

Cross Fellowship Church
Overland Park, KS
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Luke 14:25-35
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Well, you listen to a passage like that read and you sit there and you listen to those words and you begin to realize that more than likely, that passage that I just heard isn't going to win any awards for the feel good passage of the year. You don't sit there and listen to the words of Jesus and get this warm and fuzzy feeling inside. Those words are meant to challenge us, and even make us feel a little bit uneasy. That's the whole point. So if you're a little uncomfortable, welcome to the club. That's what this passage is supposed to feel like.

Why do you find a passage like this at this particular point in the book of Luke? One thing you may have noticed, as we've gone through this book and the more Jesus teaches, the more he heals people, the more miracles he performs, the more and more people follow him. The further we go along in the book, the larger the crowds are that begin to gather around Jesus and follow him and to hear him teach. Now that Jesus is going to Jerusalem, what's happening is he leaves one city and news travels out ahead of him that Jesus is coming. By the time he gets to the next city, there's already a large crowd of people gathered, waiting on him to get there. That's exactly what you have going on in this passage this morning.

The reason you have this passage here at this point in the book of Luke is Jesus understands perfectly what's going on in the hearts of all of these people crowding around from place to place following him. He knows that there are people that are committed to physically being in his presence and to walk by his side and to follow him right there beside him, day in and day out, city by city. But he also understands, even though they're committed to be by his side, in his physical presence, he knows that in their heart, they are not committed to him at all. So that's why you have a passage like this this morning. The reality is you can come to a church like this for years and years and years. You can get really, really involved. You can go to a discipleship community that we can have. You can come to prayer gatherings. You can literally do anything and everything that we would ever do as a church together. Doing those things doesn't necessarily mean that you're following Jesus or that you're a Christian.

You come to a passage like this that we have before us this morning. This is where you get your answer. This passage shows us very clearly what it looks like to follow Jesus, to believe in him, to receive him, to be his disciple. In this passage, you get this beautiful detailed description of what real, authentic faith in Jesus really looks like. The first thing Jesus does in this passage is he gives us two pictures of what it looks like to follow him, to be his disciple, to have faith in him. You find those in Verse 26 and in Verse 27.

Then in Verse 28 through Verse 32, Jesus invites us to stop and think about what I just told you. "Did you hear what I said?" If the two pictures he gave us in Verses 26 and 27 are

true, that means that following him is going to be costly. Then you come to Verse 33, and what Verse 33 is, he takes Verse 26 and Verse 27, and just in case we were asleep, he restates everything he just says, but he says it in a different way to make his point again. Then he also, in Verse 33, gives a third picture of what it looks like to follow him, to believe him, and to trust him. Finally, all of this is brought to a conclusion in Verse 34 and Verse 35 with a very serious and a very sobering warning that deals with salt.

And so look at verse 26. Jesus begins, and he says, **“If anyone comes to me.”** Everything that Jesus says in this passage deals with coming to him. When he says that, he means following him, believing in him, being his disciple, having faith in him. That's what everything in this passage is about. This is what it looks like to follow Jesus. This is real authentic Faith 101. Verses 26, 27, and 33, they all start the exact same way. Verse 26: “If anyone.” Verse 27: “Whoever.” Verse 33: “So therefore, anyone.” The things that Jesus says about what faith looks like in this passage, they don't just apply to a pastor, to an elder, to a missionary that goes off and dies somewhere as a martyr to Jesus. They don't just apply to someone who is a Christian for 30 or 40 years of life. What Jesus says in these verses apply to anyone and everyone that would ever come to him and put their faith in him. So if you're alive and you're breathing, this passage applies to you. It's not a joke. It's serious.

Now, look at the way all three of these passages end. Look at the end of verse 26. Jesus gives this picture and he says, “he cannot be my disciple.” Verse 27, he says it again. “He cannot be my disciple.” And then in Verse 33 he says the same thing. “He cannot be my disciple.” Over and over and over. He gives a picture, he gives another picture, and he gives one more, and then he ends it with the same thing.

Often what we do with a passage like this is we interpret it to where you have, on the one hand, normal Christianity and then you have radical Christianity. Radical Christianity is where the missionary moves across the world and dies as a martyr somewhere. Oftentimes we take radical Christianity, and think that's what this passage is implying. That's for the missionary that would go die for Jesus somewhere. But the funny thing is you read this and you don't get that from Jesus anywhere in this passage. See, to Jesus, as he unfolds this passage, all Christianity is radical. And really, as he goes through this, the things he describes here about faith, this is normal, routine, regular Christianity to him. This is literally like signing your name on your test paper at school. That's what it is to Jesus. It's that normal. It's that routine.

