

What is a Disciple II: A Disciple Counts the Cost

1. Introduction and Review

- a. Joke: There is a story of a soldier frantically digging in during battle as shells fall all around him. Suddenly his hand touches something metallic in the soil and he grabs it. It is a silver cross. Another shell explodes and he buries his head in his arms. Just then, he feels someone jump into his foxhole with him and he looks over and sees the army chaplain. The soldier pushes the cross in the chaplain's face and says, "I'm sure glad to see you. How do you work this thing?"
- b. Last week talked about what a disciple is and the difference between a disciple and an admirer of Jesus Christ.
 - i. Admirers want to figure out how to work Jesus.
 - ii. They want what He can give them, but won't leave their comfort zone to follow Him.
- c. This series will run through Easter and should challenge you each week in your personal walk with Jesus to get out of the rut, to engage the Master, and find new meaning in your walk with Christ.

2. Conditions of Discipleship

- a. Luke 9:57-62 *"As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow wherever You go." 58 And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." 59 And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." 60 But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God." 61 Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." 62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*
- b. Lets look at each of these people.
 - i. The first in v.57-58 seems to have invited himself to be a follower of Christ.
 1. *As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow wherever You go." And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."*
 2. Kind of like someone walking into the US Armed Services Recruiting Center saying to the Navy recruiter (Kevin King), "Hey, I'll join up"
 3. Now, Kevin's likely response is probably, "Okay! Sign right here!" as he has a quota to meet. Any warm body that is willing to give away the rights to 3 years of their life is a great candidate.
 4. But becoming a follower of Jesus is a bit different.
 5. God has no quotas.
 - a. He has said to the world, *"If anyone is thirsty, let him come."*
 - b. He has said, *"Come to me all you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest..."*
 - c. He has said, *"All who believe on my Name will have eternal life."*
 - d. He has said, *"God sent his son into the world not to condemn the world but to save it.."*
 6. Yet, when this first fellow wants to "sign up" Jesus actually tries to discourage him. Why would he do that?
 - a. Lets imagine Kevin, instead of saying to the potential recruit, "sign here" says,
 - i. Son, do you really know what you are getting yourself in for? 12 weeks of boot camp, deprivation, no sleep, a DI yelling at you morning, noon and night, PT that will have you so exhausted you

- don't think you can take another step. And when you graduate boot camp, you will be deployed to another city or state or if you are lucky, you will be deployed on a ship where you will get so seasick that you will wish you could die.
- b. Yet, Jesus does exactly that. He tells this prospective follower that to be his disciple will mean deprivation and homelessness, uncertainty and a life of faith.
 - i. I don't know what this fellow does, but we never hear from him again. I think he went home and was thankful he had a home.
- ii. The second person in v59 wants a funeral leave. *And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God."*
1. This person wants funeral leave. Jesus calls him to put aside even the normal necessities of life.
 - a. All too often, our missionaries have done this. Unable to leave their work to attend to familial duties, they place these demands second to the Kingdom of heaven.
 2. Now let me clarify: Jesus doesn't call a family to forsake their dependent children or a father as a pastor to ignore his family.
 - a. How well he cares for them is an barometer of how much he loves God.
 3. But what Jesus does is to call a person to a re-ordering of priorities, one that places pleasing God ahead of all other affections.
 - a. The first American Foreign Missionary, Adoniram Judson when he asked Ann Hasseltine's father for his daughter's hand in marriage, wrote the following to her father:
 - i. *"I have now to ask whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world; whether you can consent to her departure to a heathen land and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life; whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean, to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India, to every kind of want and distress, to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death. Can you consent to all this, for the sake of Him who left His heavenly home and died for her and for you?"*
 - ii. Imagine your daughter's boyfriend asking you, dad, for her hand in that kind of manner? Do you want to say yes?
 - b. This is the spirit in which Jesus calls disciples.
 - c. **Jesus calls disciples to a complete reordering of priorities.**
- iii. The third person, *Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*
1. This draws out a response from Jesus that ought to make us sit up and pay attention.
 2. This man uses a delaying tactic.
 - a. He didn't have his priorities sorted out.
 - b. He may have thought that he had plenty of time, like accepting a part-time job from an employer.
 - c. Literally he says: *"Let me go and set in order my household affairs,"*
 - d. But this is no part time job or hobby. It is a life-long calling.

- e. You may have noticed that the rest of Jesus disciples, once called, immediately dropped what they were doing and joined Him.
- f. Jesus' reply indicates what this man's struggle is: he was looking back, not sure if he wanted to go on, holding onto the past while contemplating the future.
- g. Does that describe you?

