

"The Cost – of Everything"

Text: Luke 14:25-35

My prayer for each of us this morning is that we might come to more fully recognize and appreciate the magnitude of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, together with a more complete understanding of just what our forgiveness cost him. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

One of the more difficult lessons for young people to learn as they grow and assume more responsibility is that, as the saying goes, "*there is no free lunch.*" We could probably take it a step further. There is almost nothing on earth *at all* that is free. Everything, or virtually everything, costs something. It might be free to us, but somewhere, somehow, somebody or something had to "pay."

Another popular old saying seems to stand in direct contradiction: "*The best things in life are free.*" We get the thought, but for the most part it's just not true. Everything costs somebody something – even if it is just time and effort. Young men who imagine that love is free have probably never had a girlfriend. They have also probably never had their heart broken, have never agonized over a sick or injured loved one, have never watched the most important person in their lives draw their last breath. They have also not yet come to realize the value of something as simple as time.

Even the oxygen that we breathe doesn't just happen or appear. Most of it has to be produced by plants through an amazing process called photosynthesis. The rain that falls from the sky requires an incredible amount of energy (mostly, again, from the sun) to form the clouds that produce it. Even the sunshine that warms your face and provides the energy for all plant life comes at the expense of continuous nuclear fusion of the hydrogen atoms in the core of the sun.

What about spiritual things? Isn't grace free? Free to us. It cost Jesus what is beyond our ability fully to comprehend or fathom. Justification? Absolutely not without cost. Jesus also earned that declaration of innocence for us.

We need to come to terms with this truth, for a variety of reasons. On a practical, everyday level, the naïve must be disabused not only of the notion that anything is really free but of the notion that it is always *others* who should have to pay. As Christians, this morning our Savior will remind

us of the basic and absolutely critical truth that discipleship has a cost. It is anything but free.

The text that will form the foundation for our study this morning is found in Luke's Gospel, the 14th Chapter:

ESV Luke 14:25-35 *Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰ saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' ³¹ 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? ³² And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³ So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. ³⁴ ¶ "Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? ³⁵ It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

These are God's Words. In great awe and humility we acknowledge this fact and seek to sit attentively at the feet of these words and both learn the lessons and gain the benefits that our God intends to hereby make ours. To this end we pray: "**Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth.**" Amen.

Out of curiosity, did you find yourself discouraged just now by our text? Anyone here keen on the idea of *hating* those closest to you – your parents, spouse, siblings, children? Does the idea of hating your life itself hold appeal to you? Are you now eager to go out and give away all of your earthly possessions? Didn't Jesus say, "**So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.**"? The sad picture flashed in my mind of the rich young man who turned away from Jesus because he loved his wealth too much to give it up. You remember the parable:

The young man said to Jesus, "All these (commandments) I have kept. What do I still lack?" ²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you would be

perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." ²² ***When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*** (Matthew 19:20-22)

Is that me? Is that you?

Didn't our text for this morning sound like Jesus was saying just that to every single one of his followers, and aspiring followers, and that if you weren't really ready and willing to give up all that you love, all that you own, all that gives you pleasure in life, you had no share in Christ? Who then can be saved?

Some have taken comfort here from the fact that the word translated as "hate" in our text routinely means "to love less." That would mean that Jesus isn't commanding that we harbor the sort of hatred toward those we love that typically comes to mind, but that our love for God himself should be greater still. This understanding is supported by other sections of Scripture, like Matthew 10:37-38: ***(Jesus said,) "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*** ³⁸ ***And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me."***

So is that the solution here? Is that how we numb our guilt and move on from these passages and the disturbing message they first seemed to convey? *"Okay, so we are supposed to love God above all things. I'm pretty sure I do, for the most part, so it's all good."*

If that is, in fact, what we get out of this text, we have no share in Jesus because we have no *need* for Jesus. If we imagine that we are doing a good job of keeping the first and hardest table of the law – ***"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy hearts, soul, mind, and strength"*** – it will be that much harder to recognize just how desperately we need Jesus Christ.

Obviously such a thing is not possible. A general rule of thumb is that if you find yourself comfortable with the law, you are not reading it rightly, or you are being grossly dishonest or delusional with yourself.

What then is our Savior telling us in our text? What lesson would he have us learn?

Christians routinely make the same mistake in understanding our text for this morning that we make when we read the Sermon on the Mount. As in

the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus in our text is not teaching us how we really *can* keep the law – not just superficially but really keep it. The deeper lesson he is teaching us is how utterly *impossible* it is for us to do so. He wasn't teaching us what more we needed to do, but to despair of achieving the perfection required and to look instead for a Savior. He was also disabusing the masses that were then following him of their false ideas about the cost of discipleship, and just how foolish it is to imagine that true Christian discipleship is free.

We need to dig into this a bit deeper, beginning with our text's message concerning the keeping of the law. How do we know that Jesus isn't here telling us what we have to do to be *real, true* Christians? How do we know that he isn't really telling us to hate our loved ones and give away everything that we own? How do we know that any other explanation isn't just greedy, wishful, delusional thinking on our part?

The first answer is that the Bible never contradicts itself. God never encourages hatred toward anything that is good. In fact the 4th Commandment says just the opposite. God's Word also teaches us to enjoy and receive with thanksgiving his blessings, but to keep material things in their proper place and perspective in our lives. He tells us to pay our bills, pay our taxes, and to eat the fruits of our labors – all of which would be impossible if he were here requiring us to give away all of our worldly possessions.

