

Part 54: The Cost of Discipleship

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A little over a month ago, Tyler preached a sermon in Luke 12 and he started by saying that this sermon should be entitled “Quotes from Jesus that don’t end up on coffee mugs.” Well I’m delighted to say that this sermon is entitled, “Quotes from Jesus that don’t end up on coffee mugs: Part Two.”

I had the privilege of growing up and spending the first 25 years of my life in the great state of Texas. This is the land of coffee mugs with Jesus quotes on them. But I don’t remember any of these verses being printed on mugs with little flowers on them. You see I grew up in the South where being a Christian is synonymous with sweet tea and blue jeans. Jesus is something you wear, not who you are.

I didn’t grow up in a religious home, or go to church on Christmas or Easter, but if you would’ve asked me growing up what religion I was, I would’ve said I was a Christian. So a question I wish I could’ve asked my adolescent self is: what does it actually mean to be a Christian?

So then I ask you this morning: what does it actually mean to be a Christian? Are you a Christian because you’re an American? A conservative? Because your parents are? Because that’s what you’ve always been told you should believe? Because it’s easy?

We are continuing our sermon series in Luke this morning, and we are in a section in the book of Luke where Jesus is really beginning to gain a lot of popularity as he is on the road to Jerusalem.

Last week, we saw Jesus say through his parable to “go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.” So in response, people are coming.

But Jesus has some hard words for the crowd. He’s beginning to thin out those who would call themselves disciples. Jesus wants to leave no room for misunderstanding what it truly means to follow Christ and be his disciple.

Today, this morning, we find ourselves, by God’s grace, in the great state of Montana, which is largely conservative and Christian. We are sitting in a church building, where I would assume (for most of y’all) it doesn’t cost much, if anything to follow Jesus. Maybe you’ve been following Jesus for awhile and have become comfortable in your walk with Jesus.

Or maybe you find yourself this morning pondering the teachings of Jesus and what Christianity is all about. My hope is that we would all truly consider what Jesus means when he says to come and follow him.

Let’s read **verse 25** again together and we will get into the context of the passage.

Verse 25 sets the stage for this teaching of Jesus. Jesus’ popularity is growing and growing. His teaching is radical, his parables are too deep to fathom, his healings are unbelievable, and his unexpected rebukes of the religious leaders are garnering a lot of followers. Luke describes these crowds as “great,” so we can assume they are quite large and everyone is clamoring to see and hear from Jesus.

To the growing crowd, Jesus is the controversial rebel that's sticking it to the Pharisees, and the miracle-man doing signs and wonders. Jesus is popular, and everyone wants to be part of the popular crowd.

You can almost hear the crowds saying, 'Yeah I want to follow the guy who heals all kinds of people and preaches about a coming kingdom. That's way better than the world we live in!'

No matter where you look in society today or how far back you go in human history, crowds flock to popular figures, some good, some bad. Similarly in this recording by Luke, we have Jesus, the creator of everyone and everything, attracting a large crowd. You would think that this would be a good thing. Wouldn't the savior of the world want everyone to follow him? Wouldn't he want to make it easy?

The last time Jesus spoke like this was back in Luke 9, but the difference between the passage in Luke 9 and this one in Luke 14 is that Jesus was addressing just his disciples in chapter 9. He was beginning to set the stage for the 12 apostles, to prepare them for his crucifixion and the persecution they would later experience. But here, in Luke 14, Jesus is specifically addressing the crowds that are starting to grow and follow him.

So to return to the question of why he wouldn't want to make it easy for the crowds to follow him, Jesus himself says just one chapter earlier in Luke 13, "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."

Jesus makes it explicitly clear that those who will find eternal life through him are few. Jesus is going to reinforce his previous teachings here. He is preparing the crowds for what it will truly mean to follow him.

As we make our way through this passage, Jesus is going to appear to try to dissuade the crowds - and you - from following him. Jesus is going to lay out what it's going to cost you, and it's not going to be cute or easy. It's going to be hard, the hardest thing you will ever do, but we're going to see that despite how costly it might seem to follow Jesus, what we lose of this world, we gain in Christ.

