

Introduction:

"A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher" (**Luke 6:40**, ESV). In context, Jesus is pointing out if we pick a bad teacher, we won't be able to rise above it. When we follow the blind, we fall into the ditch with them. However, this principle also applies if we pick a good teacher. In fact, if we pick the Good Teacher, when we are fully trained, we will be just like Him. That is what discipleship is all about: being like Jesus. In fact, the term "Christian" got started because it means "little Christ." So far, this has been a beautiful kind of picture, don't you think? We have talked about honoring God like Jesus did, learning from God like Jesus did, loving like God like Jesus did, leading others to God like Jesus did, and abiding in God's Word like Jesus did. Boy, if we could just do those things like Jesus did, we would all be wonderful people. Sign me up. I want to be that kind of person. However, do you remember where doing those things got Jesus? When Jesus came into the world, He had a job to do. From beginning to end, until He could say, "It is finished," He walked resolutely toward that duty. When we become like Him, we will have the same sense of duty. But what is the disciple's duty?

In **Luke 14**, Jesus was attending a dinner at the house of one of the Pharisees (**Luke 14:1**). While commenting on all the jockeying for positions of honor that He saw, He mentioned the "resurrection of the just." This prompted an attendee to exclaim, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" (**Luke 14:15**). No doubt, he was right. However, it seems the man had a wrong idea about who those people would be. This misconception got Jesus started teaching at the dinner table. Not only that, it had Him so worked up, He kept right on teaching when He left the house and got back with the crowd. By the time Jesus is done, we have a clear picture of the disciple's duty. If we want to be blessed, we need to pursue the disciple's duty with the same readiness, sacrifice, and tenacity with which Jesus pursued His. If you want to eat bread in the kingdom of God, you need to come when you're called, accept the whole cost, and stay 'til it's done.

Discussion:

I. Come when you're called (**Luke 14:15-24**).

- A. When the man exclaimed a blessing on those who eat in the kingdom, Jesus responded with a parable about a banquet. A man had invited lots of people to his banquet. He had set the date, sent out the invitations, and has now made the preparations. When it came time for the banquet, the invitees, one after another started making excuses. Jesus gives only three examples, but this is supposed to be representative of all. After all many had been invited, but none were coming. So, he sent his servant out to invite the blind, the cripple, the lame, the poor, the homeless. They showed up. They didn't have to make arrangements. They didn't have to make plans. They heard the call, they came running. That is the disciple's duty: Come when you're called.
- B. If you've ever hosted a gathering, you know what it's like. You put "RSVP" on the invitation, but few people do. Frankly, it feels like people are waiting around for a better invitation. They don't want to tell you they aren't coming in case they have nothing better to do and they actually feel like it when the time arrives. But they don't want to tell you they are coming in case a closer friend calls, a more fun opportunity arrives, or if they just aren't feeling it when it comes time to go. Then you have those who do RSVP weeks in advance, and you are so appreciative, but the day arrives, and the phone starts ringing. "I can't make it. Family dropped in unexpectedly." "I'm sorry. I had a tough day at work." "Please, don't hold it against me. I just didn't know how hectic life was going to be right now." "I'm sorry. A friend at work gave me tickets to the game/concert/show. I mean, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity." (I'm not trying to make people feel guilty here; I've done these things too). It's one thing to do this for a book club meeting, a bunco game, or a potluck. Jesus, however, points out it is a completely different issue when we're talking about the kingdom wedding banquet.
- C. No doubt, when Jesus told this story, there was a message about the religious elite who seemed to have responded to the invitation of God, but when Jesus arrived made excuses versus the sinners and tax collectors who actually did show up at Jesus's invitation. But for our purposes, we need to see that disciples don't make excuses. They come when they are called. The kingdom comes first. Let's be honest. None of these excuses are "I need to wash my hair that night" kind of excuses. Big purchases need to be managed. In fact, the Law, in **Deuteronomy 24:5**, demonstrates that third excuse was really a pretty good one. We might wonder why

any of these folks couldn't wait a day or schedule things better. But we can't necessarily fault them. However, the man holding the feast will brook no excuses. He gave these men the chance to dine at his table, but finding something they would rather do, they lost the opportunity to feast with that man.

