

## The Call to Radical Discipleship

Luke 14:25-33

September 12, 2021

What a joy it is to be back in the text with you today. You can turn in your Bibles to Luke 14:25. Luke 14:25-35 is a section that is searching and piercing. And at the same time, it is also comforting and encouraging. So, I think you'll see what I mean as we read through the text. Let's begin by reading this morning, Luke 14:25-35.

It says this, "Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, '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. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. 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, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish."

“Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

That is a searching text. It's a piercing text. But for those who follow Christ in discipleship, is an important and encouraging text for us. Both as a reminder, and as an encouragement that these things that are true of discipleship here are actually taking form and shape in our own lives. And I hope both those things come to your minds today as we go through the text. Going back to verse 25, Luke is very brief in setting the scene here, “now great crowds accompanied him.” That's it. That's what he gives for introduction, but it does say enough. It tells us that we have left the company of the religious leaders and the meal setting that we were in in the first 24

verses of the chapter. We're no longer with the religious leaders, the scribes, the Pharisees around the table.

Now we're back on the road. We're following Jesus on his way to Jerusalem. We don't know, because Luke doesn't tell us, we don't know exactly where this is. Where it takes place, we don't know the exact time, but we do know he's traveling again. He's on the move. And Luke tells us that, "great crowds accompanied him." So again, crowds in the plural and then added with great, there are a lot of people here. There is a massive throng, probably thousands of people. And we see by the language that's used here, these thousands of people have a generally positive view of Jesus.

The verb accompanying has a sense of association and wanting to identify with. So, this is the picture here of a massive amount of people. It's a picture of excitement. There's messianic fervor and expectation. There's great anticipation in the crowd as they walk along behind Jesus. They're excited about this popular rabbi, who keeps on besting their scholars and their religious leaders. And they're asking questions like, could this be the Messiah? Is this our time now?

Well, as readers of Luke's gospel, we know that this journey doesn't end well, at least not in an earthly political sense. We know from Luke 9:22, which we've studied, "The son of man must suffer many things, be rejected by the elders, chief priests and scribes, and be killed." So, we know where this is heading. We also know from Luke 9:51, we know that Jesus was eager to get there. "He has set his face toward Jerusalem." Jesus knows where he's going. He knows what's going to happen when he gets there. And though he is eager to get there, for prophetic reasons.

The crowds are also eager to get there, but for all the wrong reasons. They hope to be part of an inaugural ball. They hope to be part of the coronation celebration and join in the feasting and the festivities that accompany enthroning the Messiah. All these people, following along after Jesus, they thought it was relatively easy to be his disciples. All they had to do, quite literally in their minds, is walk along beside him, walk along following him. All they had to do is go wherever he's going. Hang out, listen to him teach. They're really not too unlike many people today who profess to be Christians. Just

hanging out with church people. Attending church services.  
Listening to the program, following the updates.

When you think about it, on one level, it's not a bad way to live. People are friendly. Conversation is wholesome. Sometimes even intellectually stimulating. Got good morals embedded in all this speech, so really good family environment. Great place to raise the kids. Good examples for the kids. So, for these people, the future looked bright. Some said Jesus is the prophet that Moses spoke about. This may be the Messiah, so promises of restoration might be just on the brink of being fulfilled.

It means the return of God shekinah glory that may return to the land. The overthrow of the Romans is close at hand. The elevation of Israel to its rightful place in the world, which is on top. All they need to do is stick close, hang tight, and keep watching. Let me ask you a question. Is Christian discipleship easy? Is it that easy? Is following Jesus Christ a comfortable thing? Relatively relaxed, laid back, stress free. Not really demanding too much of you, but all you can do really is just hang out. Have some good Christian buddies to go fishing with

and moms to hang out with other moms and share recipes and child raising tips. Is Christianity an easy thing?

Well, Jesus is here to confront any such notion that being a disciple of his is an easy thing. It is what it is. And you either embrace it for what it is, or you do not. What you cannot do and what you must not do is to be complacent and unthoughtful about following Jesus Christ. That, Jesus will not allow. That's why he turns and faces this crowd to talk to them about true discipleship. Christian discipleship means, and these are outline points if you want to jot them down just briefly. Christian discipleship means loyalty, priority and prosperity.

Christian discipleship means loyalty, priority and prosperity, and let me just expand each of those three words. To say that Christian discipleship is a radical realignment of loyalty. That's the first point. A radical realignment of loyalty. And Christian discipleship is secondly, a radical resetting of priority. It's a radical reset of priority. And then thirdly, Christian discipleship is also a radical redefinition of prosperity. It is true that Christianity is

about prosperity, but not in the way most people think. And so, as we come to Christ, we understand that we need to radically redefine prosperity and understand it in his terms and not ours.

So, as you can see from each of those points. Realignment of loyalty. A resetting of priority. A redefinition of prosperity. Discipleship is completely the opposite of what seems intuitively obvious to the world. It's opposite of what's intuitively obvious to us at a fleshly level; What comes natural. It's something that's supernaturally revealed to us. And once it's revealed to us, and we know and understand by God's grace, well then it all makes sense.

