

Counting the Cost

*If you're not willing to take what is dearest to you, whether plans or people,
and kiss it good-bye, you can't be my disciple.*

(Luke 14:33. The Message)

Jesus never hid the cost of discipleship. He worked hard to make sure that everyone who desired to follow him had a clear understanding of what was involved. In Luke 14 he used two analogies to explain the importance of counting the cost before becoming a follower of Christ. Who would begin construction of a building, Jesus asked, without first getting estimates on what it will cost and then determining if he has enough money to pay the bills? Otherwise, the incomplete building will stand as a monument to your foolishness (vv. 28-30).

The second story Jesus told was an analogy from warfare (vv. 31-32). What general would think of going to fight in a battle he couldn't win? First, he needs to sit down and calculate whether his army is strong enough to face the enemy. Only then is he ready for battle.

Jesus' message in these two analogies is clear: before you decide to follow me, first, sit down and count the cost! C. S. Lewis helps us to better understand what this means by a simple, yet profound, illustration.

When I was a child I often had (a) toothache, and I knew that if I went to my mother she would give me something which would deaden the pain for that night and let me get to sleep. But I did not go to my mother – at least, not till the pain became very bad. And the reason I did not go was this. I did not doubt she would give me the aspirin; but I knew she would also do something else. I knew she would take me to the dentist next morning. I could not get what I wanted out of her without getting something more, which I did not want. I wanted immediate relief from pain: but I could not get it without having my teeth set permanently right. And I knew those dentists; I knew they started fiddling about with all sorts of other teeth which had not yet begun to ache. They would not let sleeping dogs lie; if you gave them an inch they took an ell.¹

Now, if I may put it that way, our Lord is like the dentists. If you give him an inch, he will take an ell. Dozens of people go to him to be cured of some one particular sin which they are ashamed of or which is obviously spoiling daily life. Well, he will cure it all right: but he will not stop there. That may be all you asked; but if once you call him, he will give you the full treatment. That is why he warned people to "count the cost" before becoming Christians.... (Mere Christianity. p. 157f).

Baptism Sunday is the best thing we do. It makes all of us want to be Christ-followers too! But before you begin, make sure you count the cost. Jesus is not just interested in alleviating your pain or helping you with that particular challenge you are facing. No, he intends to totally change your life!

Pastor Stan

¹An English linear measure equal to 45 inches.