- D. So, he invited others. And they came. Why? What is the real difference between those who made excuses and those who came when they were called? Very simply this. A man who just bought a field, a man who just bought five yoke of oxen, and a man who just paid a dowry for a wife, are all men who think they are going to eat even if they miss the banquet. They believe they can take care of themselves. But the poor, the blind, the lame, the crippled, the homeless they don't know that. They know if they miss this banquet, they won't eat at all. They see the value in the man's banquet because they know how destitute they are on their own.
- E. Disciples pursue their duty, we come when we're called without making excuses because we know how destitute we are. We know if we don't heed Jesus's invitation, we're going to starve. We're going to die. We have only one option. Of course, the folks who are making excuses don't realize it, but they are just as destitute as we are. If you think you can survive life, judgment, eternity without Jesus, you're mistaken. Disciples recognize our need for the One throwing the feast, we recognize the value of the feast, and we make no excuses.
- F. Disciple, come when you're called.

II. Accept the cost (**Luke 14:25-33**).

- A. Apparently, between **vss. 24** and **25**, Jesus finished the dinner and left the house. It reads as if the crowd was just waiting for Jesus to get back outside. Jesus, motivated by the story at the dinner, similarly teaches the crowd. If you thought His teaching about making excuses was blunt, bordering on extreme, you haven't heard anything yet. This paragraph is so blunt, so harsh, so extreme, it can only be fathomed as a recruitment speech. Not just any recruitment speech. He isn't recruiting people to join a sales team, pledge a fraternity or sorority, or donate to a charity. He is recruiting people to fight a war. No one gets out of a war unscathed. No one gets out of a war without paying a personal price. You see, disciples not only come when you're called; disciples accept the whole cost.
- B. Please, understand this. Jesus is not asking us to count the cost. He isn't asking us to make sure we think it will be worth it before we get started. Jesus, rather, is dividing the world into two types of people. Some will accept the cost, some won't. Disciples accept the whole cost; others cannot be His disciples.
- C. In fact, Jesus repeats that phrase—"cannot be my disciple"—three times in this teaching.
 - 1. "If you are going to come to me," Jesus essentially says, "you have to hate your parents, your spouse, your children, your siblings" (**vs. 26**). Jesus's point, of course, is not that a disciple is hateful. Disciples love like God. His point is that He comes first. He will not allow for excuses or competition. He will not allow them from any source, not even family. Remember what Jesus had already taught in **Luke 12:51-53**. Despite Jesus's desire to bring peace and reconciliation through His death, He knew that in the same household husbands and wives would disagree, parents and children would take different sides, siblings would walk different paths. Jesus understood that for some, perhaps many, choosing Him would cost a disciple all the way up to and including family. It would cost them their parents, their spouses, their sibling. It might even cost them their children. A disciple accepts the whole cost.
 - 2. "If you are going to come to me," Jesus essentially says, "you not only have to walk behind me as I carry My cross; you have to carry your own cross" (**vs. 27**). On the one hand, for some this has been a literal cost. Peter, one of the disciples who heard this very message, was crucified. Many other disciples, just like Jesus, carried their crosses until a Roman soldier nailed them to it and mocked them as they died. Jesus is not saying His disciples face the hardships of life, "We all have our cross to bear." No, no. Jesus is saying His path leads to death. Death of our old lives. Death of our own pursuits. Death of our own goals, values, ways. Death of our pride. And sometimes even the death of our bodies. When we decide to be Jesus's disciple, we are stepping off the throne of our lives and picking up a cross. He had said this before in **Luke 9:23-27**. Please, understand, following Jesus does not give us our best life now. Following Jesus isn't about how to have a happy family, a lucrative career, a leisurely retirement. Listen, for all I know, God may bless you with all those things as well. But you need to understand this: on one side, the world is offering you...well...the best the world has to offer; on the other side, Jesus is offering you a cross. Yes, yes if you follow Jesus through the cross, you will eat bread in the kingdom of God; you will be blessed (**Luke 14:15**). On the other side of the cross is resurrection, life eternal, the glories of the heavenly kingdom. But between here and the blessing is a cross. That is the cost of discipleship. You can have the world right now, but understand what you are giving in exchange for that. You are giving your soul. Perhaps we all need to take a fearless and thorough inventory of our lives and discipleship. If our discipleship isn't

costing us anything, if we seem to be getting the best of the world, if our hardships aren't unique to disciples, we may be padding our crosses.

