

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

Series: The Gospel According to Jesus
Limestone Baptist Church, Bedford, IN
Rev. Michael Wilhite
September 27, 2009 at 10:30am
Selected Scriptures

OPENING THOUGHTS

• OPEN IN PRAYER

- Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. He is the Ancient of Days, the Holy One of Israel. Almighty God. He is the great I AM. He is the Good Shepherd, He is the Great Shepherd. He is our Great High Priest. Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of our salvation. He is Lord God Almighty.
- He is Master, Savior, Lord of Heaven and Earth. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is the Resurrection and the Life. He is the Bread of Life, our Chief Cornerstone. He is Faithful and True. He is our Deliverer. He is the Firstborn from the Dead, the Firstborn Over All Creation. He is the Bright and Morning Star, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.
- He is the Lamb of God without blemish. He is the Light of the World. He is the Amen. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. To sum up Jesus in one phrase: HE IS GOD.
- Jesus is all of these things and so much more. And yet, we have reduced Him to a puny, almost helpless savior who is just begging and pleading for us to accept Him as our personal Savior. Accept Him? As if Jesus needed our acceptance! Jesus does not need us to accept Him. We need Him! We desperately need Jesus!!
- And what does it really mean to accept Jesus as your "personal Savior"? What does it really mean when we say we have a personal relationship with Jesus? Frankly the devil has a personal relationship with Jesus too and it's not a very good one! The demons know Jesus very well. They know all the facts about Jesus. They know who He is and the Bible tells us in James 2:19 that they tremble at His name! Clearly their personal relationship with Him is not a good one for them.
- As we examine the Gospel according to what Jesus taught, what we find is something totally opposite of what we see in the church in America today. As Dr. John MacArthur has so eloquently stated, "the contemporary church often fails to present the Gospel clearly enough for the non-elect to reject it!" He has a point there.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JESUS

- Open of your Bibles with me to Luke 9. This morning we're starting a new series called The Gospel According to Jesus. We've finished up our series on what it means to make disciples and what that looks like in our lives individually.

- As a side note, if you missed the Disciple Maker's Meeting we had after church a couple of weeks ago, you really missed out on a good time. I'm very excited about where God is leading our church. If you weren't there, not only did you miss some good food and good fellowship, but you also missed out on some really critical information on where God is taking Limestone Baptist. Our GROW ministry has started back up and I'm really excited to see what God is going to do through us.
- One of the things that really strikes me, though, as we begin to get really serious with our lives about making disciples is that we need to have a firm understanding of the Gospel. And I really think most Christians tend to thing wrongly about the Gospel. Here's what I mean by that.
- We have a tendency to think that the Gospel is the elementary item of the Christian faith. In other words, we've got the Gospel down, so now let's move on to more important things. We know this stuff, so let's move on to the real meat of the faith. So many Christians think that way about the Gospel. And it's a wrong way to think about it.
- Ladies and Gentlemen, there is nothing deeper in the faith than the Gospel. Once you really understand the Gospel beyond just a shallow, surface level of understanding, you come to the realization that the Gospel affects every single thing you do in life. It affects how you treat others at your job. It affects who you choose as your friends. It causes you to think differently, act differently and live differently than the rest of the world. It causes you to do things that are crazy to everyone else, even to some in the church. It totally changes everything about who you are and what you live for in life.
- No my friends, the Gospel is not some elementary doctrine that we learn and move on from. The Gospel is the very heartbeat of who we are as Christians. And I believe the Gospel goes far deeper than most realize or most care to really think about.
- So this morning, we're starting a new series for the very reason that we need to understand this clearly. We need to fully understand what the Gospel is and we need to clearly know what Jesus said the Gospel was.
- Luke chapter 9 will serve as our starting point this morning. Luke 9, look down at verses 23-26. And normally I use the New Living Translation for this, but this morning I want to use the New American Standard for reasons of accuracy. It's up here on the PowerPoint slide for those that don't have a copy of the NASB.

23 And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."

24 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."

25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?"

26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."