This is so normal to Jesus that he's like, “You either follow me like this, you either have faith like this, or you go to hell.” That's essentially what he's saying. You either follow me like this or you are not my disciple. That's what he says. Now that everyone is uncomfortable and really awake, look at verse 26. There's a word there in that verse, and I'm sure as this passage is being read, there's a word that just jumps out at you. It catches your attention. It's that word “hate.” You hear that word and you immediately think, that is not right. Come on. If you weren't listening, you probably started listening then.

It's like you hear that and you think, well, this has got to be a bad translation. Surely the ESV just completely screwed this whole thing up. You get a bunch of other translations and you know what you find? They literally, almost all of them, use the same word hate. And then you think, well, this can't be in the original language. Right? It just can't be in the Greek. There's no way. We need to do a word study. We need to do some more research. And so you do all that. And at the end of that, you know what you're going to find? Lo and behold, hate means hate.

So now you're really confused, because what about all the verses in the bible that tell us to honor our father and mother, to love our spouses and our children? Here, what Jesus does is he says hate the people that you love the most. Hate your parents. Hate your spouses. Hate your kids. Hate your siblings. And oh, yeah, hate yourself. Is Jesus contradicting the rest of the Bible? And even what he, himself, says in other places? No. I don't think so. So what is he doing? What's going on?

I think what Jesus is doing is exaggerating on purpose to make a very powerful point. What he does is he takes our most treasured earthly relationships—parents, our spouses, our children, our siblings, and or and maybe even ourselves—and he takes all those things and he compares them to himself. So on the one hand, you have our treasured earthly relationships. And then on the other, you have Jesus, the Son of God, the infinite eternal Creator of the heavens and the earth that literally holds your existence in his hand. And the only reason you're breathing is because of him.

And so Jesus invites us to look at your earthly relationships in light of him. Suddenly, in comparison to Jesus, they begin to look like hate. It's like I can say, I love coffee and I love my wife. Is it both? Which one is it? I love coffee. I get up. I drink it every morning. It delights my soul. I love my wife. When I take my love for coffee and suddenly I compare it to my love for my wife, something starts happening to that love for coffee. It's not even the same. My love for my wife is in a completely different universe. It's miles and miles and miles above my love for coffee. Suddenly, when I look at my wife and I look at coffee, the coffee begins to become disgusting in comparison to my wife. It's like a pile of trash. That's what Jesus is driving at.

You see, there is this place in my heart where I seek deep and ultimate and everlasting satisfaction. If I put Jesus in that place and he's the one that I supremely long for, he's the delight of my soul above everything else on this planet, that is what you call worship and that's what Jesus is driving at in this passage. But if I take my wife and I put her in that place in my heart and she becomes the one that I seek ultimate anticipation and delight and joy in above anything else, that is what you call idolatry. That is what Jesus is fighting at in this verse. And that's why he uses the word "hate." You might think, well, couldn't he have used a different word? Could he have just said "love me more"? "Love everything else less"? I mean, he could have. But do you feel how it wouldn't quite shock you like it does when he uses the word hate? And that's his point.

Essentially, what Jesus is saying is, "Wake up. I'm not your mom. I'm not your dad. I'm not your wife. I'm not your kids. I'm not your brother. I'm not your sister. I am the Son of God." Do you feel that? He's God. It's like he's drawing this line in the sand and it's like you either treasure me above everything else on this universe or you're not my disciple. That's what he's saying.

Look at verse 27. He gives another picture. He says, **"Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."** The people in this crowd that heard Jesus say those words, they would have instantly been shocked. When we hear this, it's not quite that way. Like I've got to read a book, look at a picture of a cross, do a lot of research, and eventually hopefully I'll arrive at the point Jesus is making. The people sitting listening to Jesus didn't have to do that at all, this was instantly personal and instantly shocking to them. When they hear Jesus say cross, all of them immediately picture in their minds a Roman cross. This is how the Roman empire executed criminals. They hung them on a cross and they crucified them. That's what the people listening to Jesus would have pictured in their minds.