This will be our main point this morning. **Following Jesus is costly and requires complete commitment, but in losing ourselves, we gain Christ.** Jesus is going to give us a roadmap to true discipleship. We're going to see this in two points this morning. In verses 26-33 he will give us the three conditions and 2 parables that will show us the **True Cost of Discipleship**. Then in verses 34-35, we will see the **True Taste of Discipleship**.

So let's jump back into the text and **read verse 26 and see condition#1 of true discipleship: total allegiance.**

On the initial read of this text, I think some common reactions are "what the heck is Jesus talking about here?" or "doesn't this go against everything the Bible teaches about loving and protecting our family".

We read scripture in light of scripture, which means we read a portion of scripture not in a vacuum but in relation to other portions. Therefore, Jesus is not calling us to actively hate and have ill will towards others, in the same way he's not calling us to hate and have ill will towards ourselves.

Rather, he's challenging the priorities of the affections of our hearts. Compared to our love for Jesus, everything else should pale in comparison. Therefore, when we say Jesus is Lord, Lord of our life, do you

realize what you are saying? Because Jesus is defining it here for you. Compared to him, there are no others.

If choosing Jesus or your family ever became a choice for you, which would you choose? Would you hesitate? Would you have to weigh the choices first?

So what does Jesus mean when he says this? Earlier on in the book of Luke, we saw Jesus leave his family behind when they wanted to keep him from his ministry. Do you remember what Jesus says in Luke 8? He says “my mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”

Jesus wasn’t hating his family, instead, he was preparing others for the tension the gospel introduces to human relationships. There’s two examples I think will be helpful in showing what Jesus means here.

Tyler and Sarah had the opportunity this past fall to visit our missionaries serving in the Middle East. They shared a story of a young woman they met during their trip that came to faith in Jesus knowing it was against the will of her father. In that moment of salvation, she had to choose who she would obey.

She had to be willing to hate the affirmation of her earthly father in order to find the affirmation of her heavenly one, and this has put her earthly life in danger. Yet she’s chosen Jesus over her family. You see the Gospel doesn’t come to confuse and disorient. Instead, it comes to make sense and correct our priorities and affections.

Jesus isn’t demanding something new that God the Father did not tell the Israelites before. Jesus is reinforcing the first of the 10 commandments; ‘you shall have no other gods before me.’ We don’t usually balk at the first commandment when we hear or read it. Yet Jesus says it in a new way here and our flesh immediately rages against it.

What then does this say about our orders of affections when it comes to God and our families?

John Bunyan, who we speak about a lot here, is the author of Pilgrim’s Progress, among other books. He was imprisoned for preaching the Gospel without a license and refusing to join the Church of England.

He was warned explicitly by friends to not preach the Sunday that he was taken away, for they had caught wind that he would be arrested for preaching the Gospel. But he did anyways. His imprisonment however came with consequences. He left behind a wife, Elizabeth, and four young children, one of whom was blind.

Listen to his agony here as he writes about this experience, **“The parting with my wife and poor children has oft been to me in this place as the pulling the flesh from my bones.”**

So we come back to the same question again, how is this condition worth it? How is choosing and loving Jesus above all relational ties worth it?

Listen again to John Bunyan’s words as he describes the worth of following Jesus, even into jail and away from his family. **“Jesus Christ...was never more real and apparent than now. Here I have seen him and felt him indeed.”**

We finally get to the bottom of what makes it all worth it! You get more of him! All the pain, all the sorrow, all the separation is worth it because you get more of the savior King that has not only redeemed your life but saves your soul.

The woman in the Middle East and John Bunyan are both emphatically pointing to one word in verse 26. Did you catch it? “If anyone comes to ME.” This me, is not some mere human that will one day let you down. He is the one who John says all things were made through. He is the one who tore the curtain in two and made a way for us to come back to the garden. He is the one who says “come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He is the beginning and end of all things, the Alpha and the Omega.

This is the one who says “if anyone comes to me.” Therefore, continually making Jesus supreme in all things is not actual loss, its unending gain.

So are we coming to Jesus for all the perks? Are we coming to Jesus, just like the crowd did so that we can be associated with the popular guy, to see some healings, to meet some cool people along the way?

Or are we coming after him as a deer pants for water? Are we coming to Jesus, for Jesus, or are we just interested in Jesus + his benefits? The answer to that question could mean the difference between Jesus saying on the last day, “I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil.”