- All Scripture is God-breathed. All Scripture is like a treasure of infinite worth to us, but some passages are particularly so. This is one of those passages. This is like a rare, precious diamond of truth or a costly, rare ruby that is of so much value.
- This is the Gospel according to Jesus' own words. He was saying to them "If anyone wants to come after Me". In other words, if anyone wants to be My follower; if anyone wants to know how to have eternal life; if anyone wants to know how to be saved. Here's how you can know. And what does Jesus tell them? Deny yourself, be willing to die and give it all up to follow after Him.
- Let's just be honest here for a moment. If Jesus were to try to use this tactic in a personal evangelism class in most of the seminaries in this country, He'd flunk the semester. This is too radical for most people. It sounds so foreign to us. All most preachers want to tell people is to "accept Christ" and ask Him to forgive you. No mention of turning from sin. No mention of self-denial. Only an offer of forgiveness on the basis of accepting some facts about Christ.
- But when I read the words of Jesus, I see something totally different. Clearly the very first thing Jesus said was that if you want to be saved, you have to deny self. The New Living Translation renders this as "turn from your selfish ways." And that's a fairly good rendering, but it misses some things. This is more than just turning from selfish ways. This is a total denial of your old life.
- How many times have we heard an appeal to come to Christ because Christ will make our lives better? He'll teach you how to be a better parent, a better spouse. He'll give you all your hopes and dreams and wishes. He wants to make you healthy and wealthy and wise. He wants to open the floodgates and give you more than you could ever imagine.
- But as I look at what Jesus says, I see something different. If anyone wants to be saved, that person must deny self first. **It's not about Jesus giving me everything I want. It's not about my dreams, and my hopes and my wishes and my wants and desires. It's not about me fulfilling myself; it's about me slaying myself!**
- As Paul says in Galatians 2:20
20 My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.
- It's not an issue of my self-esteem. Jesus didn't die on the cross so that I could feel good about myself. Jesus died on the cross so that when I come to Him, my old self would die! It is no longer I who live, but Christ Himself has created in me a new nature, a new self.

- Martin Luther summed this concept up nicely in his 95 Theses. You may remember that Luther nailed those 95 statements as a protest to the Catholic Church's view of the 1500s which said that you can get forgiveness of sin by paying money for what they called an Indulgence. It was kind of like paying money to get someone out of Hell or for yourself if you so chose.
- In reacting to such a blatant attack on the true Gospel, Luther said this in his fourth protest: The penalty of sin, therefore, continues so long as hatred of self continues; for this is the true inward repentance, and continues until our entrance into the kingdom of heaven."
- Luther coined the term self-hate for what true repentance looks like. That's what we're seeing here in Luke 9:23. To deny yourself is to hate self. It's to say that you hate your old, sinful self so much that you want nothing at all to do with it anymore. You're willing to get rid of it at all costs. Jesus Christ is worth so much more to you than anything else.
- Over the next two Lord's Days, we're going to be examining in-depth what Jesus meant in this passage. And there is so much here it will take us a couple weeks to get through it. What we find here are necessary components of saving faith. You want to know what true, saving faith looks like? Here's what Jesus says are things that make up true faith.
- But for this morning, I just want to introduce this concept to you and I want you to see that this is not just one isolated incident in the life of Jesus. This was His consistent preaching all throughout the four Gospels. Let me show you that by taking you on a stroll through the Gospels. Flip back to Matthew 10 with me.
32 "Everyone who acknowledges Me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before My Father in heaven."
33 But everyone who denies Me here on earth, I will also deny before My Father in heaven."
34 "Don't imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword."
35 "I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."
36 Your enemies will be right in your own household!"
37 "If you love your father or mother more than you love Me, you are not worthy of being Mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than Me, you are not worthy of being Mine."
38 If you refuse to take up your cross and follow Me, you are not worthy of being Mine."
39 If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for Me, you will find it."
- Those are tough words from Jesus. In context, He's speaking with His disciples as He is sending them out to preach the Gospel for an extended period of time. He tells them not to take any money bags or anything extra with them because God would provide everything they needed on the journey.

