

FOLLOWING JESUS – TWO THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW
Luke 14:28-33

Good afternoon! We're continuing our series on "The Parables of Jesus". We're on the fourth part of this series and today I'd like to talk about the parable of counting the cost.

All of us know how to count, right. I think that's one of the first things we learn as a baby. Let me test that. How many do I have here? So, this is a challenge. If you get it correctly, and you have to explain your answer, you can brag and say in FB "I won against Rolly". So, how many fingers do I have? Let me see your answer in the chat box. (Answer: 20)

Now, let me give you another challenge. What is the difference between count and account? If you get this, you can also brag on FB and say, "I won against Rolly." Put your answer in the chat box. (Answer: Count = 1, 2, 3...; Account = Ah-1, Ah-2, Ah-3).

Some of you are going, "Pastor Rolly is corny. What does his joke have to do with his message?" Well, Count, Account, those are two words that will form the outline of this message which I've entitled, "Following Jesus – Two Things You Should Know". Keep that in mind. Let's turn to Luke 14:28-33 and please follow along as I read this passage. There are two parables here with the same point. (Read Luke 14:28-33)

These parables are tied to the three preceding verses. These verses say, "Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

Note that there were many people who were in that crowd, traveling with Jesus, going where he went, listening to his words. Jesus was very popular. He was drawing crowds. But Jesus didn't want followers without conviction. Just compare him with today's crowd-pleasers. He didn't want fair-weather followers. He wanted followers who would follow-through. He wanted followers who were determined to stick with him through thick and thin, sink or swim, by hook or by crook.

So, he gave them a test? "Will you follow me even if it meant turning away your loved ones if they happen to come between you and me? Will you follow me even if it meant carrying your cross and dying for me?"

Now, the image of the cross was surely very familiar to his Jewish hearers. It was the worst form of torture and execution under the hands of the Roman soldiers. It meant sure death. But there was a lot of pain, excruciating pain, before death. The root word of "excruciating" itself is *crux*, another word for cross. Jesus, of course, was not talking about his death on the cross, but the cross and the death that each disciple would experience.

So, Jesus was being forward and frank with them. Following him doesn't mean being comfortable. It doesn't mean being healthy and wealthy. Some preachers and teachers of the Bible are peddling that false belief, that becoming a Christian means you will and should experience material prosperity and physical wholeness. A teaching that has gained wide popularity in recent years. That's contrary to what Jesus is saying here. Jesus is saying you cannot be his disciple unless you are ready to give up those things that are dearest to you. Verses 26 and 27 are two different sentences with the same thought. They talk about dying and unless you die you cannot be his disciple.

This is one of the hard sayings of Jesus. And there's quite a few in the gospels where he says things that are hard to swallow. Like "Let the dead bury the

dead”, “Eats my flesh and drinks my blood,” and so on. You see, Jesus did not preach and teach to tickle people’s ears. He preached to “comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable”, as the saying goes.

At this point many in his audience have already been comfortable. They have been healed of their sicknesses, demons have gone out of some people, he has fed the five thousand, he calmed the sea. They were really comfortable. But that’s just half the picture. Now, it’s time to sift the wheat. Who will remain when he gives them the whole picture? So, he tells them two stories. For them to see that it’s not easy following him.

This afternoon, I’d like to share with you two things to keep in mind if you want to follow Jesus. If you’re a Christian already, or you think you are, maybe this is a time when you examine yourself whether you’re truly following Jesus. And if you’re not a Christian, or maybe you’re on the fence, maybe this is the time for you to also examine yourself whether following Jesus is what you would truly want.

So, I have only two points this afternoon. Some of you are saying “Amen!” The second point, however, has three subpoints. And some of you are going, “Oh, man”. Anyway, to keep the pattern, I have two points only. Because there are two verses that share the same idea and two parables that share the same thought.

