

Blessed is the one who does not walk and step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take, or sit in the company of mockers. But whose delight in the law? The Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit and season and whose leaf does not wither whatever they do, prospers not so the wicked, they are like chaff the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. But the way of the wicked leads. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous leads to destruction. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Was in the beginning, is now never shall be world without end. So remain standing, please, for the reading of the Gospel, and the reading is from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 14, verses 25-33. Large crowds were traveling with Jesus and turning to them. He said, if anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, even their own life, such a person cannot be my disciple.

And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build the Tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and you are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you. Saying this person began to build and wasn't able to finish? 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 100 men, to oppose the one coming against him with 200? 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. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything excuse me. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples. The word of the Lord.

Well, kids, it's time for kids alive. So, Father, I ask that you would bless the kids as they go to kids alive. You would bless those who teach them your word, which is sharper than a two edged sword, would pierce and penetrate to their very souls. In Jesus name. Amen. All right. God bless you guys as you go. All right. Let me say a prayer for all of us now as well. Well, Heavenly Father, thank you for the gathering of your people today. Thank you for what it means that your name is lifted up all around the world. We join with all the saints and the angels, saying, holy, holy, holy is the Lord. We pray, Lord, that our lives would reflect that holiness, that by the preaching of Your Word, that by the hearing of Your Word, by the Word being taken into our hearts, we might be shaped and formed more and more into the image of Jesus, your son. We're calling out for this, Lord. We ask you, and we beg you this in Jesus name. Amen. So when I was in high school, Jimmy Stalen was kind of the guy so many of us wish we could be.

Do you remember him, Susan? Good looking guy. Boy, he was good looking. Kind of tall, curly, dark hair, tan blue eyes. And he had just such an ease about it. I mean, he was cool and baseball player. And let me tell you, the girls swooned over this guy. Literally, I heard girls swooning over this guy. And so one day, Jimmy Stalen calls up this girl, and I can't remember her name. I'm going to call her Missy Williams. She calls up Missy Williams, and she's a band girl. She's cute. She's not the popular type, though, and she's not trying to be. She's smart. She's a widowed girl. And he calls her up and invites her out on a date, and she accepts, which you can't imagine anybody not accepting a date with Jimmy Stalin. And so the day of the date comes, and she's waiting. Jimmy's not showing up. 15 minutes, 20 minutes, 30 minutes, 45 minutes. It's almost an hour when Jimmy Stalen comes sauntering up with his cool self to the door and is about to knock on the door when the door opens. And of course, Jimmy's probably thinking, oh, man, she just can't wait to see me.

And sure enough, it's Missy at the door. And she takes one look at Jimmy, and she walks right past him and closes the door. And he's like, Missy, what's going on? I'm here. Are you ready? She says you were late. I made other plans. And she walks and gets into her car and takes off. I love that story. Missy was basically saying, Jimmy, if you're going to date me, you're either going to be all in or forget it. And he started pursuing her big time after that. You can imagine all in. We understand that concept, don't we? Right? We've all been on teams before. We've all been on things that the leaders said, all in is required. It's a concept we get. But have you ever started something and then wanted to quit? Have you ever had that experience? Maybe your kids have started something and wanted to quit, and you tell them you started it. You're going to finish it. Susan, she was a great runner in high school, but when she first started running, she came to her dad, and he was asking her how it was going. And

she's like, I think I want to quit.

And he said, Susan, you haven't even tasted it yet. Susan went on from there to become the number one runner on the team, which was amazing because there was a gal named Val Hardin who we thought nobody could beat. But one day in a crosscountry meet, Susan beat her. And then the next week she beat her again and she kept beating her. Susan ended up coming in second in the mile and two mile in the state. In her junior year, she ran a marathon, something I know I could never do. She went on to taste it, to know what it was all about, to know what it was to be all in. Well, that's how it is with Jesus. We get to this portion in the Gospel of Luke, and Jesus has been telling a parable about how God reaches out to the lost, to the lonely. He tells a parable of a banquet that God prepares, a king prepares. Of course, we know it's God, right? And he invites all the usual suspects, the rich and all the well connected, and they all give excuses as to why they can't be there. And the king gets angry, and he says to his servant, go out to the highways and the byways and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.

