

## **Luke 14:25-35—Jesus Shows There Are No Hidden Costs to Following Him**

Someone should have told Jesus if he wanted his following to grow, this isn't what you should have said. Before he got going on a roll, someone maybe should have spoken up and softened it a little bit. But, truth be told, it wouldn't have helped. We need to know the truth. Hiding it won't help anyone. Covering it over with smokescreens just leads to feeling like we've been cheated and foolish. When Jesus turns around and sees this great crowd following him, when he sees you sitting here today, he loves you, plain and simple. And because Jesus loves you he shows us that there are no hidden costs or contract fees. Jesus lays it all out on the line for you so you are clear what it costs to follow him.

Jesus says, **“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters...he cannot be my disciple”** (v.26). So much for family being the most important! Hate is a very strong word that some might say we should never say. What makes this all the more difficult is that God's Word tells us elsewhere: **“Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer!”** (1 John 3:15).

So what does Jesus mean when he says hate father, mother, wife, children, brother, and/or sister? He's not throwing out God's commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves. Just a couple of chapters before this in Luke Jesus said this was a good summary of part of God's Law. We are still to honor and respect our parents when we are young and while mom and dad are aging. Husband and wives are still the model of Christ's forgiving love. Jesus isn't telling us to abandon all of these relationships—it's still not good for man to be alone. Children are still blessings from the Lord. That relationship between siblings can be quite special; someone gets you in a way that no one else quite is able.

So what does Jesus mean? If those relationships keep you from following him, hate them. Regard that relationship as nothing. So what does this look like? When dad keeps taking the Lord's name in vain, we need to set the relationship to the side—hate it—so that we are able to confront the sin and sinner. So what do you do when mom talks down that person and behind someone else's back? Your child is clearly living against God's will—she is keeping herself from the Lord's House and the Lord's Supper, he's still in that sin. You know how your sibling is making some less-than God pleasing life decisions—do you say anything? Do you do anything? If you do, the world might say you are hating them. And so often don't say or do anything because we don't want things to get uncomfortable. We say they are old enough to make their own decisions. We love those relationships too much.

But Jesus isn't just focusing your attention how you treat others. He said, **"If anyone comes to me and does not hate—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple"** (Luke 14:26). Hate your life! Of course, Jesus isn't throwing out the Fifth commandment. No, we are to protect body and life, including our own. But it's not just family that we can love too much. Think about your rights and freedoms you cherish so much—will you hate them and consider them nothing if that means that it will bring you closer to Jesus and bring another soul to him? Think about your personal comforts and your status with other people—will you hate it if this means it will stop you from being pulled away from your Savior? Consider your hobbies you enjoy and life you have built for yourself. Contemplate your life goals, plans, and expectations—if God chooses for them not be part of your life, if those things get in the way of following Jesus, will you hate them so you stop chasing them? If they keep you from being in His Word and living as God's child, will you hate them so much that you will have nothing to do with them?

**"And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (v.27).** The Christian Cross is everything that you must struggle with and endure as a follower of Christ. It's the animosity you feel from family when you do as Jesus calls you to do. It's the animosity from friends who don't understand why this is so important to you. It's the health problems and nagging pain that won't go away. The cross is the thorn in the flesh, that temptation that won't go away but you must fight against day-after-day. It's the struggle of life not going the way you had planned or dreamed. It's living in this world among sinful human beings; it's serving your neighbor. Sometimes it feels so heavy. So we drop it. We doubt God's will and do not trust him. Some days we don't even pick up the cross with no better excuse than I just don't feel like it today. We fall into that sin and do it again. We don't show the sin of our family member and we get too focused on building up our lives here.

And what does Jesus say? You cannot be my disciple. Who knows what the future holds, but you probably won't be called on to shed your blood for the faith or die for it. But if it did come down to that, would you rather die than turn away from Jesus? After I look back and see how God has called me to carry a cross today and consider my relationship with others alongside my relationship with him, as I hear Jesus' words today, and see how I fail, could I? God give me strength.

