

Series: Come & Follow
Title: Consider the Cost
Text: Matthew 10:16-42
Key Word: Costs

Proposition: Everyone will count the costs of obedience to the call of Christ, loosen their grasp on earthly rewards and freely follow Christ. When you give to him the lesser thing, he rewards you with the greater thing.

Good morning everyone. My name is Chris Farmer. I thank God that I can serve as one of your pastors. We are thrilled that you have chosen to come and worship with us today. God is in this place. He is here to reveal His ways and purposes so that we can live the life God created us to live. He desires that we Love Him and others as He has first loved us. He urges us to grow to be like Jesus and to serve the world.

One of the first things Jesus said to a few fishermen was “Come, follow me.” The Gospel writers tell us that immediately they left everything: jobs, family, security, a caring community, you name it and they followed Jesus. The Spirit of Jesus is here today saying, “Come, follow me.”

In preparation for the celebration of Easter, we are learning what Jesus meant by this radical call upon our lives. Matt Reynolds, our Director of Discipleship explained that in God’s economy, real, everlasting life comes through death. Pastor Bonita called us to let our excuses go so that we can be free to follow the Living Christ. Today, we consider the cost.

Whenever I buy something, whether it is a car or a gallon of milk, I usually check the price. The question always is: Am I willing to pay this amount, or is the price too high? If I stop at a gas station to get a gallon of milk, and see a price of \$ 3.00, I think, OK, I could pick it up for 20 cents less somewhere else, but the convenience of buying

it right now is worth the 20 cents. However, if they were charging \$5 for a gallon of milk, I would probably wait and buy it at another store. If they were charging \$25 for a gallon of milk, I would buy a can of pop instead. Most folks ask two primary questions; how much does it cost? What is it worth? The “cost” of something is actually the price. The “worth” of something is its personal value. Any salesperson can quote the cost...but only you can determine the worth.

“Cost” is the cold, objective, sometimes painful, amount of money it takes to complete the purchase. The bill defines the monetary expense required to finish a transaction. The receipt proves that we have paid for it in full, making the purchase our legal possession.

“Worth” is the usefulness of the object, the value or importance of a service or purchased product. “Worth” plays a significant role in our thinking. On the one hand, we think about the cold, hard facts of the cost along with the subjective, magnetic appeals of worth. When the price tag is costly, then worth steps in and calls us to think about the future benefits. Many times “worth” softens the harsh blows of the price. **It says, “Go for it, it’s worth it.”**

Jesus called his twelve radiant followers together for a pre-game pep talk. He is about to send them out onto the field for the first game of the season. They had many strategy sessions. They watched him play the game; healing the sick, raising the dead, and casting out demons. They heard him proclaim that the Kingdom of God is at hand. Now, they are ready to be sent out to play the Kingdom game. Like in the game of

follow the leader, followers do what the leader does. Like any great coach, he gives them some final instructions. He tells them to focus upon connecting with the lost sheep of Israel. He instructs them to tell them that the kingdom of heaven is near, to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with leprosy, and drive out demons. Just as they have freely received, they are to give freely. He warns them of the dangers out on the field, but not to fear for they are worth more than any other created thing. He wraps up his talk with a call for them to consider the cost while realizing the worth of their engagement with the lost sheep of Israel.

Jesus gathers us today for a similar pre-game pep talk. In a few moments, we too will be sent out with the authority and power of the Spirit of Christ to engage the lost. This engagement will create a holy disturbance with the status quo. Changed lives though will make it worth our while.

Like our predecessors, faith will replace fear, trust will substitute worry. The eternal rewards far outweigh the temporary costs. Some of you are thinking, "Pastor Chris, what are you talking about? It doesn't cost anything to become a Christian!" You are right. It does not cost a thing. Salvation is a gift, which Jesus Christ has purchased for us with His own blood. We cannot earn or merit this marvelous salvation. It is by God's grace alone, and it is free. It costs nothing to become a Christian. However, we will pay a price for being a Christian. Those of us who follow Jesus Christ have difficulties and hardships that we would never experience if we were not Christians. So what are the temporary costs that are worth eternal rewards?

First, Following Christ means it will cost our loyalties. Jesus said, “*Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown before my Father in heaven.*” (Matthew 10:31, 32) Most of the Jews in the 1st Century thought the coming of the Messiah would usher in a golden age of peace and prosperity. That is why, when it became clear that Jesus did not intend to do that, many of them rejected Him as the Messiah. Many stopped following him, when he started talking about absolute, undivided allegiance to Him and His kingdom. They wanted to live in two worlds: the world of allegiance to Rome and the world of allegiance to the Kingdom of God.

Imagine that you are driving north on I-75. You see that the driver in front of you has a strong allegiance. The spare tire mounted on the back had a University of Michigan tire cover. The trailer hitch displayed U of M helmet on it. The license plate frame was bordered with the words "Wolverine" on top and "University of Michigan" at the bottom.

But something did not add up. That license plate frame was screwed into a new state of Ohio license plate, with the picture of a pastoral landscape glowing with a radiant sun and the words: “Birthplace of Aviation,” printed on it. You live in Ohio, and the SUV's license plate shows that this driver does too. You may assume the owner of this SUV had moved recently, or that they were a U of M graduate, but had not yet fully identified with his home and had no plans of changing loyalties.