The whole process of crucifixion, the pain was not just horrendous, but the whole experience was utterly shameful and humiliating. There would have been people more than likely in this crowd listening to Jesus and they would have seen with their own eyes a crucifixion. They would have witnessed one. And they hear Jesus say these words, "if you want to follow me, take up your cross and come after me," they would have immediately thought of what was called the death march. When the Roman government condemned a person to die by crucifixion, they would take the cross bar, which would be the horizontal part of the cross that your hands would later be nailed to. They would take that part of the cross and they would throw it on the person's back and then they would force them to march through the streets of the city to the outside of town where they would then be crucified. The death march.

It was a way that the Roman Empire utterly shamed and humiliated people. This whole thing was a public spectacle. People would come out. They would line both sides of the street. They would laugh. They would mock. They would spit. They would humiliate this person. Because essentially, what's happening is everyone knows that this person carrying this cross through the streets, they're literally a dead man walking through the streets. That's why it was called the death march.

Jesus says to these people, if you want to follow me, if you want to have faith in me, what your life is going to look like is essentially a death march through this world day in and day out. There is a going to be the regular occurrence of your life. What does Jesus mean? Well, I think what he means is a few things. I think that, number one, suffering is normal. It's normal to him. It's not this thing where it's just someone that moves across the world and becomes a missionary and dies. I mean, did you ever realize that Jesus is sovereign and he knew that all of us would be living in a relatively safe place in America when he said this? But the reality is to follow Jesus means that we will face opposition, shame, and humiliation, suffering, and maybe

even death. Jesus says all of those things are normal. That's what it looks like to follow Jesus through this earth.

The reality is if you think about the message of the gospel, to tell a person that everything you love, everything you treasure, everything you hold dear is wrong, it's completely wrong, it's so wrong that if you continue on the course you're going, you are going to go to hell. Jesus says not everyone is going to believe, and so to take that message no matter where you live on this earth, there's going to be opposition. Jesus says it's either you're not my disciple or we have to create this other classification of a disciple and we have to call that person the hiding disciple. And Jesus really doesn't have anyplace for that category. The longer and the longer you remain in that category of the hiding disciple, it would furnish more and more and more evidence of what Jesus says that you cannot be my disciple.

So now we come to verses 28 through 32. Jesus invites us to think about what I just said. Consider what it looks like to follow me. He gives, in verses 28 through 30, this picture of a person that would go out and build a tower. You see that in Verse 28. And he says, this person that builds a tower, do they not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? If you're going to go out and you're going to build something, you're first going to sit down and you're going to determine how much money do you have and how much is it going to cost to build this tower? Jesus says, you need to stop and think that what's going to happen if you don't have enough money to complete this tower. He goes on in verse 29 and he says, otherwise, when he has laid the foundation, he's not going to be able to finish. You're going to build a foundation and you're going to run out of money. The foundation is going to sit there in weeds, they grow up, and at the end of verse 29, **“All who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’”**

So you have a situation where people come to Jesus not for Jesus, not because he's the most supremely valuable treasure in the universe, but because of the benefits Jesus can give them. He can forgive me. He can give me a home in heaven, a place of no sin and no pain and no death and all that's great and wonderful and all that's true, but if you simply come to Jesus for the benefits and not for Jesus, what's going to slap your life is going to look like verse 26 and verse 27. It's going to be hard. You're going to suffer. Jesus invites us to stop and think and consider what it's going to look like to follow me. When it happens, that person begins to suffer and this isn't what I signed up for. So they forsake Jesus and they go the other way, and what Jesus wants us to understand is they were never my disciples.

In verses 31 and 32, he gives another picture. This picture is a little different. It's a picture of two kings that go to war against each other. He says, **“Or 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?”** Here you have a king with 20,000 soldiers and he's going to go to war with the king that has 10,000 soldiers. The king with 10,000 soldiers has to ask himself, can I win? No. No way he's going to

win. If you look at the end of Verse 32, this king with 20,000 soldiers will send a delegation and ask for terms of peace. He knows the king with 10,000 soldiers cannot win, and so he's going to send men to ask him to surrender. So here this king with 10,000 soldiers needs to sit down and think and deliberate and count the cost. What's going to happen if I reject these terms of peace? If I reject these people coming to me asking me to surrender, what's going to happen? He's going to be utterly destroyed. That's what's going to happen. He's not going to win.

What you have here is you have the other side of the same coin. The tower gives us the picture of counting the cost of following Jesus. It's going to be hard. It's going to be filled with suffering. On the other hand, this second analogy gives us the picture of what it will cost us to reject Jesus, to reject the grace that he offers. It will cost you everything. The reality is whether you commit your life to Jesus or you reject him, it's still going to cost you everything.

