

“Count the Cost”

Really Jesus? Are you serious? “Great crowds” are following you. They’ve heard about the narrow door and they want to enter in and recline at table in the kingdom of God with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the rest. They’ve heard your parable of the Wedding Feast and your Parable of the Great Banquet.

“Great crowds” are following you, and you turn to them and say – “If anyone comes to me and does not HATE his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”

Really Jesus! Do you think that message is going to resonate with anyone? Are you trying to turn everyone off and drive them away?

Folks, Jesus doesn’t want you to turn away – He wants you to follow Him – but that includes counting the cost. What does it mean to be His disciple, a follower? What does it mean to be a Christian – a Christian husband or wife, father or mother, son or daughter? In order to be a Christian, He says that one must “bear his own cross and come after me” – and if not – you “cannot be my disciple.”

Jesus gives us a couple of examples to teach us what it means to “count the cost.” “For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him ...”

One who is a Christian – who has been baptized and trusts in Jesus for forgiveness, life and salvation – IF he does not continue to follow Jesus in faith – will be mocked. The world mocks when Christians drift away from Jesus and do not live from the foundation that has been laid. They conclude that Christianity is a fake – that it’s not anything to be serious about.

“Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not first sit down and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?”

Being a Christian is not just a construction project – it's a battle, a matter of life and death! When death is on the line, one should give careful deliberation – or it may cost one his life, and the life of others. “And if [he determines he cannot win the battle], while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.”

When you are outnumbered, the terms of peace are not in your favor. When you're waving the white flag – you're at the mercy of the other to spare your life. But remember, Jesus speaking of His disciples. What are the terms of peace, so that you can continue to follow Him?

Jesus tells us what the terms are. “So therefore,” He says, “any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.” “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”

When Jesus says these seemingly offensive statements, He is on His way to Jerusalem and the cross. The narrow door and banquet feast and hating family and bearing our own cross – can only be understood in light of Christ's own crucifixion.

Are you sure you want to follow Jesus? You know where He's headed. Count the cost. Life is on the line – eternal life! We can become so wrapped up in this life that we forget about eternal life. There is much more on the line than just this life – specifically, the life that has no end.

For your everlasting life, Jesus is headed for the cross. He alone is the sacrifice of atonement. His blood alone blots out all your iniquity. His life alone, given into death – can deliver you from death, and give life forevermore.

Without Christ and His crucifixion – there is no hope, no life, for you. That is why everything else must be renounced. Nothing else can get in the way of trusting in Jesus for His deliverance and salvation – not your possessions – not your plans – not your own family – and not yourself.

When Jesus says that you are to “hate” your own family members – He means that you are NOT to “fear, love and trust” in them above God. You are not to put them before God. You must be willing to sacrifice them if they get in the way of following Jesus.

Of course, you love your family and you want what is best for them – and there is nothing better than Jesus and His life without end. To “fear, love and trust in God above all things” is the BEST THING for you and your family. You want to do good by them? Then “fear, love and trust in God above all things” – follow Jesus – and God willing, they will follow you.

Jesus wants you to count the cost today. This is serious business – nothing to be taken lightly. “Fear, love and trust” in God – that is, faith in Jesus Christ – is the most important thing in this world and for eternity. Without it – you’re like salt without saltiness – destined for the manure pile. But with it – you are truly a disciple of Jesus Christ – following Him in this world, and in the life eternal.

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear,” Jesus says. I hope He has your attention. You may be wondering if you can complete the tower, or defeat the enemy. Can I follow Jesus? If not, should one even start – or should I go my own way now?

Jesus HAS made His way to Jerusalem and His cross – He has put in all the labor necessary for your salvation – and now He desires your ears to hear. To bear your own cross is to deny yourself – confessing your sins, believing there is nothing you can do to achieve salvation – and trusting in Jesus Christ alone.

Jesus has laid the foundation – cleansing you and making you holy in the waters of Holy Baptism – claiming you as His own. His Word leads you in the way you should go – loving your fellow man, and fearing, loving and trusting in God above all things. His Body and Blood forgives all your sins, and where there is the forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation – life now, and life forevermore.

So, let us follow Jesus now, setting the example of faith and love for our families – bearing our cross of repentance and faith – listening to our Savior – rejoicing to follow Him in these days – and rejoicing with Him and all believers in Christ, for all eternity. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.