That's normal human behavior. When we move, we often go through a slow transition of loyalties to our new home. Or many folks remain loyal to their Alma Mata. So, it is as a Christian. When we come to Christ, the kingdom of God becomes our home, but the kingdom of this world does not leave our hearts easily. The great challenge of the Christian is to overcome divided loyalties and fully align oneself with God's kingdom. Overcoming divided loyalties promises Christ acknowledgement of his loyalty to us when we find ourselves face to face with our holy God.

Second, following Christ means it will cost our loves. Jesus said, *“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”* (Matthew 10:37) This hard saying of Jesus raises many questions. Some ask why does he say that he comes to turn father against son and daughter against mother. What about the verses in Scripture that challenges us to family unity, honor our parents, to train children in the way they should go, and to treat one another with love and respect?

Jesus is not excusing violence or family dysfunction. He is simply explaining the serious nature of a radiant follower of Christ. Jesus did not come to champion conflict. He invited a tax collector and a Zealot who hated Rome's tax collectors to become his followers. Yet, they left all to come and follow him, living together as a radiant follower of Christ. Seeing a tax collector and Zealot walking side by side, the disciples must have known that a miracle was happening in their midst.

However, Jesus caused tension in relationships. Look at his family. Some in his own family were not sympathetic to his ministry. John says that even his brothers did not believe in him. (JN7:5) You see tension in relationships is only an effect of his coming not the purpose of it. This has been proven true in the early church and even today with the persecution of the Christ-followers. (Paul, Peter, I Cor. 7:12 – 16)

Nina accepted Christ as her Savior when she was 16. She had to wait until she was 18 to be baptized because her parents wouldn't allow it while she was living in their home. They forbid her to attend church. As Jewish parents, they considered her commitment to Christ as an act of disloyalty against her heritage and her family. Following Jesus, yielding to his call, may cost you your loves.

When Jesus tells us that we are to love him more than we love our children, our parents, our spouse, or anyone else, he is not saying that we are not to love the others; he is saying that we are to love him more. By loving him most, we can love them best. That is what makes it worth it.

Third, following Christ means it will cost your life. Jesus said, *“And anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me, whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”* Matthew 10:38-39

A first grade teacher tells about an interaction with one of her students on the first day of school. In the habit of going home at noon in kindergarten, Ryan was getting his things ready to leave for home when he was actually supposed to be heading to lunch with the rest of the class. The teacher asked him what he was doing. "I'm going home,"

he replied. The teacher explained that now that he is in the first grade, he has a longer school day. "You can go eat lunch now," she said, "and then you'll come back to the room and do some more work before you go home." Ryan looked up at her in disbelief, hoping she was kidding. Convinced that she was serious, Ryan then put his hands on his hips and demanded, "Who on earth signed me up for this program?"

Followers of Jesus find it easy to feel a little like Ryan when we consider the costs of following the Lord. The requirements are daunting—"Surely the Lord doesn't expect me to forgive seventy times seven;" "Surely he doesn't want me to turn the other cheek when someone hurts me; or love my enemies" Surely, the Lord doesn't expect me to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned, and sell what I have and give to the poor. Surely he doesn't mean to, 'to take up my cross'?" It isn't long before we want to say, "Who on earth signed me up for this program?"

I suspect that Peter who was crucified upside down, James who was beheaded, John who was exiled on an island, and Paul who said, "I die every day," (1 Cor. 15:31) may have thought for a brief moment who signed me up for this program? However, they realized that following Jesus was worth the cost.

Like Jesus, the life of a radiant follower involves sacrifice, self-denial, not in the sense of giving something up for lent, or for all of our lives. It is saying a decisive, "NO" to oneself, to ones plans, hopes, ambitions, preferences, to the nearest and the dearest for the sake of Jesus. It may not feel like an even trade, but we get back from God so much more than we could ever possibly give.

I remember when I was a college student. If I was to achieve my goal attaining a degree, I had to learn to say, “No” to many things. I said, “No” to watching TV, hanging out in college café with coeds, or to playing basketball in the gym so I could say “Yes,” to studying so that I would have a degree. The degree would take me much further in life than watching “Baywatch” or “Hill Street Blues.” This sacrifice paid off. We say “No” to purchases now for a more worthwhile purchase later on.

This is especially true in the area of our spiritual lives. There are sacrifices we must make in order to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus, but what we get back in return is so much greater than what we give. The sacrifice is always worth whatever price we have to pay. God is not a God who takes; he's a God who gives. When we give to him the lesser thing, he rewards us with the greater thing.

Jesus never hesitated to tell people what to expect if they would choose to follow him. One author said, “This is not the world’s way to win adherents.” The world offers comfort, ease, advancement, satisfaction, and fulfillment. Jesus offered his followers life-transforming challenges. Many love the call to adventure no matter what the cost.

Radiant followers of Christ sacrifice today's ambition, ease and comfort, most certainly one’s will. Radiant followers of Christ cannot do what they like; they must do what Christ likes. Christianity demands a cross. Resurrection makes it worth it.