Because of the radical nature of discipleship, and by the word radical, I'm not using that word in any emotional or political sense. I'm not using it as a cultural meme, radical. I'm using the word radical in its most basic, first entry in the dictionary sense. As pointing to the root or the origin of something, that's what radical means. It is about the root or the origin. It talks about the fundamental nature of a thing because of its root or its origin. So, because of the radical nature of discipleship, Jesus is compelled at this point on his

journey. He is compelled to turn around and confront these followers with really what amounts to a strong dose of reality.

As they're walking together, verse 25, Luke tells us that at some point along the way, Jesus stops in his tracks and he wheels around. He does an about face. Facing the thousands who are following after him. Greek scholar A. T. Robertson says, the, the grammar here portrays this as a, a bold confrontation. So, quote, he says, "It's a dramatic act on the part of Jesus, a deliberate effort to check the wild and unthinking enthusiasm of the crowds who followed just to be following." End quote.

So, there are some of you listening today. You need this confrontation from Jesus. You need this. You need to let Jesus stop you and slow you down. Expose your superficial understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Confront your tendency towards spiritual complacency and laziness. You need to slow down and think about what it really means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. And consider carefully whether you really want that or not. Count the cost. That's what it's saying there in the text. Don't wear the uniform if you're not marching in lockstep with Christ. If you're not following



after him, along with his people; you're not with him in his church and following his agenda.

So, stop and think. For many of you listening, though, this is probably more of a reminder of what discipleship really means. It's a reminder of the commitment that you made to follow after Jesus Christ as a true disciple. Perhaps there are some loyalties and priorities in your life that need reexamining. Perhaps some confession and repentance are in order. I think many of us honestly could say that.

But for the most of us here, this time should be a time of encouragement, as we stop and reflect and think about the truth of what Jesus says here. This should be a time of encouragement for us. Because what Jesus says, the reality of all this is active in your life. You know of what he speaks; you've felt this in your own life. What Jesus says here is a reality for you. What he describes here is personal to you. It's become your personal lived out experience; it's part of your testimony, and so, if that's true for you, take heart my brother and take heart my sister, be greatly encouraged about what Jesus says here. Your salvation is nearer now than when you first believed.

So, hold out a little longer. Wait on the Lord and he will lift you up.

Let's get into point one, number one, a radical realignment of loyalty. A radical realignment of loyalty. Jesus turns around here to speak to the thousands who are following after him. As he turns around and looks at them, and I'm sure it took a bit for thousands of people to quiet down and realize they're not moving still. To stop and see what's going on and look ahead and there's Jesus standing ahead of them. And as everybody quiets down to hear what their leader's going to say, and he speaks directly to them. The grammar is emphatic about that point.

Verse 26 says, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters," many of whom were probably accompanying each other in the crowd, "Yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." The main clause in that sentence comes at the very end, "He cannot be my disciple." That's the main clause, and he repeats it. End of verse 27, "He cannot be my disciple," again in verse 33, same thing, "He cannot be my disciple."

Now, lest we make the mistake of thinking Jesus doesn't really want any disciples. That's, that's not what's going on here. It's just that Jesus isn't interested in pretend disciples. And there are a lot of those. He's not interested in a whole heap of fickle minded followers. There are plenty of those too. He's not about boosting his online presence with the number of followers and fans and friends and all that stuff. He does not care at all about numbers. Why do so many people today care about numbers? Jesus does not.

So what Jesus is doing here is culling the crowd. He's removing anyone who does not belong there. He says if you're coming with the wrong loyalties, with a misaligned set of allegiances, look, you can't come. Go no further. Stop here, turn around, go back. John Owen in the, reminded of his book, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, was just defending particular redemption. Fantastic book, never been answered. And he has in the introduction, he says, if you come like so many shoppers coming in just to browse and look around, you've had your entertainment, goodbye.

Jesus is doing something similar here. Turn around, go home, because Christian discipleship means loyalty to Christ, loyalty to God over family. And man, that is the most intimate of human relationships, isn't it? He goes even further and pierces into the most intimate place of all. Our own personal holy of holies, which is the self. And he says, "Yes, even his own life." If you have a greater allegiance to that. Turn around and go home.

Just a comment here about the word hate. Some people are tripped up by the word hate here. It's a, it is a very strong word, *miseō*. It's a translation of the Hebrew word *sane*, which *sane* sounds just hateful, doesn't it? I *sane* you, you know, but that's not how it's being used here in that sense. He's not telling everybody in the crowd, it's now okay to disregard the fifth commandment. He's not abolishing Exodus 20:12 or Deuteronomy 5:16, "honor your father and mother." He's not saying stop honoring them, hate them instead. No one takes him that way either.

More to the point, he's not using the word hate in an emotional sense, or an affective sense, or a psychological

sense, you might say. He's not talking about hatred as a negative emotion here as abhorrence, or detestation that in order to be my disciple, you got to detest your family, that's not what he's saying. This is not an affection at all. In the Semitic or Hebraic way of speaking. He is talking about ultimate allegiance. He's talking about what gets your allegiance. What has your highest loyalty?

So, it's a Hebraism. It's a way of conveying a certain thought in a Hebrew manner of speaking, which is a dialectical way of thinking. It uses stark contrast, in black or white terms, or in this case, the contrast between love terms and hate terms. So, for example, we see the same kind of thing, especially in the Old Testament in wisdom literature and that kind of thing. But we see, starting even in Genesis 29:31, when the Lord saw that Leah, Jacob's wife, Leah, was hated. He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. Jacob didn't literally hate his wife, Leah. He didn't detest her. Jacob loved Leah as well as Rachel. He came to see God's incredible gift in giving Leah half the tribes of Israel came through her womb. But Jacob did, at least initially prefer Rachel over Leah.

