

February 28: YOUTH SERVICE - Luke 14:25-35, the cost of discipleship

READ Luke 14:25-35 (Hannah!!)

INTRO: At this particular point in Jesus' ministry He had gathered a large following! Everyone loved the miracles, healing, and free food. Jesus was doing all sorts of amazing signs and wonders and no one had ever heard anyone as wise as this man! And it was all done for free! Jesus was cool, the talk of the town. But He knew their hearts. He knew they loved His gifts, not the life He was calling them to. So, when Jesus said the things in this passage they must have been as shocked as we are!! Hate your parents, your spouse, children, even yourself!! Jesus meek and mild!! the God of unconditional love! Don't say that!!

talk about hate:

Take up your cross?! What are you talking about?! HATE! that means "to despise, detest, or loathe. And taking up ones cross was no figure of speech in Jesus' day, it meant your verdict was set and you were on your way to your way to a shameful death! It seems as though Jesus' teachings here are contradicting other passages in the Bible that elevate marriage and family and self! We ALL are created in God's image (male and female) made to reflect God's gracious loving rule to this world. A husband and wife is the intimate image that the apostle Paul uses to describe Christ's relationship to the church! And of course the 5th commandment says to honour your mother and father - all themes that run throughout the whole Bible. But not here! So what is Jesus saying!! When we read this passage we often think like this..

Soapbox: A politician stands up and says: "if you vote for me you can be guaranteed to have higher taxes, lower incomes, and you'll probably lose your houses. If I get elected you'll lose what you love most! So make sure to vote for me!" If this happened you wouldn't even heckle me or throw tomatoes at me, you'd just be confused and feel sorry for me__But isn't this basically what Jesus is saying here? Hate everything that you love?! Not exactly the way to win friends and family over!

however, "hate" does not always mean "to despise, detest, and loathe," which are synonymous with the general use of the word "hate" in our modern culture. This strong figure of speech Jesus is using includes the meaning "to love less."

MAIN POINT: JESUS MUST BE OUR FIRST PRIORITY IN LIFE!

not that we should literally hate our families or lives but that if we had to choose; our obedience and allegiance to Jesus always comes first

- Now as a new dad, this is a particularly hard pill to swallow. I love my family and my new little dude that I get to watch grow work hard at being a good dad for him! This idea of family that God came up with is AMAZING, but we must be careful because the love of our families can easily eclipse all others!

- Jesus said that the first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength! And in Mt 10:37 Jesus says that “whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me!” JESUS IS CLEAR THAT HE IS TO BE FIRST PLACE IN OUR LIVES.
- → And it is not just that we should love him a little more than our families but our love for Him should be in a whole different category!! The gap should be huge!! (**see the list**)!
- too many are content with how the list is on the left, and I would worry that God often takes the bottom shelf in that list...BUT God is SOO HOLY, so above there should be no such thing as a close second!!

Context for persecution:

If we look at the first 300 years of the church, it may be easier to understand what Jesus means. The people who gave their lives to Christ were often killed for their faith (they denied their own lives), they were exiled; they were put out of work, their very own families would disown them. But thousands and by now millions of Christians would rather suffer great earthly losses than deny Jesus! In North America we may never experience this extreme kind of persecution but this same persecution is still happening all over the world! And this is the kind of love and devotion that Jesus is calling us to! That in a moments notice we would give up anything for the sake of the Gospel!

The analogy of the politician on a soapbox does not get at what Jesus is saying. So instead lets imagine a great leader of an expedition forging a way through a dangerous mountain pass to bring urgent medical aid to a remote village ravaged by sickness!

medical expedition:

The leader says: “If you want to come any further, you’ll have to leave your packs behind. From here on out the path is too steep to carry everything. you will probably never find it again. And you’d better send your last letters home; this is a dangerous journey and it is likely that some of us will not make it back!” I believe that this is the background story to what Jesus has in mind – and although we may not like the sound of it we are able to understand it much better!

Insanity 166-167!!!!

- “you don’t have to come back, you just have to Go!!” This is what the cost of discipleship is all about!

Jesus is asking the crowd followers to become fully committed disciples!! The crowds are fans of Jesus! They want to watch and see what crazy thing he will do next! But Jesus tells them if they truly want to follow him they must count the cost!! Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, on his way to carrying His own cross in

order to rescue humanity from its slavery to sin, brokenness and death. He is on a rescue mission that will cost Him His life.

The meaning of the 2 pictures Jesus gives us (read):

Jesus gives us two pictures: one is of building a tower and the other of a battle.

In the first picture a builder must estimate the costs of building a tower to see if he can complete it. If he begins and is unable to complete it, the people will laugh and there will be shame upon the builder. Now at this time the most important building project was of course the temple. Herod the Great began a massive restoration of the Temple! But what was it all for? Would it ever be completed? In Luke 13:35 Jesus had already warned that God had abandoned the temple. And if you follow history the temple was completely destroyed 70 years later as Jesus predicts in Luke 21!