- And now He takes it a step further and explains to them the exact message He wants them to preach. These are hard to take words. If you love your own family more than you love Me, Jesus says, then you aren't worthy of Him? Kind of sounds harsh, doesn't it? Jesus says He came to turn families against each other and that enemies will be right in your own household!
- Listen, if you come to Christ and really follow after Him, there will be an impassible gulf between you and your loved ones who do not know Jesus. Coming to Christ may not make your family better at all. It may make things worse! It may turn your family against you totally. Are you willing to pay that price?
- If you love your father or mother or son or daughter more than Jesus, you are not worthy of being His follower and that means you can't be saved. Those are serious words. If you refuse to take up your cross and follow Him, no salvation comes to you. If you cling to your life, you will lose it. But if you willingly give up your life and hate yourself and deny yourself and follow Jesus, you will find life.
- This was Jesus' consistent teaching all throughout His ministry. And here He tells His disciples to go preach this same thing. Go back to Luke 9, only skip to the very last verses of the chapter and you'll see another time this concept was presented. Look at verse 57:
57 As they were walking along, someone said to Jesus, "I will follow You wherever You go."
- So Jesus is passing by and someone wants to be a potential disciple of Jesus for whatever the reason. Jesus tells Him this essentially: "You want to follow Me? It's not going to be a joy-ride. There are no Ritz Carlton's out here!"
58 But Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay His head."
- If you follow Jesus, you may not even have the basic necessities in life. Jesus didn't even have a roof over His head so many nights on this earth. He roamed from town to town. **Following Jesus won't make your journey easier. It may well make it harder!**
- In verse 59 another person comes to Him.
59 He said to another person, "Come, follow Me." The man agreed, but he said, "Lord, first let me return home and bury my father."
- The implication here is that this guy had just heard what Jesus said to the first guy. And he didn't like what he heard at all. Following Jesus would cost him everything. So he wants to go back home and bury his father. His father wasn't dead! He wanted to wait around to get the inheritance before following Jesus. He wanted to take something with him because Jesus wasn't going to get him anything.
- And Jesus tells him this:
60 But Jesus told him, "Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead! Your duty is to go and preach about the Kingdom of God."
- You want to follow Me? There are more important things in life than money. Leave it all behind and follow after Me.
61 Another said, "Yes, Lord, I will follow You, but first let me say good-bye to my family."
- He heard what Jesus said to the others too. So he makes up his own excuse. And what does Jesus tell him?
62 But Jesus told him, "Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God."
- In other words, **you can't give half-hearted allegiance to Jesus and still be a Christian. It's all or nothing.** You want to follow Jesus? Go at it with everything you have because anything less is not fit for salvation!
- Flip over a few pages to Luke 14 and see Jesus continue these warnings. Luke 14 and start at verse 25.
25 A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them,
26 "If you want to be My disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be My disciple."
27 And if you do not carry your own cross and follow Me, you cannot be My disciple.
28 "But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it?"
29 Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you.
30 They would say, "There's the person who started that building and couldn't afford to finish it!"
31 "Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him?"
32 And if he can't, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace while the enemy is still far away.
33 So you cannot become My disciple without giving up everything you own.
- Can't you just sense the disciples frustration here? Here Jesus finally gets a really large crowd around Him and what does He do? He starts going off about how if you don't hate everyone when compared to your love for Jesus, you can't be saved. If you don't count the cost to see if it's worth it to you or not, you aren't fit for the Kingdom. If you won't give up everything you own, you aren't worthy of Jesus.
- Do those words mean anything to us today? Do they sound harsh compared to what we usually hear from preachers all across this nation?