Another example is in Romans 9:13, and Paul is quoting in Romans 9:13 from the Prophet Malachi. Where the Lord speaks about his preference of Jacob over Esau. It says, "Jacob, I have loved, but Esau I hated." Again, that's not describing some kind of a visceral hatred of God toward Esau, per se. He's talking about there a matter of choice of God, of God's election. God cared for Esau as well, cared for all his progeny. It says in Deuteronomy 2:5 that, "God gave Mount Seir to Esau and his children as a possession," his role was not to provoke a war with Esau because their brothers. But God did show a particular redeeming love to Jacob, demonstrating that it is his sovereign choice in election that marks the difference between people.

Same thing here. Jesus says, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own parents, his wife, his children, his siblings, even his own life, he can't, he cannot be my disciple." That's what he says. What he means by what he says is this. Your allegiance to me must be higher than the allegiance you show to your family members, and even to yourself as well. Your own interests or the interests of your family or the demands of your family, all of which bear the highest priority in any human life. That gets knocked down, as many

notches it needs to, in priority in your life because God and his interest, and Christ and his interests are at the top of the priority list. That's what he's saying.

That's how Jesus meant it, and that's how this original audience understood it. Nobody took up stones to stone him because he's teaching them to violate the fifth commandment. Just to punctuate the point, in case you're not convinced, Matthew 10:37, which is kind of a parallel. Jesus is giving the same teaching that he gives here, but he's doing it in another setting. And instead of using the starker word hate, he uses the opposite word love. "Whoever loves his father or mother more than me. He's not worthy of me and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." So, you see the *more than* comparison there. Our love for, our affection for, our loyalty to, our allegiance to our closest family ties; father, mother, spouse and children, brothers and sisters. The highest natural loyalties that we have on this earth.

Yes, even to our own self-interest. Our love for God, our affection for God, our allegiance to God has to be higher still, infinitely higher. As high as he is, which separates us from the

world and all the relations here as much as creature is separated from his creator. The relationship to family members and any other human relationship takes a backseat to Christ and his interests. Even our own lives, all that constitutes what it means to be ourselves. He's greater. He is greater. Commentator E. Earl Ellis says we are to, quote, "utterly subordinate anything, even our own being to our commitment to Jesus."

James Edwards says it this way, "When the good rivals the best, then it must be hated." That's the idea here. So, if anyone comes to Jesus and he's holding any human allegiance higher. Jesus says he cannot be my disciple. Notice he's not saying he's not allowed to be my disciple. He's saying it's not possible. He can't be my disciple because, definitionally, what a disciple is, is highest loyalty God, highest loyalty, Jesus. That is what it is to be a disciple. If that's not you, you can't be a disciple. You don't belong. You're not numbered among them. Holding any loyalty higher than him, it fatally undermines the very definition of what it is to be a disciple.

Now, if you're thinking okay, I got it. It's pretty radical, but I think I can manage this. I think I can pull this



off. I can still follow along. Hold that thought. Because I want to show you just how radical a commitment Jesus has in his mind as he speaks to this crowd. Turn over to Deuteronomy. Back in your Bible to Deuteronomy for a couple of examples there. I just want to show you how radical this loyalty is. And what it can really cost to hold God in the very highest esteem, higher than any other relation in your life. This is what it can cost.

Let's go to Deuteronomy and start in Chapter 6. We'll start with Shema of Israel. That great doctrinal confession of Israel. Deuteronomy chapter 6, and verse 4. Here's the confession that every Jew made. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." Our English translations, capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D. That's a representation of the divine name which is Yahweh. Yahweh, I am that I am, or I am who I am. It's like a sentence. It's a sentence of essence in existence. So, "Yahweh, our God, Yahweh is one." And then verse five, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." And stop there.

That simple confession. It speaks of the absolute oneness of God. Singular in his essence that there is no one else who is God, no one else who shares that essence. And the implications of his singular Godness. That there is only one God, one deity. There is no other category of deity. He alone occupies the singular category called Deity Divine. The implications of that are profound. The doctrine of divine simplicity comes out of this affirmation. God's aseity, his absolute independence. Self-sufficiency, his eternity, his infinitude. In fact, all of his glorious attributes cascade out of that one proclamation. That God is one. Everything follows from that confession.

So, a being like that, there is one and only one of that kind of being. As he declares repeatedly in Isaiah 45, "I am Yahweh and there is no other God." Nobody shares this category called Godness, called Deity, called Divine. Nobody else has that attribute, just me. A being like that, deserves our absolute, unqualified love and loyalty. He is the only being, who, by virtue of his perfections, demands complete allegiance. Demands all of our love with all of our heart and soul and strength and mind. Who he is in his essence, requires

wholehearted, unmitigated, unqualified obedience and loving devotion. None of us love him as we ought to, right?