This first picture is not unconnected with the second! It was no secret that Israel wanted to be freed from the Roman empire that controlled their nation. Jesus is warning them that if they really knew how sizeable the Roman army was they would take the wise route to peace. But Jesus' listeners were too focused on the ancient patriarchal promises of Israel to even realize that Jesus was bringing God's Kingdom to earth in a new way as Israel's true representative!

Both projects were keeping Israel from understanding who Jesus was and the amazing offer he was giving them.

So where are the towers and wars that we are focused on that keep us from realizing the promise of Jesus' Kingdom?! As I prayed about this, God brought 2 words to mind: **comfort** and **convenience**.

The Spanish explorer, Cortes is famous, for burning or destroying his entire fleet of ships upon reaching the destination of his mission. His expedition landed in present-day Veracruz, Mexico. Shortly after landing he destroyed his ships so that when the going got rough his men would have no means of retreat. No going back, only pressing on. "they had nothing to rely on, apart from their own hands, and the assurance that they would conquer and win the land, or die trying."

They were unable to return to the comfortable life they once knew. Therefore they had no choice but to completely focus on this new life. Luckily for us when we put our faith in Christ and receive the free gift of salvation Jesus gives us His Holy Spirit to come and live inside of us to help us live out this new life. Now, Salvation is only the letter A in the alphabet of the Christian life so to continue our ABC's the Holy Spirit will begin to reveal to us the ships we need to destroy that keep us from fully embracing this new life in Christ.

So what do our ships look like in 2016 on the north shore?

- Good grades and Degrees
- that certain look or car
- to travel the world
- to win the championship
- to have the perfect family, career, or home?

If you look at all these things up here; how often do we sacrifice one in order to gain another of these? You put all your focus on sports or another activity that an injury or inability to carry on takes your whole identity away from you! Maybe you want a better family life so you work longer and harder to give them the 'good things' of this life but in the meantime you actually neglect them! Or perhaps by trying to have the perfect family you actually hurt your relationships with them by forcing unrealistic expectations on them? Or by striving for the best grades you might actually cause undue stress and anxiety that takes away from your friends, family, and faith. I am not saying these are bad things but too often they take away from our relationship with God render the church ineffective...

Until will fully surrender our lives to God we cannot fully enter into the life Jesus has for us

When we lose focus on Christ this is where our lives will turn. This will lead to the church losing its flavour! Jesus says (READ 34-35) ... Salt preserves food and makes it tasty! The church is supposed to preserve the world and make it tasty!! NSA, let us not loose our tastiness!!

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was the one who coined the phrase **“cheap grace.”**

Bonhoeffer defined “cheap grace” as “the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline. Communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ.”

Costly grace calls us to die to ourselves and follow Christ with everything we have! Above all it is costly because God had to send his son to earth to die in our place as a perfect sinless substitute. We were bought at a price-the highest price that could be paid so we must not settle for cheap grace!

One of my teachers told our class: **Grace costs me all my favourite sins!!**

Jesus is calling us to radical obedience not because he wants to wreck our fun but because he wants to use us to save a broken and dying world! Our world is a mess! War, famine, hideous evil, greed, and pride wreak havoc on humanity. Our failure to join God’s rescue mission means our submission to this dying world! Jesus is the greatest revolutionary the world has ever known and the church is the greatest organization to ever exist.

God’s Kingdom is so much greater than any version of the North American dream!! God’s Kingdom is where we fully encounter the one true God who created the universe. This is where love truly reigns and is not just given lip service to! God’s Kingdom is anti-hate, anti-greed, anti-evil. When we obey the commands that Jesus has laid out for us in scripture we begin to restore

humanity and become more human not less. Anything we do that goes against God's Word is actually going against His good creation and undoing it! Sin at its heart brings brokenness to God's creation and ends in only in death.

I am not suggesting that we can work our way to salvation. Salvation is a free gift of grace, Jesus simply asks us to believe and put our faith in Him. So we don't obey

Pastor Tim Keller: "The upside-down pattern of God's Kingdom so contradicts the thinking and practice of the world that it creates an "alternative kingdom," an alternate reality, a counterculture among those who have been transformed by it. In this peaceable kingdom there is a reversal of values of the world with regard to power, recognition, status, and wealth. In this new counterculture, Christians look at money as something to give away. They look at power as something to use strictly for service...Christ creates a whole new center of life. Those who are shaped by the great reversal of the cross no longer need self-justification through money, status, career, or pride of race and class. So the Cross creates a counterculture in which, sex, money and power cease to control us and are used in life-giving and community building rather than in destructive ways."

- Compassion Sunday: we were going to buy a new couch...
- David Platt's book Radical: we were going to sell our house and buy a bigger one: now we downsized and adopted a kid

If we are to make Jesus our first priority we must count the cost. What is God showing you this morning that you need to give up in order to follow in His footsteps and obey His commands in more completeness? What gear do you need to put down to join the dangerous rescue mission? What ships do you need to dismantle so you can more fully experience the new life that God has for you in His Kingdom!

PRAY