3. Costs of Discipleship

- a. Billy Graham has said that *"Salvation is free but discipleship costs everything we have."*
- b. Look at Luke 14:25-33 *Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, 26 "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. 27 "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. 28 "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? 29 "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 "Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 "Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. 33 "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up (renounce) all his own possessions.*
- c. What did you expect when you became a Christian? I think that there are three categories folks fall into when they are confronted by Christ:
 - i. **No way Jose:** These people count the cost and realize that they are not willing to pay it.
 - 1. They are the ones when I ask them point blank, "What is keeping you from giving yourself to Jesus" say, "I'm not ready to let go."
 - 2. At least they are honest.
 - a. They know that to come to Christ means He is going to change them radically and completely, from the inside out and that they simply aren't ready to part with their self-led, self-run life.
 - b. Granted, they are rejecting the greatest love in the universe,
 - c. They are rejecting the greatest promise – eternal life,
 - d. They are rejecting the greatest impact on the purpose and meaning of their life here on earth.
 - e. But they count the cost and declare "I don't want it."
 - 3. This may be you today. You have heard about what Jesus did for you, you may even have had someone ask you to ask to receive Him. And you have said, "not yet, I'm not ready to stop living for me."
 - a. If so, I am glad you are here to hear this message.
 - b. I hope the love of God touches you today to reconsider.
 - ii. **Something for Nothing Nelda:** These folks know a good deal when they see it.
 - 1. They see a free ticket to heaven and all the answered prayers they can pray here on earth.
 - 2. Christianity for them is a happiness capsule, an escape from difficulties and a shortcut to an easier life.
 - 3. You see this brand of Christianity advertised on television all the time.
 - a. It is a life where God exists to serve you.
 - b. The problem is that this outlook will never change you.
 - c. This a Christ-less Christianity because where there is no cross, there is no Christ.

- d. Many folks want to share with Jesus at the breaking of bread, but few at the drinking of the cup.
 - e. Many want to see his miracles but detest the times of His silence.
 - f. Many love Jesus so long as nothing bad happens to them..
 - g. Many bless him so long as they receive blessings from him.
4. M. Luther - *A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing.* –
- iii. **Pay the Price Paul:** These are the disciples who have counted the cost.
- 1. They see what Jesus did for them and realize that there is nothing that God can ask of them that is too great in comparison for what He did in their place.
 - 2. These folks have spotted the pearl of great price and have taken all they have and sold it to buy it.
 - 3. They have forsaken everything else because what the Christ they have found is so much more valuable than anything they hold.
4. **The Price isn't Right** - So often what happens is after we have walked with Jesus for awhile, something comes across our path that makes us ask the question, "this isn't what I signed up for"
- a. John the Baptist
 - i. I would like you to consider John the Baptist who when he was in prison sent messengers to Jesus with a strange question.
 - ii. Matthew 11:2-6 *Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. "And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."*
 - iii. This is a very strange question for the cousin of Jesus to ask.
 - 1. He knew who Jesus was when he baptized him and saw the Spirit descend like a dove upon him.
 - 2. Yet he asks this question shortly before being executed. Why?
 - 3. What was happening to him that could possibly cause him to doubt and ask such a question?
 - 4. I believe it is because John is between a prison and a platter, Herodias' daughter asked for John's head on a platter.
 - 5. John is facing his mortality, and he has a friend and cousin who he knows can do anything!
 - 6. I believe that John was asking Jesus, the Messiah, who most believed was the CONQUERING messiah, to set him free from his present circumstance.
 - 7. But Jesus ends his reply with a most unusual response. "*Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.*"
 - a. What Jesus says and does seems uncivilized for our cultured Christianity.
 - b. Jesus is saying, "*I got the power, but I am not going to rescue you John. You are blessed if you don't fall away on account of this.*"
 - c. **Jesus' purpose is not to save us from pain and suffering but from meaninglessness.**

- d. Jesus never promised that. In fact, He promised the opposite.!
- ii. In the hall of fame of faith listed in Hebrews 11:35-40, we see a host of those who “did not receive what had been promised”
 - 1. In other words, “they were sawn in half, died horrible deaths, were persecuted, burned alive, torn by beasts, etc”
 - 2. Do you think when you talk to them in heaven they will say, “aw, we got the short end of the deal”?
- 3. No, they would tell you that they were most fully alive, most fulfilled, most complete when they were in the midst of God’s will, following and depending upon Him without compromise.

