



“Counting the Cost”
Psalm 31:19-24; Luke 14:25-35
October 19, 2008

Introduction: counting the cost. How good are you at counting; in your head or via calculator? Do you budget? Do you plan ahead? Are you aware of your life?

Hating Your Family

I don't mind saying that this is a jarring statement, especially when you factor in other Scripture verses such as honor your parents, or love your wife as Christ loved the church or love others as God has loved you (Ephesians 5, Exodus 20 and 1 John 4). What is Jesus telling us here and how can we live this out? Jesus is using typical Semitic imagery to shock us and to grab our attention. Jesus is not saying that we should be filled with the negative feelings of anger, rage and passionate displeasure with our family. Rather, what Jesus is saying is that our love for Him must outweigh all other personal and even familial attachments. That is, our relationship with Jesus is our most important and primary relationship, allegiance and commitment.

I love the old Texas saying, one that is true in every state, that if Momma is not happy, no one's happy. I learned early on in marriage that this very true. In fact, this is one of the first areas I cover in marriage counseling. I have to give credit to Rachel, however, for one time when we were talking, she said it is okay to have one Christ sized exception to this saying. When Jesus tells us something and our spouse is not on board, Jesus must come first. She told me don't be unfaithful to Jesus in trying to please her.

How about you? What relationships influence you? Is it your children? Is it your spouse? Is it your parents? Is it you? Most of us live to please ourselves. We then make decisions based on what will make us feel good. Or is it Christ? Of course, there is only one holy answer to this question. But what is your real answer? What do the actions of your life say? John Ortberg, in his book, **Faith and Doubt**, says there are three types of belief: public, private and core convictions. What do the core convictions of our lives tell us about how important Jesus is?

Counting the Cost

Have we, have you truly counted the cost of discipleship? Jesus tells us we must do so if we are to last in following Him. Have we really considered what it means to listen to, to seek, to obey and to learn from Jesus? Are we willing to let go of everything and everyone that gets in the way and that distracts us from Jesus? Are we really willing to live lives punctuated by His costly discipleship?

Jesus gives us these parables as visual reminders of the folly of not counting the cost. Any responsible person will count the cost before embarking on projects. A builder will of course sit down and plan out the cost before beginning to work. Otherwise, they waste time, energy and supplies and never finish what they started. In fact, the sign of their lack of discipline and of integrity becomes a public comedy. Also, a king going to war does not do so without planning. Every war movie I have ever watched involved some sort of maps, plans or strategizing ahead of time, including even expected losses. Jesus tells us in Luke 9:62, *“No one who puts their hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”* When we decide to follow Jesus, then we are to know that life may be full of challenges, but His powerful presence with us is the ultimate reward.

I was thinking this week: what are the underlying issues here? Some of our sinful human tendencies are to want to be in control; or to know what is coming and when it will happen; to get impatient too quickly; to get frustrated that our plans are not the same as God's; we prefer pain or struggle avoidance; we want life to be easy; we want to enjoy life while in spiritual armchairs. How about you? I think I would be more worried or even nervous about someone telling me their life has turned out exactly as they had imagined. They either don't know how to beyond ours and perfect. How about you? Have you seriously pondered what it means to follow Jesus? Have you thought about what you will need to give up? Being a Christian is not about what we get, but rather about learning to give up everything in our lives that does not glorify Him. For as Jesus tells us in Luke 9:23-24, *“If anyone would come after me, they must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.”*

Being Salty

I know when I think of this term the first thing that pops into my mind is when sailors or others use salty language. This is not the case here. Rather, Jesus is giving us a image of how we are to live. Salt then, as now, so and thus in the older days, there would be salted beef and pork. Basically, it would be disastrous for salt to lose its favor. Salt would then be worthless. So too is it a disaster if we fail to become who God would wants us to be. If we fail to become like Jesus, if we fail to be a light in the darkness, if we fail to be selfless and self sacrificial, we will miss out on the fullness of love. We are to make sure that we rid ourselves of whatever or whoever gets in the way of us being who God has created us to be, of being the salt of the earth. This parallels what Jesus had said earlier in Matthew 5:13, where He says, *“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, who can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.”*