But not only does Jesus tell us to hate our own families, but he goes one step further and says “Yes, even his own life.”

We are living in a culture that screams from the rooftops to love yourself no matter what people say or think; to just be you and no one else; and to take care of yourself, even if it’s at the cost of others.

But here’s Jesus, telling us to do the exact opposite. He’s telling us that we cannot be a true disciple unless we have total allegiance to him, even if that means hating our own lives. Do we love Jesus more than our lives? Do we love him more than the comforts this world has to offer?

This has looked different for Christians across the centuries and across contexts. For some in the first several centuries of the church it meant being willing to go into the Roman arenas and be killed by ferocious animals or being drug by your ankles by horses until you perished. For some it looked like crossing seas and bringing the gospel to heathen nations and peoples who had no knowledge of Jesus. For others it’s looked like making less money for the sake of honesty and integrity to Jesus’ teachings.

We are all too prone to read this passage, realize that Jesus is not actually saying to hate our families or ourselves and then move on. But Jesus wants you to stop and meditate on his words. Jesus loves our families, he loves you. But are you making an idol of your family and yourself.

Do you love Jesus more than your family or your life?

Let’s read **verse 27** and see **condition #2 of true discipleship: bearing your cross**.

Jesus does not mince words here in verse 27. He is as straightforward as he can be when he sets up this second condition to follow him. It's as if Jesus is saying "in case giving up your family, even yourself, wasn't enough, then I'm going to demand that you suffer, just as I am about to suffer."

This isn't the Jesus that's advertised on TV or the Jesus that was displayed to me growing up in the South. The Jesus displayed on TV was the Jesus that got all the glory every time a football player won a game or scored a touchdown, but interestingly not when he lost or got hurt.

Jesus was a decoration on people's walls, not the creator God who hung on the very tree that he spoke into existence. Jesus is the charm that hung on everybody's neck, not the Son of Man that bid you come and die for his sake.

When Jesus says "whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple", he is literally telling us that if we would come and follow him, then we. Will. Suffer. There is no getting around it. There is no 'we could possibly suffer.' There is no tithing, or service, or good deeds that will eliminate this seemingly mandatory suffering.

For Jesus does not say, 'pick up your bags and follow me.' No, he says whoever does not bear or carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

I'm not sure what the first thing that comes to mind when you think of bearing your cross, but I confess that I am often thoughtless when I hear this verse. I know it in the back of my mind, I know it's there, but do I actually *know* what it means? I think this is probably because people are not hung on a cross anymore. We have no reference for it, except for Jesus' death.

However, what if I said instead, 'pick up your electric chair and come and follow me?' Or 'come tie your own noose, pick it up, and follow me.' Does that grab your attention a little more?

One pastor describes the cross like this, "No manner of execution that has ever been devised was more cruel and agonizing than to be nailed to a cross and hung up to die like a piece of meat. It was horrible. You would not have been able to watch it-not without screaming and pulling at your hair and tearing your clothes. You probably would have vomited."

So when Jesus says, whoever does not bear his own cross and come after him cannot be his disciple, he is inviting you to suffering and death.

The question is why? Why do we have to suffer if Jesus gave the once and for all sacrifice to atone for our sin? Shouldn't that mean that we, as believers in Jesus Christ, be devoid of suffering?

And if you're not a believer sitting here this morning, you might be asking the question, why in the heck would I want to follow Jesus now? I came here for hope and for my sins to be possibly be forgiven, and you're telling me that if I put my faith in Jesus that I am 100% guaranteed to suffer?

The Bible speaks to this actually very explicitly. It's not a hidden passage to find.

Remember the Apostle Paul when he was converted? Jesus sent him out saying "he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles...for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." Therefore, why are we continually surprised when suffering comes?

Jim and Elisabeth Elliot were missionaries to the Auca tribe in the Ecuadorian jungle. Jim and 4 other men left their wives and families one morning to make contact with this tribe and were martyred on the beachhead.

