day their chicken and pig overheard that they are not enough eggs and bacon for everyone's breakfast.

The chicken said to the pig, "Let's help them out by donating a few." The pig looked at her with that "Are-you-out-of-your-mind" eyes and replied, "Easy for you to say it. For you, it is a donation. But for me, it is a total commitment."

Many people became so money savvy, in everything they do, they go by two major principles – "What is in for me?" and "What is going to cost me?" As long as they get a lot and have to dish out little or nothing, they are very happy.

The Bible bellows it, the preachers proclaim it – the gift of God for eternal salvation is absolutely FREE. Even though it is free to us, but it costed our Savior Jesus' life. However, once we become the followers of Jesus, we must recognize that being a Christian requires a total commitment from us instead of a little bit of donation.

## A. WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

*Luke 9:18-20 And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him, and He asked them, saying, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" 19 So they answered and said, "John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again." 20 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God."*

Living under the boot of Roman domination, the Jews longed for their Deliverer – the descendant of David who would lift them out of the mud and set them on top of the world.

*Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.*

Prophecies like this one filled the people's hearts with dreams of an eternal kingdom on earth with peace and justice. Think of it! No more oppression. No more fear. No more IRS! That would make anyone to get excited for a while. During Jesus' day, messianic hopes coursed through the tiny nation of Palestine like an electric current.

The people of Israel including the disciples thought and hoped that Jesus would be that deliverer and conqueror over the Roman Empire.

In Luke's Gospel, the feeding of the 5,000 marks the end of what is called the "Great Galilean Ministry". Jesus now begins His journey to Jerusalem. There is a parallel between this account and the account of Paul's last journey to Jerusalem in the Book of Acts - in Luke, Jesus went from Nazareth to Jerusalem; and in Acts, apostle Paul went from Jerusalem to Rome.

After Jesus asked them what the others think about Him, He looked square in their eyes and asked their thought about Him, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

Jesus is the Christ – literally, "the anointed One, the Messiah". And He is God. He is the Savior of the world, the Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace.

This question must be asked to every human being on this earth. The answer to this question would make a literal heaven and hell difference. If you answer like Peter with all of your heart, then you would have eternal life, but if you come up with any other answer, you will end up in hell.

## **B. SAY WHAT?**

*Luke 9:21-22 And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, 22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."*

After the revelation of His true identity, Jesus dropped a bomb in their hearts. This would be an unbelievable shock to anyone expecting, or hoping, that Jesus was the national and political messiah. It is as if a presidential candidate announced towards the end of his campaign that he is going to Washington to be rejected and executed by the Senate and Congress. I think that they are doing that now anyway.

The disciples' minds were so wrapped up in three verbs that they couldn't remember the fourth one, "Be raised". The whole thing just didn't make sense to them.

## **C. WE NEED TO DO WHAT?**

*Luke 9:23-27 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross **DAILY**, and follow Me. 24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. 25 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? 26 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. 27 "But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God."*

When they thought it couldn't get worse, Jesus made another comment that was worse than the first.

The closest contemporary word to "disciple" is probably "apprentice." A disciple is more than a student who learns lessons by means of lectures and books. He is one who learns by living and working with his teacher in a daily "hands on" experience. Too many Christians are content to be listeners who gain a lot of spiritual knowledge but who have never put that knowledge into practice.

In the Roman world, the cross was a symbol of shame, guilt, suffering and rejection. There could be no more despicable way to die. Crucifixion was not mentioned in polite conversation, and the people would no more think of wearing crosses on their person than we would think of wearing gold or silver electric chairs or lethal injection syringe. By now, some of the disciples were thinking, "Did we sign up for this? Is that in our contract?"

Jesus laid down the stern requirements for discipleship not only to the twelve disciples, but also to us. We must first say, "NO" to ourselves - not simply to pleasures or possessions, but to "SELF" - and then take up our cross and follow Christ daily. This means to be identified with Him in surrender, suffering and sacrifice.