So just what is he telling us? First, that we need to learn to give up on self and to acknowledge not just our need for a little help, but for a Savior to rescue us from certain failure. This is the spiritual level on which Jesus always operates. This is what it means to ***"renounce all that you have."*** Jesus isn't all about making us better people; he is all about saving us. We can't be saved if we believe we can or are *saving ourselves* by our own goodness or obedience.

Our Savior is further here teaching us to make a sober evaluation of what it really means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, and, even more importantly, recognize that in and of yourself, you don't have what it takes for that either. Not even close.

In our text Jesus lists two examples: building a tower and going to war. Both are to represent discipleship. Is his point here "Don't build the tower" or "Don't go to war" and instead seek a compromise with the approaching enemy? In other words, is he telling us to give up on following him because we can't "afford" it, and instead to make peace

with the world and try to have it both ways – *in* the world and *of* the world? Obviously not. This battle *must* be fought. God's Church *must* be built. To "count the cost" means recognizing not that the struggle will be free and easy, but that he must supply every good thing that we need to carry out his work and will. The Holy Spirit alone gives us the desire and strength to walk not according to our sinful passions but according to the new man that he has created within us – to conduct our lives according to God's will, not our own.

Will this kind of discipleship involve a cost to *us*? Absolutely. Shortly before Jesus spoke the words of our text, he also said this: **"Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.**"⁵² **For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three.**⁵³ **They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."**^{ESV}(Luke 12:51-53) There will be bitter division because, as we are told in our text for this morning, to be a disciple of Jesus Christ means that we will hate evil wherever we find it – including in those we love the most.

Jesus finally uses salt as the ultimate example of how right it is for Christians to be what they are created to be, and to do what they are created to do. Salt's purpose is to flavor and preserve. Given that, salt obviously becomes absolutely useless if it loses its natural characteristics. Disciples of Christ are created to share the message of Jesus Christ with the world. That is more than just what we *do*, it is what we have been created to *be*. Given the fact that **"to live is Christ and to die is gain,"** we pray that our God would provide us not only with our sin payment – which he in fact already has – but also with the courage, strength, and dedication to actually do what we were created to do as ambassadors for Jesus Christ.

Salvation is ours through faith in Jesus Christ. Keep your eyes on Jesus Christ. Trusting him for all that you need, the victory that you could not possibly win on your own is already yours. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 30:15-20** "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

^{ESV} **Philemon 1:1,10-21** Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker -- ¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. ¹¹ (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) ¹² I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. ¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, ¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. ¹⁵ For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother--especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. ¹⁸ If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹ I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it--to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. ²⁰ Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

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The 13th Sunday after Pentecost – September 8, 2019

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 227 (Red Hymnal)

"Come, Holy Ghost, in Love"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: ((Deuteronomy 30:15-20) As they entered the Promised Land, God set before the Children of Israel the clearest of choices: A) Keep me as your God and obey my commandments and I promise to make you prosper, or B) turn to other gods and ignore my commandments and I will visit you with my wrath and condemnation. Even in the material, secular world the Jews could not keep this covenant. How much less can man hope to earn *heaven* by his actions?

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 121 (Page 42) (Brown Hymnal)

The Second Lesson: (Philemon 1:1,10-21) As Paul here pleaded with Philemon to charge him (Paul) with any debt incurred by what the runaway slave Onesimus had done, so too we thank Jesus for making the same request of God the Father in our behalf. With his perfect life and innocent death, Jesus said to his Father, "*Let me pay for whatever they owe.*" What a comfort all Christians should appreciate every day of our earthly lives that God the Father has already charged our sin to Jesus' account. We are forgiven. Jesus took our punishment and gave us his perfection.

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed – page 5. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 344 (Red Hymnal)

"Come, Let Us Join Our Cheerful Songs"

The Sermon – Text: Luke 14:25-35 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"The Cost – of Everything"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Pre-communion Hymn – 277 (Red Hymnal)

"I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say"

The Preparation for Holy Communion (Brown Hymnal page 17)

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving (Brown Hymnal page 20)

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 605 (Stanzas 1 & 5) (Brown Hymnal)

"The World Is Very Evil"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here!
To our Visitors seeking Holy Communion – In obedience to God's Word, we practice "Close Communion." This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting anyone to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word, not in judgment of anyone's Christian faith.

Attendance – Sunday (30) Average (40)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee time
Tues-Thur	-WC Pastoral Conference in Lemmon	
Thursday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee time
	-11:15 a.m.	– Church Council Meeting

CLC News – Pastor Del Maas has returned the call to Trinity of Spokane. Pastor Timothy Daub has accepted the calls from Redeemer of Bowdle and Zion of Ipswich to serve as vacancy pastor, effective September 29.

WCPC – Pastor Roehl is scheduled to attend the West Central Pastoral Conference this week in Lemmon – leaving early Tuesday morning and returning Thursday afternoon.

Confirmation Class – Confirmation parents and students please note that because Pastor Roehl is scheduled to be in Lemmon on Wednesday, Confirmation Class has been moved this week to Thursday at 6pm. Please let the Pastor know of any conflicts. No Confirmation Class is scheduled for the following week (September 16-20) since Pastor Roehl is scheduled to be in Eau Claire attending CLC Board meetings.

Gullerud Retirement Service – A special farewell service for Pastor Gullerud has been planned for September 29 at 5pm in Bowdle. See Pastor Roehl for additional details.