**Luke 14:25-35**

**Count the Cost**

We live at a time where we can follow and listen to whomever we want at the click of a button right on our couch without ever leaving the house. Many of you lived at a time when that wasn’t the case. Many of you lived at a time when you had to get off the couch, and go see where your friends were at. A time when if you wanted to learn something, you went to the library to check out a book. Or you went to a lecture where some expert was talking about something. A time when you actually had to walk or ride or drive to church in order to worship. The ability to communicate with, listen to, and follow someone has advanced at exponential rates. We read the gospel of Luke this morning, and we see the old version of following someone influential. Except, the following wasn’t about how many profiles followed your page. It was about how many people followed you around on foot listening to the things you had to say and teach. Massive crowds were following Jesus, and that was great! But today was the day where the rubber would hit the road. Today was the day when Jesus would ask all the people following him if they were really following him or if they were just walking along behind him. You wanna be disciples? In order to be a disciple of Jesus, you’re gonna have to consider what the cost of that discipleship is. That’s what we consider this morning.

There’re three statements that we need to explain this morning, and the first may be the most difficult for us to wrap our minds around. **If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.** There’s room for some painful misunderstanding here. Jesus isn’t saying that you need to leave here today and end all of the most important relationships that you have, in order to be his disciple. It would, in fact, be ungodly for me to walk back to my wife and tell her that I hate her. That would not be pleasing to God, and yet, Jesus says that clearly. If you don’t hate all these people, then you cannot (not you shouldn’t be a disciple or have to wait to be a disciple), but you CANNOT be my disciple. Love and hate are considered to be the salt and pepper of emotions. They’re the two that come to mind when you talk about emotions. They’re such strong words that it’s difficult to distinguish the Webster definitions from their other, intense nuances, but I’ll give it a shot. Love and hate aren’t just feelings, they’re actions. If you truly love someone, you will do whatever you are able to put them first and serve them faithfully despite how you feel about them. You can love someone that you don’t like, in fact, Jesus calls us to do that frequently. In the same way, you can hate someone you do like. You see, hate, same as love, is acting a certain way despite how you feel about someone.

In the case of Christianity it looks like this: there is not a single person in your life that can step between you and Jesus. Not a SINGLE person in your life steps between you and Jesus. Jesus says, hate the person that steps in front of me, meaning, step past them, walk around them, because there should be no one between us. No one on planet earth belongs before Jesus in your heart. Don’t hate your family and friends by treating them poorly, but don’t put them above God. Which also means, if they're pulling you away from your Savior, it may come to the point where you do have to distance yourself, because the earthly relationship with any one of these people is never worth giving up your relationship with Christ. Here at Trinity, I put it this way: Your most important relationship is your relationship with God. If you come across anything in life that hinders that relationship, run away. That might be a family member who says your faith is proof that you’re a fool. That might be the spouse who says they’re done going to church on Sunday morning because it ruins their prep day for the new week. It may be a parent who says that you’re spending too much time reading your Bible, and should probably start reading your textbooks more. Do not allow another person in your life to step between you and your Savior. That’s the cost of being his disciple.

Next: **Whoever does not carry his own cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.** This debunks fair-weather Christianity. A disciple of Jesus doesn’t look for opportunities to set their cross down and take a break from the hard work of following Jesus. The reality for us sinful people is that we regularly set that cross down. Every time you fall into temptation—everytime we run back to a pet sin, we set that cross down, and we prove to be poor disciples of Jesus. Anytime we decide that it’s okay to give up the opportunity to give God glory to instead, glorify ourselves, we set down our cross and prove to be poor disciples of Jesus. How about the thought that Sunday morning is the only time I need to carry my cross? What about the thought that there’s no need to spend “extra” time in God’s Word because pastor has everything I need for the week written down in a 15-20 minute sermon? Carrying your cross means you go where Jesus goes. I follow where Jesus leads. If I’m the only walking behind him then so be it, but I know where he’s going is where I want to be. If you’re not ready to spend the time working on your relationship with Jesus, if you’re not ready to fight the battle against temptation, if you’re not willing to let your relationships with other people fall down your list of priorities, if you are not ready to go all in—then you cannot be a disciple.

There’s one more “cannot” statement. **So then, any one of you who does not say farewell to all his own possessions cannot be my disciple.** Stuff can do the same thing another person can do. Sometimes more effectively. Stuff can easily get between me and Jesus. I still remember the days when sports didn’t practice or play on Wednesday nights or Sunday mornings so that people could go to church. That’s no longer the case. How easy it is to wake up in the morning and throw on the news or scroll through Facebook instead of opening our Bibles and reading our devotions. There are so many wonderful awesome things that life has to offer from careers, to vehicles, to toys, to vacations, you name it, that distract us from what matters, our relationship with our God. If the thing that you love to spend time using, or the thing you love to do, or the place you love to go keeps you from growing in your relationship with Jesus, Bye bye! It’s not worth it. And that’s what we’re doing this morning. We’re deciding if it’s worth being a disciple of Jesus. Because if you and I were to actually, honestly assess the difficulty that following Jesus entails, we probably wouldn’t be here.

The examples we see here kind of seem like common sense, don’t they? If you’re gonna do a building project, you need to plan ahead and make sure you can afford it and have everything you need to build it. That makes sense. We don’t experience war this way today, but if a King was about to go to war but that army’s bigger, he’s gonna try to negotiate his way out of that war. Being a devoted, God fearing, disciple of Jesus takes all the more consideration. Am I ready to end a relationship with someone close to me if they, intentionally or unintentionally, ruin my relationship with Jesus? Am I ready to carry the cross of suffering, devotion, loneliness, mockery that I’m promised as I walk behind my Savior? Am I ready to cut the possessions, the vacations, the hobbies, the blessings of life on earth that inhibit me from spending as much time with Jesus as I can? It costs the people I love. It costs the things you like to do. It costs the joys we like to pursue. Are those costs you’re ready to pay? It costs a lot to follow Jesus.

You’re not alone as you contemplate the cost of your relationship with Jesus. It would take you and I a lifetime to come to the conclusion that it’s worth dropping everything and everyone to follow Jesus. You know how long it took him? You know how long it took Jesus to count the cost of creating, maintaining, and solidifying a relationship with you? About as long as it takes you to say your name. See, you and I have commitment issues when it comes to our God and our Savior. But never has he had an issue committing to us. He considered the comfort of his heavenly throne—and decided it would be better to give it up for a manger. He considered the temptations of Satan and mankind around him—and decided it would be better to say no to temptation and yes to you. He counted the cost of a relationship with you—the cost was his relationship with God the Father, he even gave that up as he bore God’s wrath for our sins on the cross. Jesus paid his life—for yours. The cost was counted, but the cost wasn’t contemplated. Because contemplation requires weighing two options. Not saving you was never an option. Not dying for you was never an option. Not paying the cost to spend eternity with you was never an option. Jesus counted the cost of an everlasting relationship with you, and the cost was worth everything to him. Amen.