Look at Verse 33. Jesus says, **“So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”** What he's doing here is he's taking verses 26 and 27 and he's saying it again in a different way just to make his point after he's given us these analogies of counting the cost. Renouncing all he had would include hating your family and giving up a life of comfort and ease. But it also gives us a third picture of what it looks like to have faith in Jesus and follow him. The phrase here, “all that he has,” is a phrase used in the New Testament that almost always refers to your physical property, your stuff, your possessions. Jesus gives us another way to know what it looks like to follow him and to have faith in him. He says, whoever does not renounce all their stuff cannot be my disciple. Does that mean that I need to quit my job? Sell everything I own? Move off to someplace where they don't know Jesus and spend the rest of my life telling them about Jesus? Is that what that mean? Maybe. It very well could. But here's the thing. I think it actually means a whole lot more than that. How is that?

We come to this verse as wealthy middle-class Americans. Here's the problem. The people that are in this crowd listening to Jesus say these words, they're not wealthy middle-class Americans. Many of them are poor. They don't really have anything. Many of them are the outcasts of society. They're following Jesus around, because he's the only one in the world that has compassion on them. If I quit my job, I sell everything I own, I move wherever, at the very least I'm at least going to need a tent and some food, even if I've got to go out every day and gather that food. The problem you have now is you've done that and you're living in a tent somewhere and you're getting your food scrounging around. You've just now reached the point to where many of the people in this passage are at and Jesus says these things to them. Do you feel that? Jesus looks the poor person straight in the eyes and he doesn't flinch and he says, “Unless you renounce everything you have, you can't be my disciple.” What in the world does he mean?

I think he has to mean at least two things. Whatever he means, it's permanent. The word renounce has that idea. It's a permanent thing. It's something you're doing permanently

with your possessions. It's not I sell everything here, I move somewhere else, and I buy some more stuff. This is a permanent mindset of how you view your stuff. The second thing, it's everything. Everything. It's not just the things. It's not, everything except what you would consider the things you have to live on. It's those things, too. It's everything. All your stuff. I think what Jesus has in mind is in the first century, there was someone that was called a steward or a manager, a household manager. A wealthy landowner would come and they would hire this person, and they would come and they would live in their master's house. They would take care of all of their master's belongings. They would do that everyday, but the reality was they didn't own anything. Nothing was theirs. All they were doing was managing for their master all of his things.

I think what Jesus wants us to feel in this is that, essentially, we've come under new management. There's one thing and one thing only in the world that he wants us to grip and to cling so tightly to that we would never ever, ever let go of, and that's him. Everything else we're to hold with an open hand. When we cling so tightly to Jesus, it doesn't matter what it is. We'll let it go. Because essentially it's not ours. I've renounced everything and I'm following Jesus, and so my time, it's not my time anymore. My stuff is not my stuff anymore. It's his. He's the one that holds ultimate control of my heart.

Now, look at verse 34. Jesus concludes everything with a very serious and sobering warning. Verse 34 says, "**Salt is good.**" The people that heard this, they could agree with that. They knew salt was good. You could put it on food that didn't taste very good. You could put it on meat to preserve it. You could put it on the soil for fertilizer. You could put it on a wound. There were a lot of things you could do with salt, so everyone knew salt was good. Then Jesus says, "**but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?**" What do you do with tasteless salt? Well, the reality is there's no such thing. Salt never, ever becomes unsalty. It doesn't. So what does Jesus mean?

Well, at this particular time, there was a hybrid form of salt. It was half salt, half gypsum. It wasn't real salt. It was fake salt. But if you put it next to real salt, you couldn't tell. They didn't have a microscope. They couldn't analyze it. The only way they could tell the difference is they would have to take it and use it. They had to put it on their food, put it on a wound. They had to just go out and use it. When they used it and it didn't work, it didn't preserve meat, it didn't make the food taste better, they would realize they had gotten a batch of the fake salt. That's what Jesus is referring to. Salt that loses its taste, he's referring to this fake salt. What do you do with this salt? He said it's of no use, either for the soil or for the manure pile. Jesus says it's worthless. You can't do anything with fake salt.