So we get this sense from Jesus that God has this huge magnanimous heart, that he's one who goes after everyone to invite them in. But now this guy who seems to be going out of his way to bring everyone in is now represented by this Jesus who seems to be going out of his way to whittle down the list, right? It says that crowds were following Jesus, but Jesus tells me, you want to follow me? You really want to follow me? Do you know what it's going to cost? You really want to follow me? Have you come to terms with what it means to follow me? Are you ready to lay down your life? I mean, you can't follow me unless you hate your mother, your father, your brother, your sister, your children, your very wife, your very life. You sure you want to follow me? It seems like Jesus is wanting to whittle down the crowd. He says that to you and me. You really want to follow me. And it's a scary thing to really take, in Jesus words here. I was with several other guys at Boulevard West the other day, and we were studying this passage, and we all agreed this is a tough passage, a passage that could literally make you despair of what it means to be a Christian and a follower of Jesus.

One of the guys was saying, how? How do you measure up to this? But while Jesus can be tough, it's the kind of tough that wants the best for us all. It's the kind of tough that looks us in the eye and says, you haven't even tasted it yet, right? It's the kind of tough that says, I don't want to make Christians. I want to make disciples. What are you? Are you a Christian or are you a disciple? That is, one who has learned what it means to follow me is learning what it means to follow me and will learn what it means to follow me for the long haul. That's what a disciple is. So we have a beautiful opportunity here today as we open this passage of a real tough saying of Jesus found in Luke, chapter 14. If you want to turn there and follow. Large crowds were traveling with Jesus and turning to them. He said, if anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, even their own life, such a person can not be my disciple. Jesus is here speaking to our affections, and I'm always so tempted when we get here to say, wait a minute, right?

Jesus tells us to love one another. Jesus tells us to honor and respect our parents. Jesus calls husbands to love wives, wives to love husbands. Jesus is a lover. He says, love your enemies, even, right? So how can Jesus says, Love, love now suddenly say hate? There's a real temptation to soften the blow of those words. But that word is a tough word. It's got that root M-I-S mis in it. Mise. It means to have great antipathy towards something. It's where we get the word misery from. It's where we get the word misanthrope, a hater of mankind or misogyny, hater of women, that wherever you put miss on top of a word, it's usually not a good thing. And Jesus is saying, I want my followers to have literally a passion against anyone or anything that would come against me. And if that means your parents, well, don't suppose I've come to bring peace but a sword. Jesus said, I've not come to bring families together, but to divide them. From now on, a mother will be against a son, a father against a daughter. And we've seen it bear out in the history of the world.

People give their lives to Christ, and their families don't understand. And when their families don't understand, there's that moment of crisis. Which way, Christian? Which way, disciple are you going to go? Are you going to show by your actions that you love your mom and your dad, that you love your wife, that you love your brother, that you love your country? Are you going to show by your example that you love them more than me? Or you're going to show the world that I'm number one? That's

what Jesus calls for. And it was shocking in his day. In a culture that probably knew more about loving family than we even know, our families are spread out all over the place. Our kids go off to college, and then they go to Oregon or New York or someplace like that, and families are spread out. But in those days, families were compact. How you lived affected the family. What you said, what you thought, the commerce you entered into, it was shocking. And Jesus was saying, will you love me even more than them? Will you prefer me over them? He speaks to our affections. I get challenged by this.

I was reading the other day and Voice of the Martyrs about a guy named Pastor Manuel in a rural area of Mexico who was attacked with a machete by a couple of men. He survived it, praised God, but he was attacked because in that town they had synchronistic beliefs and they couldn't believe that he was putting Jesus over their traditions and their rituals and bringing turmoil to the town as people were coming to faith in Jesus Christ. And so they attacked him. He showed where his love and his affections lay. Probably loves the town more than they do. Probably loves the people more than they do. But he definitely loves Jesus more than the town and more than the people. So what does it look like for us who live in relatively safe environments? It's a parent who has decided firmly that attending worship is something the family will do. Sometimes that's easy as the kids are young, but as the kids grow older and they want to go off here or there, a parent says, I love Jesus more, and while you're in this family, we're going to go worship. There will come a day when you'll be able to make your own decisions and your own choices.