It is easy for us to declare that Jesus is the Savior and Lord. I've seen a plenty of people who say that exact thing, but their lives reflect anything but Christlike.

As C. S. Lewis wrote in 'Mere Christianity', "The real test of being in the presence of God is that you either forget about yourself altogether or see yourself as a small, dirty object. It is better to forget about yourself altogether."

Understand, the Bible is not teaching self-hate. It is not teaching that we should be miserable and self-loathing people, neither. Rather, it is saying to see ourselves as we are. We already love ourselves. So instead of loving ourselves, deny ourselves and love God more than we love our own life. If we will take our life and give it to Him, then He will give us His life in its place. If we lose our life, then we will find it through Him.

So when we hear people say they are trying to find themselves, especially during their middle age crisis, what they really need to do is lose themselves. We need to say, "Lord, here is my life." That is not a miserable thing to do. It is the greatest thing we can possibly do. What God will give us in the place of what we give Him is infinitely better. If I have learned nothing else about God in my years as a Christian, I have learned that God's plans are always better than my plans. We don't need to be afraid to commit an unknown future to a known God.

I asked you to underline the word "daily" in v23. Discipleship is a daily discipline. We follow Jesus one step at a time, one day at a time.

Those who wish to be Jesus' disciples must die to self-centeredness and self-absorption. And because selfishness doesn't ever seem to die a once-for-all death, we must execute it daily.

Our motive should be to glorify Christ. Anyone who is ashamed of Christ will never take up a cross and follow Him. But if we are ashamed of Him now, He will be ashamed of us when He comes again and we will be ashamed before Him.

Many Christians don't want to be identified as born-again Christians at their workplaces or schools because they are concerned about what others might think. The One you truly should be concerned about is not those people who are fickle, it is God who will be ashamed of your decision.

It is my earnest desire that until our last breath we glorify our God and our Savior that our Father in heaven would pull His suspenders out and boast about us when we get to heaven. The last thing we want to do is bringing disgrace to His name because of our stupidity and sins. Don't you all agree?

I know that this doesn't fit with the recommendations from psychologists and philosophers. They say that we need to love ourselves and pamper ourselves. We've been doing that since the beginning of the human race. That is why the world is continuously getting worse.

Psychologists are not the only ones who insist this selfishness nowadays. Many evangelical Christian churches have joined this silliness. Their idea of church services is making the congregation feel good about themselves rather than giving them the truth of the Word of God. Not in my watch.

*Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.*

#### **D. THE EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO MAKE EXCUSES**

*Luke 9:57-62 Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go." 58 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." 59 Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." 60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God." 61 And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house." 62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*

The Lord gives us three examples of the people who made excuses in following Him wholeheartedly.

The first man desired to follow Jesus but knew little of the cost. He had to deny himself. Apparently he was accustomed to a comfortable home.

The second man was called by Jesus. What an honor that would be! But he was worried about somebody else's funeral when he should have been planning his own spiritual funeral. Jesus is not suggesting here that we dishonor our parents, but we should love Christ so much that our love for family would look like hatred in comparison.

The third man also volunteered, but he could not follow Christ because he was looking back instead of ahead. In plowing a field in that day, a farmer kept the rows straight by focusing on an object in front of them, off in the distance – such as a tree. If the farmer started to plow, and kept looking back, he would never make straight rows and do a good job plowing. In our Christian life, we keep our eyes on Jesus in front of us, and never take our eyes off Him.

#### **E. APPLICATIONS**

**1) Following Christ means more than believing Him - it includes obedience.**

By believing in Christ, we receive His gift of eternal life. By obeying Him, we become His disciples and are transformed in our daily life.

**2) Living obediently means more than accepting the truth - it includes "tasting death."**

That is, it includes putting to death our selfish desires in favor of Christ's will for our lives.

**3) Tasting death means more than being unselfish - it includes dying daily.**

Pride insists, "I want what I want when I want it!" This goes against what the Lord Jesus teaches us. We must come to Him with humility and unselfishness.