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Luke says that thousands were still following Christ by this time in His life. Like window-shoppers, they looked on with admiration and desire, yet lacked the commitment of personal devotion. These masses of people still saw Jesus as an “add-on”, an “extension” to their lives and not the essential center that He ought to be. Self-reliance, self-love, self-ambition crowded their hearts and competed for the singular love they ought to have for Jesus Christ. Following Christ isn’t about adding Him to anything. It’s about making Him everything!

Cost of Discipleship Luke 14:25-33 NKJV

- ²⁵ Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them,
²⁶ "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.
²⁷ And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.
²⁸ For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has *enough* to finish *it* ---
²⁹ lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see *it* begin to mock him,
³⁰ saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish'?
- ³¹ Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?
- ³² Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.
- ³³ So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

Many by this time had experienced fantastic displays of miracles and were no doubt caught up in the spectacle that Christ generated everywhere he travelled. These experiences swept many into a euphoria where their religious experience replaced their much-needed personal belief on Christ. They were there for the “hand-outs,” but not willing to take the hand of God and allow Him to lead them away from their own self-rule.

It wasn’t unusual for Rabbis to have followers. They saw Jesus as a Rabbi, and we could easily speculate that no Rabbi who ever lived had such a large following. But just because these crowds followed Christ doesn’t mean that all of them looked upon Him with heart-felt faith.

In His merciful compassion Christ clarified what He was calling people to realize in order to receive salvation. He was grieved that so many were self-deceived---believing that they would be in the kingdom with Him someday. Sadly, their inadequate attempt to keep the law perfectly, thus satisfying the holy demands of God, was reason for their rejection from the kingdom. Until they would realize that self-reliance cannot break through the narrow gate to the kingdom, they could not be a disciple of Christ. **Discipleship is self-abandonment.**

In a three-fold explanation using a figure of speech like a comparison, called a “Habraism,” Christ stripped away their self-reliance to expose that at the heart of true Christianity is an unshared love for Jesus Christ.

In the first layer of His discourse (v.26), Christ explains in comparative terms that if your attitude of love towards Christ is less than that of your loyalty to your family you cannot be “My disciple.” This love for family is less *objective* and more *subjective* in attitude. Christ is not contradicting the well-established Mosaic Law “Honor your father and your mother,” nor is He commanding an angry and bitter spirit towards family. **What He is showing is that as great as your earthly love is for your natural family, it ought to pale in comparison to your love for God.** The word “hatred” is used as a comparative word, not to be confused with an objective disdain for others.

In the second layer of His discourse (v. 27), Christ illustrates the way of a disciple as the way of one who is thrust out of society, having to bear the judicial

cross of execution under the weight of shame. One who lays hold of the claims of Christ as their Savior is one who will bear the reproach of others who look upon him with reproach and scorn. The disciple of Christ will be loyal to Him first, losing his self-made reputation in the identification of being one with Christ: Loving Christ enough to be identified with Him.

In the third layer of His discourse (vv. 28-32), Christ lays out the terms of the price to follow Him. It won't be in ignorance that one will look to Him. There needs to be a personal and honest assessment of each individual that looks to Him for their rescuing. They must become convinced that they cannot rely upon their own means for their salvation. They have counted up the cost of what they will abandon and knowingly, willingly, leave it all behind in their pursuit of Christ. Nothing of what they own is to give them any security or confidence in this life. Only by following Him can they truly be saved. In fact, in their assessment of all things, even the blessings in their lives, they count them as loss compared to the knowledge of experiencing life with Christ as ruler of their lives. In essence, they must be saved from themselves!

The Apostle Paul testified to having this kind of self-abandonment in his walk with Christ: (Phil. 3:7-10)

⁷ But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.
⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ
⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;
¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death...

In this direct appeal to the crowd we find that Christ is an evangelist. This discourse is not a training lesson for those who already are following Him in faith as a sort of level of further commitment. In prior conversations recorded in the Gospels, Jesus has laid out important truths that one must believe on in order to look to Christ for salvation (ie His deity, His

sinlessness, His sacrifice, etc...). So, in this sermon, Christ did not exclude those facts from their relevant placing in salvation. But, in this discourse, rather than reviewing all of these very necessary truths, He highlighted the attitude of the heart. **In order to believe upon Him for their salvation they must come to Him with no self-dependence.** The attitude of their heart must be that of complete self-abandon.

We look to Christ with an unrivaled, unshared love. Our love for Him and our pursuit of His supremacy in our lives leaves no room for our selfish ambitions. While we do not abandon relationships and possessions that we have been blessed with in this life in order to seek Him, we do hold those things loosely in relationship to the value that we have in knowing God for ourselves through His Son Jesus Christ.

When we have counted the cost and laid aside the guarding of our reputation for the sake of calling Him our Lord, we will find that in Him we have all! Without Him we really have nothing at all.

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- 1. What three areas of self-dependence does Christ strike against in this passage?**
- 2. Why is it important that there be a personal assessment of the cost of following Him?**
- 3. Is this evangelistic message hard to hear or easy to hear? Why?**
- 4. Have you ever taken an honest and personal assessment of your life in view of these truths?**