But as a family, here we stand. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. What if my kid rebels against me? What if he resents me the rest of my life for making them go to church? Jesus is first. If they resent me the rest of their life, still, it was right for me to bring the family to worship God. That's not the attitude that we find in our culture today. It used to be. It's not the attitude today. The kids run the show in many places today. When the kid has a game, we go. When the kid when the kid has an overnight, we let them. We let the kid do what they want to do because we don't want that kid to resent us ever. But Jesus said, where are your affections? Are they for me first or your children? It's a hard one. It's hard to put Christ first. It's the young person who's choosing a career path based not what on his parents want, not on what will or won't disappoint them, but on what Jesus wants. Lord, what do you want of me? Where do you want me to go?

Overseas as a missionary. I'll go to work for that company. I will. Whatever you want. Jesus. It's guiding the family into more sacrificial way of life, rather than giving them everything they want, saying, we're not going to spend all our money on all that we want. But we are first about what the Lord wants. We are stewards of this. It all belongs to him anyway. We cannot take it with us. Lord, what do you want us to do with it? And then you do it over the protests of your own heart, maybe over the protests of your children. It's a believing spouse who seeks to live out their faith despite the lack of support or even anticagonism for an unbelieving spouse. No easy thing. Yet the Lord says there's great reward and he gets a little tougher even, he says, and whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. And again, we look at the toughness of this. Carry the cross that means to give up your life. Kayla Mueller, at the age of 27, gave up her life in the country of Jordan. She'd gone as a humanitarian worker.

She was captured, tortured. She was forced to marry the ISIS leader Al Baghdadi against her will. She had the opportunity to escape with a couple of young girls who were Middle Eastern. And she decided that she would not escape with them because she said, my American face is going to give you away and you'll get recaptured. So she stayed. Before her death, she had gotten a letter out at some point, and she said, I have surrendered myself to our Creator because literally there is no one else but by God and by your prayers. I have felt tenderly cradled. When we hear a story like that, an account like that, and we can tend to be shamed. I don't live up to that. But Jesus said, let me read it again. Whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. You have a cross to carry. Your cross may not ultimately end up in your martyrdom. But the Christian, it's been said, following Jesus, dies a thousand deaths every day, 1000 deaths to themselves, 1000 deaths for the sake of others. Are you doing that? Are you thinking concretely about what it means for me?

Not my wife, not my kids, not anybody else? What does it mean for me to carry my cross? Jesus

stands before you and he puts that challenge to you. For whoever will not carry their cross cannot be my disciple. So he speaks to our affections, and then he speaks to the cost of being a disciple. The cost of discipleship. In verse 28, 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? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you saying this person began to build and wasn't able to finish. There's a cost to discipleship, a cost of time and investment and struggle. Do you feel that in yourself? Are you able to examine and say, I am paying a cost. Maybe it's little, maybe it's huge, but there's a cost to be paid in following Jesus. If there's no cost, the question has to be asked, are you following? Because that's what a disciple does. And Jesus assures us there is a cost time investment struggle and we're planting a church, right?

Planting a church is costly. There's one part of this that I want to talk to Jesus about and it's a part of the parable that says this fellow didn't count the cost. I think, boy, there's a lot of things Jesus you've called me into where I thought I counted the cost. But then I get into it and I realized, wow, this is a lot more costly than I thought. But I think that's the way it is. When you follow Jesus, when you're really following Him, you almost can't completely count the cost. He just wants to know, are you willing to? Because as you step into it, you're going to realize, wow, this takes a lot more than I ever thought. And it's that point that he's saying, you're tasting it, you're tasting it. Keep on. Don't give up because it's going to be worth it. Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes about this. He laments cheap grace that's often dispensed in churches that I know I'm tempted to give out. Right. Oh, it's all right. The Lord loves you and don't worry about it. Cheap grace never calls for a cost. But he writes costly grace. And, you know, Dietrich Bonhoeffer ultimately gave his life in resisting the Nazis, in staying true to the gospel.

And he wrote often what he wrote was written from prison. But he wrote, costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must not. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow. And it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life. And it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it costs God the life of his Son. You were bought at a price and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the incarnation of God. Jesus speaks to the crowds and he says, are you willing to love me above all things? Are you willing to count the cost of what it means to follow me? If you're not, you cannot be my disciple.