But let me tell you. That is the kind of love that Jesus has for his God. That is the kind of love that he practiced without fail. There was not one break in his love for one moment of time. There was not one diminishment on the scale and the register of the strength of his love for God at any time at all. It didn't wane or wax. It was full on, hundred percent, dialed to ten throughout his life from start to finish. His love is an absolutely perfect love and so, since ours is not and it is a sin not to obey God, is it not?

Aren't you grateful that he is your substitutionary sacrifice? Aren't you grateful that he is your perfect atonement? That we, united to him, all of our sin is taken away. He paid for it. All of this absence of love in our hearts. All this coldness that we ought not to have for a being like this. He took it away in his death on the cross. Not only that, but his perfect life is given to us. We're united to him, and so the father looks at us as if we did everything that he

did. Is it not a miracle that he would think of us, look at us and see his son in us. That's the love that Jesus has for God.

And get this, that is the love that he calls for among all those who follow him. Among all those who call him Lord, among all those who say that they are his disciples, that is the kind of love. The word I have for our God. Anything less than that kind of love is disloyalty. It is, you say, but I don't always practice that even the best Christians I know don't practice that. Yeah, that doesn't diminish the demand. It just says you're failing. That's all it says. But that's why the gospel is so precious to us, because in all of our failure he never failed. Anyone who holds to any other allegiance, listen, commits treachery against God of the highest order.

So, to see what I mean by that, let's go from Deuteronomy 6 and flip over a couple of pages to the right. To the 13th chapter. Deuteronomy 13, when put to the test, here is what that love for God, and that loyalty to God. When put to the test, this is what it looks like. Look at Deuteronomy 13:6, "If your brother, the son of your mother," just to be specific, "Or your son or your daughter or the wife you embrace or your friend who,

as your own soul." Man, notice how Moses is ladening the language there with affection and love and friendship. And oh, the wife you embrace and love, and your children, and your friend, who as your own soul.

Many of them "entices you secretly saying, 'hey, let's go and serve other gods,' which neither you nor your fathers have known, some of the gods of the peoples who are around you, whether near to you or far off from you, or from one end of the earth to the other. You shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him, nor shall you conceal him. But you shall kill him. Your hand shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. You shall stone him to death with stones, because he sought to draw you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. And all Israel shall hear and fear never again do any such wickedness as this among you."

Okay, that's radical. Right? Somebody write a book on that, pass it around here in our country, radical, kill your family members, right? Listen, stop though and, and, and take that in.

When you picture your own family members executed in that fashion, and by your own hand. Well, that's what loving God with all your heart with all your soul with all your might, that's what loving God means and requires. Your family member, after all, had the audacity to try to draw you away from the God you supremely love. He's the God who rescued you out of the land of Egypt, out of idolatry. You want to go back into idolatry? Someone's going to entice you into that, even your closest relations? How dare they. It's tough. It's clear, isn't it? I mean, it's like no mistaking what it's saying there. But man, isn't it hard to think that way?

Another example turn over just a few pages to the right to Deuteronomy 21. Deuteronomy 21 and verse 18, "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, and they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he's a glutton and a drunkard.'" That's implying he's a little bit older. "And then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones.

And so you shall purge the evil from your midst," And again, same thing, "and all Israel shall hear, and fear."

Teenagers, that's the next passage we're teaching in the parenting class. Just want you to, what do you do with unruly teenagers well you, you rock them to sleep, it says. So, if they're not going to sleep right away, use bigger rocks, right? Be warned. In the first example, in Deuteronomy 13. The test of loyalty was to let a family member slide with secret, private enticements. When that person embraces an aberrant theology. Advocate some form of idolatry. Picking up some new theological cool thing and running with it.

This example in Deuteronomy 21, is about behavior. And the test of loyalty is to overlook attitudes and actions and lifestyles that God clearly forbids. We're not living in Israel's theocracy. Capital punishment is not on the table for us. But still, don't let that diminish the import and the impact of this text. Let this text sink in. And think about the tests of your loyalty that would come to you with a family member. Who do you love more, God or family? Who really has your allegiance? Who really gets your attention? Who really

takes your time? Jesus is calling for true disciples. Those who love God over all.

Again, we're not in a position to throw literal stones. I mean call me weak, but I am thankful I'm not in that position anymore. That is really, really tough. But listen, what about you? Will you at least confront them? Okay, so we're not going to pick up a rock and throw it at somebody, but would you even challenge somebody in your family, who's embracing an aberrant theology? Who's living a sinful lifestyle, will you even challenge it? Will you confront it? If need be, would you separate from that? Would you limit your time? No one comes to us today saying come on, let's go to the temple of Molek. Let's burn some children, drink some blood. Nobody's saying that, right?

So it may seem easy to dismiss these things in the Bible and say that's for yesterday. We're in a much friendlier, more polite time living in our world. What about compromising convictions? Going soft on sin, embracing softer, gentler views of God? As a more tolerant, more accepting, more loving deity than you have made him out to be. Ah, it's you in that church,



you guys are hard people, hard. My God's not like that. He's so kind, loves people.

They want you to ignore what the Bible says about God's love of righteousness, about the evidence of his judgment. They want you to maintain the relationship with them and overlook stuff with always the little carrot that's held out in front of your nose of having more influence with them. If you'll just overlook this, yeah, maybe, maybe your God will appear friendly to me. And I'll, maybe I'll consider him.