3. "If you are hanging on to anything in your life," Jesus essentially says, "you cannot be my disciple" (**vs. 33**). Whether it is a plot of land, a yoke of oxen, a spouse, a car, a house, a reputation, influence, a job, a retirement, a name, Jesus says to renounce it. Take leave of it. Let it go. Here is what is truly difficult about this. Jesus doesn't mean when we are baptized into Him, we must sell everything we own, cut off ties with everyone we know, abandon every plan we have. The fact is part of our responsibility as disciples is to provide for our own household (**1 Timothy 5:8**). That is, we still have family relationships and responsibilities. We still own things and must manage them. Yet, at the same time, disciples renounce everything. This means we loosen our hold on everything and everyone but Jesus. Further, we absolutely cut off and break the hold everything and everyone else has on us except Jesus. If anything or anyone ever comes in conflict with Jesus, we hang on to Jesus. If even our own right hand or right eye gets in the way of serving Jesus, we cut it off or pluck it out and toss it away (**Matthew 5:29-30**).
- D. In the middle of these statements, Jesus tells two parables, explaining why the disciple's duty is so extreme. There are two ways students of these parables understand them.
 1. Some see these parables as about us, the disciples. We are the builders, and we are the kings. We have a task before us. If we don't count the cost and renounce all we have, we will get halfway along in building, not complete it, and look like fools. Or we will get part of the way on our campaign and either face an ignominious defeat or have to come to the enemy, offering surrender. Again, we'll look like fools. The only way for us to not look like fools as builders and kings is to accept the cost, renounce all we have.
 2. Others see these parables as about Jesus. Jesus is the builder. Jesus is the king. (While I have historically accepted the first explanation, I am increasingly intrigued and persuaded by this second one.) If correct, Jesus is essentially saying, "Look, I'm building My tower, My city, My kingdom. If I only get halfway and can't finish because My workers flake out on Me, I'll look like a fool. I'll be mocked. Here's what you need to understand. I will not let that happen." He is essentially saying, "Listen, I'm fighting a war. The enemy has twice as many soldiers as I do. I've got have soldiers that are worth two of each of his soldiers. If I start heading out to war with a bunch of soldiers who are going to flake out and leave on the way to the battle, I'll have to try to seek terms of surrender to My enemy. Guess what. I will not let that happen." In other words, because Jesus will not leave the building half done and will not bail on the battle, He can only recruit disciples who will accept the cost.
 3. Either way, we get to the same conclusion. Disciples accept the whole cost. Everyone who doesn't accept the whole cost cannot be disciples.
- E. Disciple, accept the whole cost.

III. Stay 'til it's done (**Luke 14:34-35**).

- A. My Bible has a publisher-added heading between **vss. 33** and **34**. That almost caused me to miss the final step in the disciple's duty. It's much shorter section. It's a very simple point. Disciples stay 'til it's done.
- B. We are the salt of the earth, but if we lose our taste, we become useless. Jesus gets pretty graphic about it. The manure pile is too good for tasteless salt. In other words, if we don't come when we're called and accept the cost, Jesus has no use for us. Friends, He loves us. He died for us. He's done everything He can to grow us and make us all that we can be in Him. But if we push Him away, if we choose something over Him, He eventually lets us go. And where we end up is worse than the manure pile.
- C. This drives home a point. Disciples worth their salt, don't quit. Disciples who quit, don't eat bread in the kingdom of God. Disciples who fake it, don't make it. Disciples don't put their hand to the plow and then look back (**Luke 9:62**). Disciples stay on duty until the tower is built, until the war is won.
- D. Disciple, stay 'til it's done.

Conclusion:

Jesus's recruitment speech isn't going to win any awards for being winsome. If I didn't know any better, I'd think He was trying to thin out the crowd and get people to quit following Him. Here's the deal. Jesus was just being honest. Jesus wasn't giving commands, providing instruction, or offering advice. He was stating facts. In the same way that disciples can't have two masters, people who won't come when they're called, accept the whole cost, and stay 'til it's done can't be disciples. When a disciple is fully trained, the disciple become like the master. Our Master went to the cross. If we won't accept the training that leads to the cross, we won't be His disciples. Oh, we may still "go to church" every Sunday, but we won't be His disciples. In fact, in that situation we simply can't be His disciples. Jesus is building a kingdom. He is fighting a war. If we will be like Him, if we will be His disciples, we will come when we're called,

accept the whole cost, and stay 'til it's done. And the reason we come here every week is because we have figured out we will not pull that off by ourselves, and we will not pull it off apart from His grace and strength.