- Those are challenging words indeed. In his book *Basic Christianity*, John Stott said this about this whole idea: Quote
 - The Christian landscape is strewn with the wreckage of derelict half-built towers. The ruins of those who began to build and were unable to finish. For thousands of people still ignore Christ's warning and undertake to follow Him without first pausing to reflect on the cost of doing so. The result is the great scandal of Christendom today, so called nominal Christianity. In countries to which Christian civilization has spread, large numbers of people have covered themselves with a decent, but thin veneer of Christianity. They have allowed themselves to become somewhat involved, enough to be respectable, but not enough to be uncomfortable. Their religion is a great soft cushion. It protects them from the hard unpleasantness of life while changing its place and shape to suit their convenience. No wonder the cynics speak of hypocrites in the church and dismiss religion as escapism.
- End quote. Those words ring so true for so many people. Maybe they speak volumes to you too. So many want the decent, thin veneer of Christianity – just enough to make them seem like good, moral Christians, just enough to be respectable. But the reality is that they didn't count the cost before they came to Christ and they did not receive life eternal as a result of it.
- That's what Jesus says about people like that. **You cannot claim Jesus as your Savior if you won't submit to Him as Lord.** In the New Testament, the word Savior appears only 24 times. Only 24 times is Jesus identified for us as Savior. Consider this, however. Jesus is identified as Lord 616 times! 24 times Savior, 616 times Lord. Which does God place more emphasis on in your opinion?
- One more place I want you to look. Turn over to John 12. I want you to see that this is Jesus' consistent preaching in all four Gospel records we have. John 12 and look at verse 24.

24 I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives.

25 Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity.

26 Anyone who wants to be My disciple must follow Me, because My servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves Me.
- Now this is just another way of stating the same thing we see in Luke 9. Those who love their life in this world will lose it for eternity. If you want eternal life, you have to hate everything about your old self and give it to Jesus and follow Him.

- Now go back to Luke 9:23 where we started out. When Jesus says to deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow Him, what does that say to you? Most consider this too radical. Some even call it works salvation, but Jesus never preached works salvation.
- Over the next few weeks, what we'll find is that genuine faith always results in these. As James says, "faith without works is dead." Saving faith without self-denial and cross-bearing is not saving faith at all.
- Does that sound too radical to you? It does to most in the church today sadly. If we hear these words of Jesus and we tend to cringe because we think they are too harsh or just too radical to really be true, that's more of a scathing condemnation on our version of Christianity than it is on what Jesus said!
- If we consider these things as so radical that they are way out of the norm for us, we need to radically shift our entire understanding of the Christian faith. This wasn't some obscure preaching by Jesus. This was the way He always preached the Gospel to the lost. And it has radical implications for how we present the Gospel to the lost as well. And over the next few weeks, we'll be seeing that.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- As we conclude our time together this morning, I want to close with the words of a song called "Burn Your Plastic Jesus" by one of my favorite artists, Steve Camp. I think these words have relevant meaning to us today for what we have considered from the Word this morning.
- Burn your plastic Jesus
The one you keep hid in your drawer
The one you take to church on Sundays
Then conveniently ignore
He's not big enough to worship
He's Gandhi with a grin
He never judges sinners
'Cause he tolerates their sin
- Burn your plastic Jesus
Your social worker for the poor
Political crusader, won't question your behavior
Don't demand to be your Lord
He's your presidential slogan
Your bumper sticker God
Who wants to make you happy
With your BEST LIFE NOW
Oh burn your plastic Jesus
Burn your plastic Jesus
- He's got no power, got no real love
He's got no cross that he bled and died on
He's got no tomb that he broke through
Burn this plastic Jesus ... he's just as plastic as you

- It ain't no plastic Jesus who was Virgin Born
It ain't no plastic Jesus who was beaten and scorned
It ain't no plastic Jesus who conquered sin and death
And it ain't no plastic Jesus who drank the cup of wrath
And it ain't no plastic Jesus who reigns from heaven's tower
Who's King of kings and Lord of lords, the Sovereign with all power
It ain't no plastic Jesus who we worship and we praise
And it ain't no plastic Jesus who is the Life, the Truth, the Way
- He's got all power, got true real love
He bore a cross that He bled and died on
There's an empty tomb that He broke through
He ain't no plastic Jesus ... He came to save the plastic you
- **LET'S PRAY.**