Look some of you I know are feeling this right now. Things like this are being played out in your life and in your family. In your relationships and your friendships. There are irreligious people, some of them family members, who are making claims on your time and your energy. They're setting expectations for you on how you ought to think, how you ought to relate to them, what you ought to do with time and attention and money, and all the rest. They tug at your heartstrings. Why? Because they're your own flesh and blood. Obviously, they tug at your heartstrings.

But they for themselves. They live with no other higher priority in their life than themselves. And they want you to act accordingly. They want you to spin around them as the center of the universe. They want you to accommodate their idolatry of the self and walk in lockstep. But Deuteronomy 13:4, your God is the Lord. Not them. "You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him."

Beloved, align your loyalty to God and to God alone, and do that always. Go back to Luke 14, and let's look at just one quick point. Just the continuous nature of this loyalty we need to have toward God. Jesus said, "If anyone comes to me, doesn't hate his own father or mother or wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." All those verbs in that verse, comes, hate, cannot be. All those are present tense verbs. And what that means is they portray action as ongoing, as continuous, as a habitual lifestyle issue.

So, if I expand the translation just to emphasize it. If anyone makes a practice of coming to me, Jesus says, makes a practice of coming to me and does not have a continuous attitude

of hating his own closest family relations. That is to prioritize me above all family relations, yes, and even his own life. He is in a continuous, ongoing state in which he is unable to follow me in discipleship.

So, allegiance to Christ over family, over the self. This is a continuous frame of mind, a continuous state of being for us. It's a radical fundamental conviction of life where God and his Christ are the highest priority, and all other allegiances are subordinated. So, you can't be Jesus' disciple if you follow him on the one hand while holding onto with the other hand, misaligned loyalties and treacherous allegiances. Abandon that, abandon any sinfully aligned allegiances and realign your loyalty to God to his Christ and to his people.

Second point, a radical resetting of priority. A radical resetting of priority. One priority for a disciple of Jesus Christ, and that is to bear your own cross as you follow Jesus Christ. Look at verse 27, "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." Back in Luke 9:23, "Jesus said, 'if anyone would come after me, let him deny

himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.'" That's the positive expression.

Here's the negative corollary. Whoever does not bear his own cross, it's the verb *bastazó*. It's a literal picture of picking something heavy up and bearing the weight. So, if someone doesn't bear that weight, that cross and come after me, he cannot be my disciple. So if verse 26 didn't dull the wild enthusiasm with the crowds clamoring after Jesus, this sure did. This stopped them cold because crucifixion raised horrific images among the crowd. It's a cruel method of capital punishment. If you've studied it at all, you realized it was a statistically designed way of inflicting the most pain and the most shame upon the victim than any other form of execution ever devised.

One author says the cross was a repugnant instrument of cruelty, pain, dehumanization, and shame. Just mentioning a cross in polite company made everybody turn away, sent chills down the spine. It's a brutal practice it'd been perfected over many centuries. Passed down by many peoples, Assyrians, Persians, Barbarians, Greeks and then the Romans took up the

practice and really perfected it in Palestine. So James Edward says the cross was the most visible, omnipresent aspect of Romans terror apparatus, designed especially to punish criminals and quash slave rebellions in the most painful, protracted, and public manner possible as a warning against rebellion.

So, the cross was a symbol of absoluteness and totality. Absolute loss of dignity. Absolute loss of any comfort, any ease, all that taken away in a full and final manner. That's what the cross symbolized. The Roman occupation of Judea meant crucifixion was not an uncommon thing. It was seen around the land. People watched as lines of condemned criminals shuffled along, driven ahead by soldiers, each one carrying his *patibulum*. The *patibulum* is the, the crossbeam of the cross. And they carried the *patibulum*, the means of their execution, to the place of their execution. I mean, it was humiliation from start to finish.

So, what is that *patibulum*, that cross, that beam? What does it represent for us? When Jesus says we must bear our own cross, what does he mean? For Jesus, obviously it's a literal cross. A literal piece of wood, that *patibulum* that was erected

on a pole, and he was hung there, nailed to it. But what that cross symbolized for him and for us. It symbolized what put him there. It symbolized what earned him that sentence of death. In the most humiliating and painful way. And what is it that got him hung there? Radical loyalty to God. That's what put Jesus on the cross.

In Deuteronomy 6:4-5 terms Jesus as we said, walked perfectly loyal to God. From his heart all the time. He's the perfect Israelite. He loved God to the uttermost. He's the perfect man. He is the son of man. He's the second Adam. He is obedient to all the things that Adam failed to do, and every one of Adam's progeny, including us. Where sinners have failed in living in perfect obedience to the law and to God, Christ perfected it. Not one blame against him. And the sinners of the world hated him for it. They hated him for it.

So, John 19:17, uses the same word there for bearing the cross that's used here, *bastazó*. Literally, referring to picking up, lifting up, bearing the weight of that *patibulum*. John 19:17 says, "he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of the Skull." They killed him for his

obedience. They killed him for his radical loyalty to God. They killed him for his allegiance to God, for single-minded devotion and love to God. So, if that's what this cross symbolizes, that's what put him there. That's what everybody sees is his offense against the state, which is higher loyalty to God than to the state. Well, that's what it symbolizes for us. He died literally on that cross.