Yet, in light of all of this, his wife, Elisabeth, once said after her husband's death, that "the cross is the gateway to joy." The cross is the gateway to joy. Jesus' suffering and death on the cross was the greatest evil the world has and will ever know. Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, willingly went to the cross for the sins of others. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2Cor 5)

Through the greatest evil this world has ever known came the saving of souls. Jesus, the serpent crusher who was foretold from Genesis 3 had finally come to restore the chasm between God and man. Through the greatest suffering, the greatest good came into being.

Therefore, we can make sense of Elisabeth Elliot's quote that the cross is the gateway to joy. For without the cross there is no salvation, and without salvation there is no joy.

So when Jesus says in order to be his disciple, you must bear your cross and follow him, Jesus is inviting us into his sufferings. And if his sufferings and death brought about the greatest joy, then we can start to see that Jesus inviting us into his sufferings is never for nothing but a privilege that leads to fruit and eternal joy.

For Jesus is inviting us into suffering not because he hates us and wants us to be miserable. As Paul would say, by no means! He means quite the opposite. He's saying because I love you, come suffer with me.

Our sufferings on the path of obedience, are like the crafting of a sword by a swordsmith. My favorite sword making scene is from the third Lord of the Rings movie when Elrond commands his elves to remake the sword that was broken by Sauron. It's this super intense scene where you see the elves heating up the broken shards and then beating the sword back together, putting it in water, heating it back up, flipping it over, beating it some more. And somehow, because I'm not a swordsmith, so I apologize to anyone who actually knows how this is done, a beautiful spotless sword is made.

This is not dissimilar to the life of a Christian on the path of obedience. Sufferings of this world, like the hammer to a sword, make us more and more into the image of Jesus by the refining fires of trial and pain.

Paul writes in 2Corinthians 12 about how a thorn is given to him "to keep [him] from becoming conceited." Paul, the apostle Paul, is given a suffering to continue to refine him, so that he would not become conceited or boastful. And it's not that Paul didn't ask for this suffering to be taken away. He did! 3 times it says he asks for it to be taken away. Yet Jesus says no, "my grace is sufficient for you."

Now listen to Paul's response to Jesus **in verse 10**, he says, "for the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Paul responds, “Ok Jesus, I will continue with the sufferings of this world because in it, I am made less, and you are made more.” Or in another way, “I will willingly pick up my cross and bear it, because in my suffering, I become more and more like my Savior King who paid it all for me to be reconciled to the Father. So give it all to me. Whatever makes me more like Jesus, give it to me.”

Elisabeth Elliot says it one more way, **“Whatever is in the cup that God is offering to me, whether it be pain and sorrow and suffering and grief along with the many more joys, I’m willing to take it because I trust Him. Because I know that what God wants for me is the very best. I will receive this thing in His name. I need pain sometimes because God has something bigger in mind. It is never for nothing. And so I say Lord, in Jesus’ name, by Your grace I accept it.”**

There are some that God will call to literally pick up their cross as they are martyred for their faith. But for most of us it’s going to look different, and it’s not going to be the same as your brothers and sisters around you.

It might look like dying to yourself over and over again while raising your children. Putting down all your hopes and expectations and even your coffee to love and discipline them well. But Jesus says it’s worth it, come and follow me.

It could look like fighting to get out of bed every morning even when your mind and your body tell you they can’t do it anymore, to just give up. Jesus says it’s worth it, come and follow me.

It could look like dying to the American dream and all that you’ve imagined your life would look like, and moving halfway around the world to a place you know the jungles and fevers could take your wife and kids. Jesus says it’s worth it, come and follow me.

Brothers and sisters, if Jesus is who he says he is, and he was raised from the dead and has ascended to the right hand of God the Father and is sitting and reigning and ruling. If all of that is true. Then saying ‘Yes Jesus, you’re worth it, I will come and follow you, wherever that might be and whatever that might cost me, because you are worth it,’ Becomes the easiest thing in the world.

In the middle of Jesus giving us the conditions to be a true disciple of him, **Jesus gives us two parables** to help further illustrate how we should consider counting the cost of following him if we haven’t yet. **Let’s read verses 28-32.**

Every single one of us counts the cost of almost everything we do. Those range from easy to hard.

For instance, you might weigh whether or not you should eat ice cream or not if you’re lactose intolerant, or to buy a new car, a house, to go out to eat, to have another baby, to get this surgery or not, to start chemo or not, to say to the doctors whether you want chest compressions or not if your heart stops beating.