Jesus gives us this opportunity again to sit and stop and think. That's the point of the two stories in verses 28-32. **Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? <sup>29</sup>For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it,**

everyone who sees it will ridicule you,<sup>30</sup> saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’<sup>31</sup> “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?<sup>32</sup> If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. Jesus isn’t telling us we better plan stuff out or we are going to make fools of ourselves. What he is teaching us is: count the cost of following him. Make no mistake what God asks of you as you follow Him. He doesn’t have any hidden fees or surprise charges. It’s all right here: **“In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples”** (v.33). So it’s not just your closest relationships or your own life; it’s the things you possess. Jesus isn’t teaching you to sell everything you have; those are blessings from God for you to enjoy. But if all of that had to be given up, would you? Consider how you might react when there’s another sermon about offering giving. God forbid it, but what if you lost everything in a fire? What if the market crashes and your retirement goes up in smoke? Would you still praise as Job did, “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be his name.”?

The truth is, you could do all the right things most of the time. You could even say the right things the rest of the time. But, what’s inside? Jesus goes on: **“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out.”** You have counted the cost of following Jesus. Many of you stood in front of church and confessed you would stay faithful until the point of death. You support the church with your offerings. You serve your neighbor. But where is your heart? You can look like salt—the right way on the outside—but if you are no longer salty—the inside is far from Jesus—it’s worthless.

I wonder how many of that great crowd gathering around Jesus heard these words and thought much like my own sinful nature: God is asking too much from me! His demands are too great. He’s not fair. Wouldn’t you be better off not following him at all? Now our sinful nature, the devil, and this world want you to believe that you would be better off not following Jesus. They promise a better, easier life. And maybe it is for a while. But it’s an empty promise that doesn’t take care of the issues or make them disappear but eventually leads to death. Yes, make no mistake, what Jesus calls for today in Luke is real. There is a cost. And if my life with him was dependent on doing this hating and cross-carrying I would be without hope. Jesus drives us to despair of ourselves and ask, who could possibly do this? Why?

It's because he first loved and did this for us. Jesus already paid the cost for you to be with him forever. It was paid in his blood and sealed to you in baptism. Between now and then, don't fool yourself or be surprised when life is a struggle, when family disappoints and hurts you, when the world hates you because you follow Jesus. Don't be shocked because he faced it too. His family thought he was crazy because of what he was preaching and tried to stop him. While there are times when he would make sure to take care of himself and go off to pray or takes a nap in a boat to rejuvenate, he also looks out on crowds and has compassion on them. He sees the sick and suffering and heals them. He puts neighbor first before his own life. He knows very well what it means to pick up the cross. He prays that the cup of suffering be taken from him. But, not my will, your will be done, Jesus says to the Father. After being rejected by the ones he came to save and condemned by those he came to serve, he counted the cost. He faced the cross and scorned its shame. For the joy of saving you he carries the cross to Calvary. Weighed down with the burden of my sins he does not come down; no one forced him up there or kept him, but of course he wouldn't come down. He knew that his suffering would bring you peace with God. He knew that sprinkled with his precious blood you are made right with God. He knew that by his wounds you are healed. So he forsakes everything, even his own life when he dies, for the sake of you having everything in him.

As you see your cross, look at Christ's cross and his blood that pours off that has washed you every sin. As you see your cross, look beyond Christ's cross to the empty tomb—Jesus lives and so do you. Yes, the struggle is real. But you have a brother Jesus who washed you with water and the word and brought you into his family. He gives you brothers and sisters in Christ to encourage one another towards love and good deeds. Yes, the cross is heavy. But he tells you, "Come to me and I will give you rest." And when he says that, he comes to you and says, "Here's my body and blood sacrificed on my cross for you. Take. Eat. Drink. This will strengthen you." You being saved doesn't cost you a thing. Jesus already paid the entire debt. So we hear the cost—Jesus doesn't hide it—and we willingly endure it because Jesus has shown he counted and paid the price for us to be with him. Amen.