So, let me give you the first point. **If you want to follow Jesus,**

I. You must count the cost of becoming a disciple.

It is not easy to follow Christ. There is a cost or there are costs involved. Because there’s a cost, you must decide carefully. Really think about it. It’s not something you swallow and then unswallow afterwards. In Filipino, we have a saying about marriage, “Ang pag-aasawa ay hindi biro. Di tulad ng kanin na iluluwa kapag napaso.” “Marriage isn’t a joke. Unlike rice that you can spit out if it’s too hot.”

In reality, when you become a Christian, you become a part of the church that is married to Christ. He is the bride and we are his bridegroom. So, it's not a joke being a Christian. In short, it's not easy. You must count the cost.

Jesus compares the decision to become a Christian to a building project and a military strategy. Here in the states and in many developed countries, you'll be amazed at the speed in which they construct and finish their building projects. And you are awed by some of the buildings you see – tall, grand designs, stunning in their architectural beauty. And you conclude, “Wow, they put a lot of thought in erecting that building”. Which is truly the case. Because a building wouldn't be finished unless the builders counted the cost. They took into account all the factors involved to complete the project, the financing, the manpower, the zoning permit, the equipment and materials, the weather, the measurements and all that stuff. They have to make sure that everything fits the bill. If there's any that doesn't, then they would re-do their plans or scrap the project. It would be bad or even funny to see a half-finished building or wrongly-constructed one. But it happens. There are some projects that ended up wrongly or weirdly due to miscalculations. Look at some of these **construction fails**.

I think you get the point. You will be ridiculed if you started out in a blaze of glory and then fizzle out.

You see, there is more to being a Christian than just saying you believe in Jesus. Jesus had a lot of people who followed him around, but most of them were not true followers of him. Most of them weren't willing to count the cost and take up their cross and follow him. Many of them were just after what Jesus could give them not who Jesus means in their lives.

So, the cost of following Jesus may mean great discomfort for us. You see, we are by nature comfort seekers. Everything that has been invented was designed to make us feel comfortable and make our life easier.

The smart phone, the computer, the light bulb, the air con, the heater, the air bed, and a host of others. Do you know what the greatest invention is according to mothers? The microwave.

But you see, a follower is not asking the question “How can I be comfortable?” Many of us are not following Jesus – we’re following comfort. We’ve made comfort our God – it’s what we live for – work for – and sacrifice for. But there’s nothing comfortable about the call to follow Jesus.

I think there are a lot of people who have made a decision to believe in Jesus – but never really committed to Jesus. Because they never counted the cost in the first place. I think it was Charles Stanley who described Christianity nowadays as being like a mile-wide swimming pool but only an inch deep. Modern Christianity is producing a lot of shallow Christians. They’re not there for the long haul.

I think this kind of attitude has been influenced by the society we’re living in where commitment is no longer it used to be. That’s why we see a lot of live-in couples. They cannot commit to a marriage. We see a lot of abortions. They cannot commit to raising a child or the sanctity of life.

For some, it’s a personal choice. They choose and pick what they want to do with their Christianity. And that’s the way many Christians approach their commitment to Jesus and the Bible. I really like Jesus – but I don’t really like serving the poor, my resources are spoken for. I want to follow Jesus but don’t ask me to forgive the person who hurt me. Don’t ask me to release that bitterness and resentment I’m not going to let that go. I want to follow Jesus but don’t ask me to give a percentage of my money. I worked hard for that. I’ll follow Jesus but don’t talking to me about my relationships –I can do what I please. I’ll follow Jesus but let me decide what kind of gender identity I should have. I’ll follow Jesus but don’t let me get into that read-your-Bible-everyday stuff. And don’t even expect me to apply the so-called principles in my life because some of them are outdated.

We wear the name Christian and then we pick and choose - the teachings of Jesus that we're going to follow – as if the teachings of Scripture were a buffet, where you just take what look good to you and don't worry about the rest.

Folks, Jesus is looking for commitment. He is looking for people who would count the cost of following him.

To follow Jesus, you must not only count the cost.