We all make calculated decisions. We all count the cost. If you’re a confessing Christian here this morning, do you remember counting this cost when you began to follow Jesus? I think most of us that grew up in the West would say that teachings such as this one by Jesus came to our attention far after we began following Jesus. We had everything to gain and nothing to lose by following him.

But for the crowd listening and for believers in hostile parts of the world, this question of cost did not and continues to not escape them.

Jesus first gives an illustration of calculating the cost of building a tower before you begin so you will not be put to shame and mocked.

I remember the first time I visited Missoula, when Ellyn and I were considering moving here, and we visited in the Winter so there were no illusions to what we were getting into. I remember driving around town and asked Tyler, who was our tour guide, 'oh I didn't know there was a ski resort down in Lolo...'

If you've spent any amount of time in Missoula, you've probably noticed the apparent ski resort just south of Missoula, close to Lolo peak. If you don't know the story, a man had a dream of putting in a ski resort in Lolo and started to clear a lot of land. Over 400 trees were cut down to make this happen.

But before the man was able to finish, the Forest Service got involved because the man had not secured the permits to cut down all the trees on protected federal land. He was shut down, and now the slopes are now an eyesore and a constant reminder of someone who did not count the cost of starting something he could not finish.

We too, must calculate the Christian life and the call to follow Christ, for the life will be hard. It will come at great cost. But the one who bids to follow him is also the one who spoke this world into existence. Who commands the winds and the waves. He will never let you down nor forsake you.

Verses 31-32 describe another parable that Jesus told about calculating the cost of going to war with other countries. There are traditionally two different kinds of war. There's a war of conquest where an army will set out to conquer and invade another country. And then there's a war of attrition. This is when a country or army will attempt to hold its ground in hope that they will hold out and endure long enough that the other army will finally give up.

The Revolutionary war was a perfect example of this. Britain wanted to take their colonies back and so they set out to conquer the American colonies. However, the British did not fully count the cost of going to war with a people with greater resolve and who were spread out far and wide. All the American colonies had to do was hold their ground until the enemy gave up.

So too is Jesus highlighting our need to count the cost of following him, for it is life and death. Have we truly considered the cost enough? For Paul writes in Ephesians 6 that "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

Souls are at stake here. And the enemy is prowling around like a hungry lion. Therefore, are you prepared to follow Jesus? Are you prepared for a war for your soul?

But Jesus is the good shepherd who knows his sheep. And this shepherd will defend and protect you. He will even go willingly to the cross for your soul.

Following Christ, true discipleship of Jesus, is not an accessory to your life. It is literally life and death. It's not a video game, it's real life. With real life consequences. So Jesus asks the question again, will you follow me?

Let's read verse 33 and this will be Jesus' condition #3 of true discipleship: renouncing all that you have.

If this verse sounds familiar, it's because Jesus uses similar words for the rich young ruler in Chapter 18 in the book of Luke. Read with **me verses 22-23**. "When Jesus heard this, he said to him, 'One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow me.' But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich."

This is Jesus' third condition of being a true disciple: renounce all that you have. I spoke earlier about loving Jesus above your family and yourself, and then about the crucible of suffering and the pure and devoted allegiance to Jesus that it produces earlier. Jesus now takes it one step further.

If you know me, you know that I love to cook, therefore I like cooking shows. A guilty pleasure of mine is a show called Guy's Grocery Games. It's essentially a cooking competition that takes place in a huge grocery store, so you have to run around and find ingredients and cook them in a certain amount of time. There's a particular twist though, that the host occasionally uses and it's called "no carts allowed."

This means that the shoppers have to grab all the ingredients for their dish and just use their hands and arms to carry it all. So they can only grab what they can hold. It's great, it's hilarious, and super entertaining to watch them suffer for the sake of \$20,000.

Is this not at the core of what Jesus is speaking of here. In this life, especially our Western one, are we holding on to too many things: our career, our dreams, our money, our country, our family? Are we running around holding everything we can in our arms and then are left with the inability to help others in need. Are we unable to serve Jesus by taking the gospel to the nations because we are so encumbered by our own pursuits and dreams? Are we trying to save all the money we can so we can then rest and play golf and travel for the last 20-30 years of our life?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor during WWII and wrote a book called *The Cost of Discipleship*. Bonhoeffer was a Christian who condemned the Third Reich for their treatment of the Jews and was later imprisoned and hung for it. This was a man that intimately knew what costly discipleship looked like and aimed to prepare those around him for the costliness that was coming by following Jesus. In his book he writes,

"The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death-we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise godfearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."