To prove his point, he brings up two of the lowliest uses of salt known to people. There was kind of this hierarchy of how you would use salt, because it was very valuable. When you have exhausted all of your other efforts, you would throw it on the dirt, because it would fertilize the soil, but that was never your first option. Then the last thing you would ever do is

you would throw it on the manure pile. At this particular time period, you didn't have indoor plumbing. You went to the bathroom in a bucket and then you took the bucket outside somewhere and you threw it in a pile. Well, it obviously was pretty rank. They would get salt and they would throw it on that manure pile to knock down some of the smell. Jesus says, fake salt can't even do that. You can't even throw it on a worthless manure pile and expect it to do anything.

Then he says, all you can do is throw it away. He says he who has ears to hear, let him hear. He's contrasting a genuine disciple with a fake disciple. The person that is, basically, everything he's just said with the person that looks like on the outside, they are what he's just said. But the reality it it's all a facade. It's fake. What Jesus wants these people to hear and what he wants us to hear is if you haven't truly committed your heart and your life to Jesus, you're not fooling him. Jesus has absolutely no worth for the person that will not wholeheartedly commit their life to him. You're worthless to him until you give your heart and your life to him.

What in the world do we do with a passage like this? You would think Theophilus, for example, the person that this whole book is addressed to, he sits down and he's going along in his scroll and he gets to this passage. What does he do? What does he think the first time he reads this? I know what he probably didn't think. He probably didn't think, man, is Jesus worth all of this? I don't think he thought that at all. Because the reality is that's a question he would have already answered. He knows that Jesus is worth everything. He knows that. That's why he became a Christian in the first place, because Jesus is the greatest treasure he could ever know.

So what does Theophilus do when he reads this? I think he reads this, he puts the scroll down, and he thinks to himself, there's no way. Maybe he's already experienced some of what Jesus is saying, but he looks ahead in his life after reading this vivid description of Jesus telling him, essentially, what the rest of his life is going to look like and I think he pushes that scroll back and he thinks, there's no way in and of myself I can ever live like this. What does he do? He runs to Jesus. He clings to Jesus. He goes to the all-surpassing wonder and love and grace of Jesus. He really doesn't have any other option. He knows in and of himself he cannot live the way Jesus is calling him to. He cannot just try a little harder, put a little muscle in the thing. He knows he will never, ever do that. He runs to Jesus. That's what this passage is calling you, as a Christian, to do. We can look at our lives. We can come away from this passage. I mean, you want to talk about a guilt trip. This whole thing is inviting us and calling us to run to Jesus.

He calls you to something you can't do on your own. And that's the wonder and the beauty of Jesus. What do you do with something like this if you're not a Christian? Well, I think what you're asking is, is Jesus worth this? And that's a legitimate question to ask, because if he's not, this whole thing is utter foolishness. In Phillipians chapter 3, verse 8, Paul says, **“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ**

Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.” Is Jesus worth your life? Is he worth everything? I'm not going to convince you of that. I mean, I can point you to the Bible and that's what it says. The apostle Paul could look at Jesus and he could look at everything else in this light and he could see very clearly that the greatest thing in the world was Jesus, the all surpassing worth of knowing Jesus. That's the greatest treasure in the universe. Paul could look at Jesus and he could see that and suddenly everything else on the earth compared to Jesus is a pile of trash. It's filth.

So if you're here and you're not a Christian, I would beg and plead with you, just don't waste your life. Don't waste your life chasing after the filth and the trash in this earth. There will come a day when you will stand before the Almighty God of this universe and you will know beyond a doubt if you spent your life rejecting Jesus, that you utterly wasted your whole life. And so I would plead with you. You can turn right now where you sit. You can repent of your sins. You can trust in Jesus and he will save you.

Let me pray. Oh, Father, I pray that you would help us to love Jesus, to delight in Jesus, that he would be the one that we would get lost in, that we would daydream about Jesus, that he would be the one that captures our very soul and all of our affections. And we would cling to him and that we would follow him wherever he might lead us. And I pray, Father, for all the people in this room. I pray if there was someone here that does not know you that you would do a mighty and a wonderful miracle in their heart and you would open their heart and help them see the all sure passing worth of your son. I pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

Would you please stand? We come to the point in our service where we take the Lord's Supper, and I love this part. It's a beautiful reminder that what we need is we need Jesus. And that's what this is. We are invited to come and to remember that we need his grace. We need his strength. We need his favor. It's a fountain that we can drink from that will never, ever run dry. And so as we partake, I would invite you and encourage you to cling to Jesus. Treasure Jesus. Think about the all surpassing worth of Jesus.