

The Call to Radical Discipleship, Part 2

Luke 14:25-33

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 loyalty, priority, and prosperity.

Second point, 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.'"

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, as 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.

Third point, which is about, number three, a 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. 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 increased 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 them 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 a 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.