But what it means is the same thing for us. While we bear the, the weight of our cross, figuratively, it is a real weight to carry. It is a true burden to bear. What, just being real clear here, what is that weight? What is that burden? The cross that each one of us bears is the consequences of obedience to Christ. The consequences for having a single-minded loyalty to God. Devotion to his word. A love for, an obedience to his Christ.

So, when we obey him, when we follow Jesus as Lord, when we march in the same line, walk in the same steps, share the same loyalty, you know what's going to happen to us? The clearer and clearer our life approximates Jesus Christ. We're going to face the same consequences. To stand by, you're not going to be

loved by this world. Jesus says to the would-be disciple. Here's your *patibulum*. Here's your crossbeam. Pick it up, bear it on your shoulders and fall in line. Follow me.

Whoever does not do that, doesn't bear his own cross, present tense verb again. Continuous action portrayed here, pick it up, carry it, keep on carrying it. Whoever is not continually bearing that cross, his own cross, cannot be my disciple. Again, not possible. It contradicts the definition of what it is to be a disciple, not to carry that cross. Paul did that. In Galatians 2:20, he says, "I've been crucified with Christ." That is to say, Paul considered his old life dead, united to Christ, who died on that cross. And now he says, "It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives within me. The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me."

Again, Jesus went first. He did it literally. We carry our own cross and follow him. In the life that Paul now lives, according to 2 Corinthians 4:10, he says, he's "always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in his body." Why is that? Because the consequences



of obedience to Christ in his loyalty to God. We who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake. That's the burden. That's the weight. With the result that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

So just as the ultimate, what the world mocks, is the ultimate failure of the Jewish Messiah, dying on a cross. Some Messiah, can't even stay alive. That resulted in the greatest triumph, the death of death itself. The end of sin, the end of bondage to sin. The end of Satan's domination over the soul, over the world. And Christ himself, through all the pain and shame of the cross, was lifted up to the highest of the heavens. Where he is honored as the Majestic Lord. In the same way, we who live always being given over to death for Jesus' sake. Well, you know what? The life of Jesus is manifested in our mortal flesh. Great glory comes out of great suffering and pain.

I guarantee you that the crowds who accompanied Jesus on this day did not envision a future of crucifixion. You know what? Twenty first century people, they don't expect that either in coming to Christ. Many come to Christ these days because they think he's the means of their own personal

fulfillment. They're not interested at the death of self. The self is so important to them. They bought into yet another form of the false gospel of health, wealth and prosperity. Get it your way, get it done now. Fulfill yourself.

This is going to bring us here to a final point. For anyone who comes to Jesus, presents himself or herself to be his disciple. It means a radical change, doesn't it? Radical realignment of loyalty, a radical resetting of priority. Why would anyone make such radical changes? Why would anyone accept Jesus' demands, especially when they are so searching? And so painful in the consequence of living them out. Well, from an objective, theological point of view, we know that change is a result of God's secret work. The Holy Spirit performs that invisible work called regeneration. He gives that person, who is elect of God, chosen by God, gives them a new, completely new nature. That's as radical as you can get. To take out the old self, dead and gone and give a new self, that is radical as you get, as basic and origin focused.

As a result, that person is a new creation in Christ. They make different decisions. They think differently, they have

different desires. Said from the beginning, I'm using that word radical in its most basic sense, talking about the root or the origin of something. That which makes a thing as it is. And so at the most radical, fundamental level, discipleship is explained, is the consequence of what God does. It's his work. "No one comes to me," Jesus says, John 6:44, "unless the Father who sent me draws him."

So, the one drawn by God, the one who comes to Jesus, does so because of those radical changes to his nature. Old, taken away, new, come. All things made new. That results in making radical changes. Realigning loyalty, resetting priority. From a subjective point of view, that was the objective. But from a subjective point of view that is talking about what drives the disciple internally. What is it that compels him to come to Christ? Coming to Christ means radical change. Which leads to painful consequences, maybe even parting company with family members, denying self, bearing a cross, suffering the consequences of that loyalty to God.

So, what motivates that change from a subjective point of view? What does that disciple think? It's our third point.

Third point, which is about, number three, a radical redefinition of prosperity. Radical redefinition of prosperity. There's no doubt that we have experienced a season of unparalleled health, wealth and prosperity in our country. Technological productivity in our time has resulted in a surplus of wealth. A surplus of wealth has resulted in widespread self-indulgence.

It's resulted in a love of ease and comfort and pleasure. And now our national self-indulgence has, as they say on the farm, gone to seed. Many find themselves now, unsatisfied with the material, health, wealth and prosperity they so much loved and chased. That's predictable. I mean, Solomon's testimony in Ecclesiastes has been there for several millennia now. Pick up and read. Today, people have set aside searching for material health, wealth and prosperity and now they want to search for psychological health, wealth and prosperity. It's just another dead end. It's a chasing after the wind. Looking for some elusive satisfaction that will never come.

Why? Because it's just another form of idolatry. The idolatry of the self, idolatry is a lie, it's a deception, it's

a ruse. So, to idolaters and sinners of all ages, Jesus turns and says to them all. You need to radically realign your sense of loyalty. You need to radically reset your ultimate priority, and you'll only do that when you embrace a simplified, a very basic, radical redefinition of what you understand prosperity to be. To do that requires that you stop. Think carefully, assess your situation and count the cost.