5. Suffering and the Cross

- a. Matthew 16:24. *Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*
 - i. Jesus words were to “take up” ‘pick up” the cross. That is, “pick it up yourself.”
 - 1. He didn’t say, “pick up a cross for protection”
 - 2. He didn’t say, “wear this cross as a fashion statement”
 - a. In fact, most of us would rather wear a cross than bear a cross.
 - ii. When Jesus says “pick up your cross” he is giving us a choice.
 - 1. He gave us a choice, just as He had a choice whether or not he was going to the cross for our sins and our sake
 - 2. **Cross bearing is voluntary..**It is a choice we make.
- b. **What isn’t a cross?**
 - i. A Cross is not sickness or suffering, and it isn’t a difficult circumstance.
 - 1. With the circumstances of life you don’t have a choice whether or not you will endure it.
 - ii. A cross isn’t when a tornado wipes your home off the map or a hurricane sweeps away your job. That is not a cross.
 - 1. You didn’t volunteer for it...that is just a tragedy of life.
 - iii. When a loved one passes away and you are filled with grief, that is not the cross Jesus speaks of. You didn’t choose it. It is a hardship of life that loved ones will die.
 - iv. If your doctor tells you that you have lung cancer and you will have to live your life with just one lung, that is not a cross. That is a sickness.
 - 1. You don’t choose it. It just happened to you.
 - 2. It is a burden that you must bear but it is not your cross.
 - v. I am not making light of life’s hardships – but believe me, they are not the cross that Jesus was talking about.
 - vi. Bearing the cross is a choice. **Picking up our cross is a voluntary act of sacrificial obedience that identifies us with Jesus.**
 - 1. Bearing our cross is not making the best of a circumstance or situation.
 - 2. It is something we deliberately take up and bear in obedience to Christ..
 - vii. **Cross bearing is not an accident, it is an act of love.**
 - 1. It is an act we freely choose, a task we undertake out of love for Jesus.
 - 2. For Jesus it meant going to a cross to die because he loved us so much he could do nothing less.
 - 3. For us, it means reaching out to people who are unlovable or unlovely, and who may never return the love.
 - 4. It may mean loving people who won’t love you back.
 - 5. It means choosing to pay the price of love regardless of the hardships or rewards.
 - viii. Does talking about cross bearing bother you?
 - 1. It should as we lean back in our easy chair with our families at our side.
 - a. Jesus interrupts our comfort and tells us to “take up your cross and follow me.”

2. Do you say, “but I worked really hard today, I need more time for myself, I don’t have time to coach that children’s team”
3. Sunday morning comes and Jesus says, “I have a classroom of squirming gradeschoolers who need to hear about Me.”
 - a. Do you say, “Oh Lord, that cross just don’t fit me!”
4. Jesus is going around us and setting crosses all around us, waiting for us to pick one up.
 - a. Instead of crosses they become stumbling blocks when we refuse them.
 - i. Missionaries need money...
 - ii. The food pantry needs volunteers
 - iii. VBS needs teachers
 - iv. The Mobile Home park ministry needs your help
5. What is your reply to His command to “pick up your cross”?

6. Rewards of Discipleship

- a. **Jesus did not offer to make men’s lives easy but rather to make men’s lives great.**
 - i. When we follow Him our lives take on an eternal perspective and leave a permanent impact upon our world.
 - ii. Our lives mean something more than mere survival and happiness and a six foot plot at Madison cemetery.
- b. Our world teaches us that success is measured by what we have and how easy or convenient life is for us.
 - i. Sadly, the church has adopted that attitude, advertising itself as a place where its members get all sorts of fringe benefits.
 - ii. What people end up doing is to shop for the church that offers the most for their money.
 - iii. Unfortunately, if you live like that you will never see the radical, world changing, life impacting supernatural power of God flow through you.
- c. We must come “after him” and “deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him.”
 - i. The way of the cross is the pathway to greatness and significance.
- d. Are you content warming a pew?
 - i. Do you want no purpose in life other than to punch your clock and to see your religious duty fulfilled?
 - ii. **God’s will for us is to make the days of our lives to count rather than for us to merely count the days of our lives**
 - iii. Hudson Taylor understood the cross as joy, because at the end of his fifty years of missionary labor in China he said, "I never made a sacrifice."

7. Closing

- a. This morning Jesus offers you a cross. Not a life at ease or a church that has all the solutions to your problems.
- b. We cannot guarantee you success at your job or that you won’t have trouble in your marriage or that you will prosper and have all the money in life you want.
- c. All we have to offer is Jesus and His Cross.
- d. The question for you is “will you come to Him today?”
- e. Eternal life is yours, a free gift for the taking.
- f. But it will cost you the rights to yourself.
- g. Are you courageous enough to receive it?
- h. Lets pray.