Though Bonhoeffer wrote this in the 1930s, it couldn't be any more relevant than today. Have we given ourselves over to the American dream, to the fear that to truly follow Jesus that means the end of a happy and joyful life? NO! It is but the beginning!

He does not bid us to come and die to then live a miserable life, he bids us come and die to ourselves and gain all the treasures and joys of Jesus. Joys that money cannot buy, and man cannot make.

Have we renounced all that we have for the sake of the gospel and for Jesus? Are we willing to lose everything, in order to gain Christ? If not, then you are not a true disciple of Jesus. Not because I say so but because of what Jesus himself declares. So brothers and sisters, I plead with you this morning: Give it up, give it all away. Choose Jesus and only Jesus. He is the treasure we sell everything to get.

This leads us to our last and final point this morning which is the true taste of discipleship. Read with me verses 34-35.

Salt in that region of the world was often derived from the Dead Sea. They would let the sun naturally evaporate the water and what was left was salt. But the Dead Sea had other minerals in it as well, so some of what was left was not salty. It was literally worthless. It couldn't be used to season food or to help preserve things. It was thrown on to the road where it would be trampled on by foot.

There are certain passages in the Bible that are vague and up for interpretation sometimes. Even his parables were meant to sometimes shield some of his teachings to those who did not have eyes to see and ears to hear. But these last two verses are explicitly clear. Almost so direct that you miss it the first time you read it.

The salt in this passage is referring to disciples of Jesus. Jesus is direct, as he has been throughout this entire passage. He is telling all who have ears to hear, that if you claim to be a disciple of Jesus and you have no salt, no real substance, then you have no use to him. You are to be thrown to the road to be trampled by feet.

Let that sink in for a moment. Examine yourself. Examine your life and the fruit in it. Brothers, sisters, friends, do not let your church membership, your church attendance, your weekly tithing shield you from this examination. Jesus does not parse words.

If you're not a believer in this room, take heed of the words of Jesus. He isn't looking for people to call themselves Christian and then do nothing. He is looking for salty disciples that love him more than anything in this world.

He doesn't want your money or your good works or your surface level commitment. He wants it all. But in losing yourself you get all of Him. And that's worth more than all the riches in the world. Psalm 84 says, "For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere!"

By placing your faith in the one who lived a perfect life, was beaten, scourged and shamed for our sins, and then went to the cross willing to die the death we should've died, you will lose everything. But you will gain everything eternally.

This life is but a vapor in time. The Lord is patient, but the judge is at the door. I beg you to come to the one who has overcome the world. He is the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords. There is no one like him. Consider it, count the cost, then follow him or walk away, there is no in between.

If you're a believer in this room, let this serve as a warning to myself, and to you. Is your life categorized by an all-consuming passion for Jesus and for his name to be known among the nations? Is your life categorized by an insatiable hunger for his glory to be magnified in your own life, in your spouse's life, in your children's lives?

Or are you content with living a life that outside of the two hours that you are here on Sunday morning, looks exactly the same as your unbelieving neighbor? Because if this passage is saying anything, it's saying this: following Jesus requires an absolute and unwavering commitment to himself. He will not be shared with anyone.

He requires you to love him more than your family and yourself, he requires that you suffer for his name, and he requires you to renounce all that you have. If this sounds like a lot, it is. It's actually everything; he requires all of you. Not part. All.

But for those who have been given the gift of salvation, do not lose heart, for we have hope. For the one who was cast out and trampled on by men, has made you salty by the grace of God. And those who have been made salty have the assurance that he will preserve you to the end.

Therefore, in losing yourself, you gain Christ. You gain the all-loving, all-satisfying, all-mesmerizing Savior of the world, worth more than all the treasure in the world. The Lamb who takes away the sins of the world is bidding you to the wedding feast that is reserved for all that would come. So come to him, come to the cross, and follow him.