Look at verse 28, "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's laid the foundation, is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he's able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the others are yet a great way off, he sends a delegation, asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."

Two short parables there. Followed by that conclusion in verse 33. Those parables are making a similar point. But they're not the same. The second is building on the first. In both parables, the need of the moment, what's required of both builder and king. So the common man and the noble man. Notice the phrase in verse 28, "first, sit down and count the cost." Again in verse 31, "sit down first and deliberate." Common to both of them, each one must stop and assess and take stock of that situation before they act. Think before you do. Look before you leap.

First parable, verse 28, "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?" In the first century, security systems were called towers. Towers, they're necessary for getting up high and keeping watch. They're there for security. For protection of life and property. They're also used just in a good management sense of keeping track of people and resources. And you get up high, you keep an eye on things, you provide direction for your workers, and direct the resources to them, and you will call for security when needed. Today we know that a poor man security system is a baseball bat, right?

Or, or a personal firearm. The rich guards his property with technology monitored by a security force or a security company.

But everyone, poor and rich alike, shares this in common. They care about security. Same thing in the first century. Properties had towers. Those with lesser means had smaller towers. Those with greater means had bigger towers, more elaborate wealth simply increase the size and effectiveness of the tower. But they all are concerned about security. So Jesus poses this rhetorical question to a crowd for which this is a common consideration. He wants him to identify with this and he says so, "Which of you wanting to build a tower doesn't first sit down and count the cost?"

The collective answer, no one. No one does that. Everyone in this crowd anticipate building a tower is going to sit down first, count the cost. See whether he's got enough money to complete the project. So, Jesus then takes a step further. He didn't let it rest there. He says, let's work this out to the ridiculous. So just so you see. "Otherwise, when he's laid a foundation, not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock

him, saying, 'This man was, began to build and was not able to finish.'"

What are the consequences of hasty building when you don't sit down first to count the cost? Ask any carpenter. Why does it matter to measure twice and cut once? Loss of money and property, that's the result. You spend money to put a foundation on a useful space, which in the end of the day you don't use, which means you can't plant anything there. You can't do anything with it, you can't use it for any other purpose. So, it's not only a loss of money that you spend on building something you can't use in the moment. The money you lose on the piece of ground that could have produced for you, you lose that too. So current and future income gone because of this foolish, hasty decision.

Another consequence of your stupidity is public shame and disgrace. Neighbors arrive on the scene to mock and scorn. They add insult to injury and no one listening to Jesus is going to say, "Oh poor guy, leave him alone. He's had a hard day." Everyone's gonna think, that's what the stupid guy deserves. Load it on him. Pile it up with the shame and disgrace. He



should never do that again. See the emphasis in verse 29, verse 30. Emphasis on ability. The repeated line is, "not able to finish." What the neighbors are mocking here is the fact that the man didn't take a better account of his abilities and limitations from the very beginning. This is his own fault, so the ridicule is deserved. He'll get no sympathy from them.

Backing out of it though, the basic point here. This would not happen because that is stupid. The parable portrays for everybody this farcical situation. This is an absolute absurdity. No one in Jesus' day would do such thing. Except when it comes to their own souls. Except when it comes to this matter of discipleship. Why is it when it comes to relatively unimportant things like work like possessions, things that are all going to pass away and come to an end? People give so much time, attention, effort, thinking about those things.

When it comes to something like the mortality of the body, the uncertainty of your days, the immortality of your soul, why do people pay such scant attention to eternal things? He leaves that hanging and he goes to the second parable, verses 31-32. "What king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not

sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation, asks for terms of peace."

Again, no king in this kind of a dire situation, facing a superior force, pressed for time. Considering all that he stands to lose as the sovereign over that nation or that land. No king is gonna rush his troops into battle on a suicide mission. Outnumbered two to one. That's not how he got to be king in the first place by being reckless and stupid.

Caesar Augustus had a saying that he impressed upon his generals. It's a principle of warfare. *Festina lente. Festina lente.* He liked that saying so much he had it printed on his coins and emblazoned on shields and banners. *Festina lente* means, make haste slowly. Make haste slowly. Proceed expeditiously, but do it prudently. Any king in this kind of situation is gonna take time to sit down. Gather his wits about him of the news that he's being invaded. He's gonna convene his war council. And then he's gonna deliberate. He's gonna think carefully, perhaps, perhaps he can, with an inferior force

outnumbered two to one. Maybe he'll deploy his special forces. Get some targeted missions going. Decapitation strikes. Take out some, some leaders and officers.

Maybe knowing his own geography and terrain better than the invaders do. Maybe he can use that to his advantage and outflank the enemy in some outsmarting way. Prevail over his enemy, but he needs to deliberate quickly. *Festina lente* because he doesn't want the invading king to march too far into his land. The further that other king encroaches into his land, the more he loses, and the less he has to negotiate with. So, if he's unable to respond to the threat with his military, he has to resort to a less ideal option. Which is a diplomatic approach. See what negotiations might yield. Because at the very least, that can buy him some time to make other plans on the side. But it's going to have consequences. And that invading king, who's met by a diplomatic envoy rather than a violent military response, that other invading king, he knows he has the upper hand in negotiations. Surrender is soon to come. And surrender for our king here means a loss of a lot.