2. You must also account for the losses you're going to incur.

So, there's a cost involved. Sometimes, the cost is too high. It's too steep. Assuming you have counted the cost and you're ready to take the dive, then the next step is to account for the losses you're going to incur. What kind of losses? The losses are the sacrifices you have to make once you decide to become a follower of Jesus. If you want to follow him you must be willing to carry your cross. You must be ready to give up those things that you hold dear in your heart, even your life itself.

There's a lot of things we need to sacrifice. Let me just give you three.

a. You Sacrifice Your Plans

All of us have plans. Any thinking person has a plan. It can be a good plan or a bad plan but the truth is we make plans. After this Service, you plan to have fellowship online. Then, you plan to eat. And while you're making those plans, I plan to sleep.

The thing is, we can make plans but if those plans don't line up with God's plans, then they're no good. You may think it's a good plan but it can turn out to be not for your good. Proverbs 14:12 says, "*There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.*" We can be excited about our plans. We may be thrilled about the prospect of carrying it out. But we must be careful that it is not just all emotions. We have to factor in the leading and will of God.

Oswald Chambers was a British preacher who died an untimely death at the age of 43 in 1917. He was greatly used by God during World War I where he became the chaplain of a British Regiment somewhere in Africa, I believe. His preaching has touched many soldiers and many of them turned to Christ. But his influence was really felt when his wife compiled excerpts from his preaching manuscripts and published it as a devotional which became immensely popular and that devotional is **“My Utmost for His Highest.”** I highly recommend this devotional.

Chambers did not plan to become a preacher. His greatest dream was to be an artist for God. He was a skilled painter. He sold a lot of his paintings when he was in college and tutored other students as well. He earned his way to college in a sense. He realized God has given him such excellent gift and he planned to use it for his glory after college.

Until one day buyers of his paintings became scarce. This went on for several weeks in which his paintings found fewer and fewer buyers. Until no one was buying them any longer. And he wondered why. That’s when he went to a mountainside one day and sought God’s will for his life. After much prayer and reflection, he realized God had other plans for his life. God wanted him to be a preacher which he at first disliked. Until that desire grew in him. And he obeyed and the world is a little better because of it.

God says in **Jeremiah 29:11**, *“For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.”*

We don’t know the future. Only God does. Trust in him. Give up your plans in favor of God’s plans.

So, you sacrifice your plans. Then, you also

b. Sacrifice Your Money

There is nothing wrong with money. Money is a necessity in this world. But God may ask you to give up your money for him. I know many of us don't have that much money but God may even ask you to give up whatever you may have.

Anyway, the former president of World Vision USA, Richard Stearns, was the CEO of a big company that manufactures fine china. He started with that company, Lenox Inc., in 1995, after serving as CEO of Parker Brothers. He thought that it was where God wanted him to be for the rest of his life and it was a dream come true for him because his salary and the perks that came with his position was more than enough to give his family a comfortable and luxurious life even after his retirement.

In a series of events, however, Richard came to the realization that God wanted him to head the world's leading charity organization. That wasn't in his plans because he didn't have the desire. All he wanted was to provide well for his family. Their children attended private school. They have a 10-bedroom farmhouse, he had a Jaguar provided by the company, and he knew that he could retire in less than a decade because of what he was making. But God's leading was so strong that he had to give them all up after only two and a half years with Lenox and move to California, take a meager salary, and go around the world raising money and awareness about the plight of poor children.

Richard gave up his money, his treasure, in order to put them where they have eternal value. He responded to Jesus' command, *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."* (Matthew 6:19-20 NIV)

You sacrifice your plans, your money, and also

c. **You Sacrifice Your Relationships**

One of the most painful things that could happen to you as a Christian is when people leave you, reject you, or disown you because you're a Christian or have become one. In Muslim families, this is more pronounced because the parents would ask their child who has become a Christian to leave home and even hurt them. There are even reported cases of children being put to death. Muslim parents feel that it is a big disgrace to their family when a child becomes a Christian.

In the church I attended in Australia, one of our missionaries confessed that his parents wouldn't talk to him since he became a Christian and so he would stay at a friend's house every time he came home to Sydney for his furlough or vacation.

