

090422 "The Cost of Discipleship" Luke 14:28-33

In one Peanuts comic strip Sally was struggling with her memory verse for Sunday. She was absorbed in her thoughts trying to figure it out when she remembered, "Maybe it was something from the book of Reevaluation."

She never did find the memory verse, but we should always read the Bible with the intent of reevaluating our attitudes and actions to make sure they are in line with the truth of God's Word.

We will always prefer to hear about God's grace, that is, God's own covenant loyalty to redeem and save, but we must not neglect to reflect on the covenant loyalty that is expected from us in return. The parable of the tower, as written in Luke 14 today, is a parable that Jesus spoke to teach "the cost of discipleship." In other words, through this analogy, Jesus teaches us the attitude and determination necessary to be true disciples of Christ. We are Christians, the people who follow Christ. So we are the disciples of Jesus Christ, and we must take to heart this parable.

If any of you are about to build a tower, should you not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?

And if a king should go out to fight another king, should 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?

Looking at these two parables, we may misunderstand them to think that if we are not confident we can finish, we should not even start. If you do not have the confidence to complete the tower, you might be tempted not to start building it. And if there are only 10,000 people when there are

20,000 enemy troops coming in, you might be tempted to think it better to surrender instead of fighting. However, Jesus did not speak these parables to say that we should not start if we are not confident we can finish, but that if something must be done, do it with determination and thorough planning from the beginning.

Because in Jesus' day building a tower was not an option. When they built a castle, they must have had a tower to spot the coming enemy. The same was true of farming. The tower must be there as well to stop thieves from coming in. So the tower is not a choice but a necessity.

The second parable means the same. If 20,000 enemy troops are coming in, you must go out and fight to defeat them, for all you hold dear will be at stake. Will you not fight with your life to save your family? We must fight to win. And to win, we must be prepared.

So is the life of faith. Like the tower, faith is what we need to win against the power of sin and death, and the power of darkness. Faith is necessary for spiritual battle in our daily lives! So we must be diligent and prepared in our life of faith.

Today's message is also about carrying what must be carried and leaving behind what can be left behind. We should be willing to give up even the things we value most. This does not mean to unconditionally give up and throw away all the blessings we enjoy, including wealth, power, and honor. These things, in a sense, are God's blessings that we may enjoy in this world and use to help build our tower of faith. Queen Esther saved her people by taking advantage of her high position. There are many people of faith who use God's blessings to support God's work to the fullest. But

what is key is that if these worldly blessings hinder building the tower of faith, then we must give them up along with our obsession for them.

Paul likened the life of faith to racing. The racer only wears what is minimally necessary to lighten the weight. When you're jogging outside in the morning, would you like to run in your best clothes and accessories? When we run, we have to let go of all the clutter and run. Likewise, we must have courage and determination to rid of the things that hinder us in the race of faith. What must you give up to follow Christ more faithfully?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German Lutheran pastor, theologian, anti-Nazi dissident, and key founding member of the Confessing Church. In his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, he said,

“Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: ‘Ye were bought at a price’, and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, some people live life as a heavy burden while walking on the path of faith on this earth, while others live life as a gift or treasure. Obviously, there is a cost of discipleship, but we live each day as a gift because we realize how great the grace we have

received from God. Matthew 13:44 says, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

God's grace is costly because it cost God the life of his Son. Let's follow Jesus every day with thanksgiving. Then oddly, graciously, we will see God is with us. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.