So he speaks to our affections and he speaks to the cost. And then he speaks to the terms. And I love this. I'd never noticed this before in verse 31, it says, or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king when he first sit down and consider whether he is able with 10,000 men, to oppose the one coming against him with 20,000. 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. So the thing I never noticed in this is I always thought he's just making a common sense argument, okay, here comes somebody that's got a much bigger army against me. I better figure out how to make peace with them. What I had never really had insight into until it was pointed out by a commentator I was reading the other day is that Jesus is the stronger king. He's the one coming against me with the greater army. The hosts of heaven are behind him. And Jesus comes to me, and I have to realize, am I going to fight against him? Is my life going to be a rebellion against him, or am I going to come to terms?

When I was a college student and I'd become a Christian and I began to read the Bible and to do what it says, I got a role in a play that was written by a playwright at the school. A student playwright had written it, and it was full of foul and filthy language and especially full of taking the Lord's name in vain. And at that point, as an actor, I knew as an actor, you're going to be in place where there's filthy language that comes at times, and sometimes it's gratuitous and sometimes it's not. In this case, I felt like it was gratuitous, and particularly the way the Lord's name was being used. And I said, I can't do this. I will substitute something for using the Lord's name in vain, a believer in Jesus, and I cannot do this. And they said, well, you cannot be in this play. The playwright refused to adapt the script at all, and so I was kicked out. And of course, word gets around in a small drama community of what's going on with Patrick, what's he doing. And this grad student, another playwright, actually a directing grad student, came to me, Matthew Vicky, and he said, I don't know if you know, but I'm an

Episcopalian, and I'd been saved through the ministry of the Episcopal Church, church of the Ascension, which is a very faithful Godly church.

And he said, But I'm an Episcopalian, too. He said, I got to tell you, at some point I came to terms with my Christianity. I just remember clear as day, I was like, I can't come to terms with Jesus. Jesus is the one who lays down the terms. I don't remember what I said to him, but I knew that that was a false argument. Jesus, the King comes to us, and what are the terms? Absolute surrender. What are the terms. In those days, if you made war, you were hoping that you would be able to maybe just pay tribute once a year. You were hoping you would be able to remain as the king of your land and maybe volunteer and send your army to help fight for the other king who is stronger that he would provide you with protection. But when King Jesus comes to you, you lay it all down. It all belongs to him. And so you see this King coming and you realize he's the stronger. And he says, in the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples. What do you have belongs to Jesus?

You have a nice house, a car, a huge bank account. Do you have some prized possession? If you are a disciple? Right? If you are a disciple, you laid it down already, Jesus, it belongs to you. Let me use this as you will for your purposes, and should you decide to completely take it, it's yours. You're my king. Anything less, he says, you cannot be my disciple. And I don't know what that means about salvation. I don't know if that means, well, you could believe in Jesus, and by his grace, you'll get in to heaven. This has got nothing to do with works, righteousness and earning your salvation. Not at all. This is about surrender to the King. And he said, if you really want to know the joys of being my disciple, if you really want to taste it, you got to lay it all down. I know that this can make Jesus seem like a taskmaster, but who wants to get to the end of their life and say, you know, this Christianity thing, it was easy. It was a piece of cake. I'm glad to be walking in through the pearly gates now.

No, we respected those in our lives. They said, I'm calling you to something tough. I'm calling you to something higher. I'm calling you to give your life. I'm calling you to be all in, because that's the God we have. On May 10, 1940, Winston Churchill became Prime Minister. And when he met his cabinet on May 13, he told them, I have nothing to offer but blood toil sweat and tears. I have nothing to offer but blood toil sweat and tears. Jesus stands before us and he says, I have so much more to offer, for I have offered my blood toil sweat and tears. And the Scriptures tell us that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. Oh, God, that we would not cheapen it, but that when we would come to this table, we would offer ourselves. Lord, you offered us everything, your blood toil sweat and tears. We offer you our possessions. Lord, we offer you our affections. We offer you whatever it costs. It's yours. And the Lord will show you how to surrender and how to use every last thing that you have for his sake so that you might wear the badge of disciple and wear it with joy and taste of the heavenly kingdom.

Heavenly Father, we do fall short. I know I fall short. Send your Holy Spirit on us, enable us, equip us, by the blood, by the holy food of your word, by the holy table in which we take Christ in. Cleanse us, renew us. Let this church, Lord, be a church of disciples. In Jesus name, amen.