You will feel rejected when you're a Christian. People will mock you because of your faith. In school, you're not supposed to say a prayer or even say "Bless you" to someone who sneezes. Friends will walk away. They won't want to hang around with you anymore because they will find that you are living a different lifestyle which is radically different from theirs.

Greg Laurie, an evangelist and pastor of Harvest Fellowship in California, said that when he became a Christian in his teens, he didn't want his close friends to know about it because he was afraid they'd turn him away. One day, a friend invited him to have some fun in his friend's house together with others. So he went but as he approached the house, he realized that he was carrying a Bible. He hid the Bible in a bush in front of the house and just like that entered the house and started to have some fun with his buddies.

Suddenly, the door opened and his friend's mother appeared with a Bible in her hand. "Whose Bible is this?" she asked. "I saw this under the bush while I was cutting it." Of course, Greg admitted it was his. He was so embarrassed and since then he resolved not to be afraid of losing friends.

Jesus says that friends and loved ones will leave us and we will be persecuted when we follow him. In **Matthew 5:11**, he says, *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.”*

It comes with the territory, as the saying goes. You can expect it to happen if it hasn't happened to you yet. You must have heard of these horrible reports coming out of China, Iran, and other non-Christian nations where Christians are persecuted and killed.

Jesus tells us to give up our rights to ourselves. Give up our relationships if we are to follow him. It is a hard requirement but Jesus asks for nothing less. Our love for him must be more than our love for anyone on earth, even for our own selves. And you know why? Because he loved you more than you could love him. He first loved you when he died for you on the cross. That's the greatest sacrifice anyone could ever do. Jesus gave up his own life for you and me. He didn't want us to spend eternity in hell and be far away from God. He came to earth so he can go through the humiliation of dying on the cross to take away our sins. We don't deserve salvation, we don't deserve to be set free from sin and death because we are stubborn and rebellious. We want to do things on our own. But God was patient with us and he loves us so much. The Bible says, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16)

What should our response then to this love? To heed his call to follow him 24/7. Not 24 only, not 7, 24/7. And it means dying to ourselves daily. That besetting sin, put it to death. That unwholesome habit, put it to death. That irresistible vice, put it to death. That critical spirit, put it to death. That disobedient heart, put it to death. And give yourself wholly to Jesus.

As I said, this message can make you feel uncomfortable. But Jesus didn't call us to live comfortable lives. He wants us to identify with his life and suffering. Because the Christian life is not about conforming to this world but conforming to the image of Jesus. The Christian life is not about doing things in the dark like non-Christians do but being lights in this dark world.

In light of all this, let me offer you...

Two Invitations:

1. Move from just being a believer to being a disciple.

Basically, this means moving from mind to heart, from mental assent to determined action, from knowing to doing.

This doesn't happen automatically. You need to be decisive in inviting Christ to have you. Recognize His authority to claim your life.

The Bible says that He deserves all of us anyway, so why not let Him have it all? I can guarantee you that it's worth it.

You want security? Live as a disciple of Christ, allowing Him to constantly remind you of His presence and care.

You want significance? Allowing Christ to have the control allows you to be used by God in significant ways.

The second invitation is much more basic and is for those who have never placed their faith in Jesus.

2. Take the first step of faith in Jesus.

Being a disciple of Jesus starts with establishing a relationship with Him.

What does it mean to have a relationship with Him?

It basically means that you acknowledge Him as your Savior, putting your trust in what He did in Calvary for your sins.

You see, the Bible says that without Christ you face an eternity in hell, paying for your sins.

But Jesus said, “You know what? How about instead of you dying for your sins, how about Me dying for your sins?”

And that’s what He did. What you need to do is just accept His gift of eternal life that He bought with His own blood.

The Bible says that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. All you need to do is just accept the gift. If someone gives you a birthday gift or a Christmas gift or whatever, the gift does not become yours until you take it for your own.

So do that today if you never have before, okay? I’m going to give you that opportunity in just a moment.

I love the fact that Jesus is not done transforming meS to be more like Him, to know Him better and to love Him more. He’s not done with you, either. But you need to get close to Him for it to happen.