Those are the parables. I want you to notice the differences between them. In the first parable, Jesus invites the listener to imagine himself engaged in a building project, something that many of these people may have been involved in, very common. A common issue for common people. In the second parable, Jesus asked them to get into the head of a king, someone who is way above their pay grade. Something way outside of their common experience.

In the first parable, the builder has the luxury of time. He's able to start or not start the project according to his judgment, at his leisure. In the second parable, though, the king does not have the luxury of time. There's a more powerful king on the march, heading his way. So, it's *festina lente*, a decision is imminent because it's pressed upon him. In the first parable, what's at stake is the builder's money and reputation in the community. In the second parable, the stakes are much higher. Potential loss of many lives, or at the very least loss of land, freedom, way of life. Potential loss for him of sovereignty, of identity as a land, a nation.

This brings us to the crucial point that Jesus wants us to see. Common people, they don't feel the weight of responsibility. They're not making crucial life and death decisions. In a day-by-day basis. They live in the illusion of the luxury of time. The illusion of sameness in life. Then nothing changes much and nothing really matters too much. For kings and those in authority, they feel the pressure. You ever see one of our presidents after four years in office or eight years in office? How much it ages the man? They feel that pressure. That pressure imposed upon that individual has the effect of crystallizing what really matters.

What this king realizes is that even in great loss what he hopes to preserve, is life itself. Facing a dire situation. Facing a grave and imminent threat. This has a terrific tendency to focus the mind. Clarify what really matters. Boil down everything to its bare essence. In other words, it sets radical priorities. It clarifies and defines what prosperity really is. Jesus says as you sit down to count the cost, as you sit down to deliberate, as you think very carefully about your situation, consider your working definition of what really constitutes prosperity. See what you're willing to give up and everything you're willing to give up is not the definition of prosperity.

What you're not willing to give up is your very life. Verse 33, "Any of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." It's a reminder of what Jesus said in Luke 12:15. "One's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Prosperity is not stuff. It's not even more stuff. It's not a lot of stuff. It's not the world of stuff. It's not a matter of material possessions or increasing wealth. Prosperity is not a matter of trying to hang on to this physical life. It's not about extending the battery life in your dying and decaying body. Prosperity is not about psychological health and happiness either.

Again, back to Luke 9:23-25. Jesus drew this out when he said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it. Whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?"

True prosperity is life itself. An eternal life that only God can give, that only God has. It's a life that God has in

and of himself, he is life. And so it's the life that only God can give and those who grasp that point, very simple point. Those who embrace this. This radical redefinition of what prosperity really is. All of Jesus' true disciples, for them, the world loses any and all hold that it had on their hearts.

The disciples of Jesus Christ are those who transcend the verities and disparities of this fallen world. Rise up to take the challenge that Jesus lays down to deny the self, take up the cross, bear it daily, follow after Christ. They have radically reset their priority. And seek, above all things, God's kingdom and God's righteousness. This is the very thing that sent Christ to the cross, and they know that. But they embraced the consequences anyway because they have a radically realigned loyalty. They love God above all else. They follow Christ above everything else.

So, they cut away everything in life that hinders them from that radical discipleship. That's Christian discipleship. That's what so many of you have embraced. Is there room for some self-examination today among us perhaps? Is there a place for some repentance? Probably, sure. Who among us has arrived?

But so many of you know what Jesus is talking about here is true. Because in varying degrees you have lived this out. You've experienced the division that Jesus spoke of at the end of Luke 12.

Again, speaking of family, "From now on, he says one house there will be five divided, three against two, two against three. They'll be divided father against son, son against father, mother against daughter, daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter in law and daughter in law against mother-in-law."

And you've experienced that. You've felt that. You've experienced the consequences of following Christ and you bear your cross and you do it readily. You do it eagerly. You do it cheerfully. You count it all joy to suffer for his namesake. I know that to be true of many of you. I'm so encouraged by that, and I'm praying for you, along with you.

Others of you, well just understand there's a short time in which you can still count the cost. Don't believe in the luxury of time. You don't have it. You don't know what tomorrow holds.



Count the cost. Do it quickly. See the situation for what it really is. And I plead with you, give your all to Jesus Christ. In giving all to him, you gain everything.

Let's pray. "Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." We love you, Father and worship you and we only long to worship you more fully, more completely, more consistently. We don't want any break in our love for you and our allegiance and loyalty to you.

We pray that you continue, by your grace to make it so, sanctifying us and making us more and more like Jesus Christ. Father, for those here who do not yet know you. For those who maybe have been claiming to be Christians for many years. But this does not describe their life at all even in a small degree.

Oh Father, we pray that you would be gracious to them. That you'd open their eyes to the truth. And you'd grant them saving grace, repentance unto new life. We are here ready to receive them, rejoice in them, and walk together as you shepherd us into heaven.

We pray, Father, that you would help us to be faithful to Christ. That we would humbly but boldly proclaim his name in this lost and dying world. To see other sinners come to know what we've known. That you would make radical changes. If it be your will we pray for a revival in our time. It is very dark time and it seems like it cannot happen. But Father, we believe in a God with whom all things are possible. We can trust that to you. And if that is not going to happen, we pray, Maranatha, come Lord Jesus. It's in his name that we pray. Amen.