

**The Gospel According to Luke**  
Luke 14:25-35  
Reading: Luke 14:25-35

Sermon #64  
January 18, 2020

## **Giving Up All – With One Exception**

### **Christian Hierarchy**

You heard the Word of God read by Garth and now I will give you the bottom-line truism I see in this passage, that we will learn, study and I hope you take into your hearts from this morning's passage: **True followers of Christ, true Christians MUST be ready, if God calls, to give up everything, even one's life.**

As we work through this morning's passage and we follow Christ towards the cross in the Gospel of Luke we come up against an extremely demanding text. I am approaching this text today with much prayer and much fearfulness. This is a short passage of Scripture we must understand and beyond understanding, we must live. The big problem with understanding this text is that many are conditioned by the world and taught by others to think the Scriptures are not completely true – especially our text this morning. Many churches have allowed the culture and society to come into the church. Many read this passage and then immediately make some excuse as to why Jesus surely cannot mean what He says. But, know this my beloved, Jesus always meant what he said and what he said is always true.

If you asked most Americans, if you asked them, “Are you a Christian?” They would answer, “Why, yes I am.” Most of the time this answer is based on some social idea that basically everyone is a Christian, after all America is a Christian nation, is it not. Many were raised in Christian homes, but Christianity was their parent's religion and they grew up watching their parent's behavior that was different from the precepts found in the Bible. Most of these

culture Christians could not give a simple explanation of the Gospel. For many, even though they attend church, they may not have heard the gospel or read it. At best they are moral Americans or cultural Christians who own a Bible or two, maybe they inherited them or were given them, but do they read the Bible and meditate on it? For some in America it feels like it would be easier to give up their lives than their stuff – we live in a materialistic driven society.

The second group believes that they are Christian because they can affirm a few truths found in the Bible. If you believe a few correct things about Jesus then you must be a Christian. This is why a survey of those who call themselves Christian indicated that many believe that Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses and many other cults are Christian. If you asked them certain questions, they might be able to give correct answers and if they simply do not know the answer, they will say the answer is “Jesus” because that is a fairly safe bet. If you asked them the same question as the first group, “Are you a Christian?” they too would answer, “Yes I am”.

In America people have been conditioned to believe that saying a short little prayer makes you a Christian. If you come to the front of the church and hold the preacher’s hand and repeat a short prayer after him or her, then you are a Christian. My beloved, is this what makes a person a Christian? All these ideas are what we must get out of our heads because they are not true. Yet, what makes it so hard for us is that these ideas are what many have grown up with and been taught all our lives. The prince of this world has done a good job in perverting the Gospel of Christ. True believers must do a better job in living and sharing the true Gospel.

If it is possible, today, this morning, let us not approach Christianity with these preconceived social notions but approach this morning’s passage with a clean

slate, a fresh and open mind, and listen to what Jesus, Himself, tells us what being a Christian really is. During the message try to listen as if you are hearing what Jesus says is required to be Christian with both your heart and mind.

I must qualify one very important point here as we get started and that is, when Jesus uses the word “disciple” in our text this word is synonymous with the word “Christian”. A Christian is a disciple and there are no Christians who are not disciples. A disciple is not a super Christian or even something you suddenly become after you are saved; although spiritual growth helps one to truly follow Christ as his disciple. A disciple is Christian and a Christian is a disciple. The word disciple comes from the Greek word that means to be a learner of the teacher, but beyond a learner or student it means to be devoted to the teachings and way of life of the teacher or master and a disciple’s life emulates our Teacher and Master, Jesus Christ, Son of God the Father. We learn from Luke in his written record called “The ACTS of the Apostles” or the “Book of ACTS” that those disciples who believed in Jesus as the Christ, as their Lord and Savior, were called “Christian”. **“Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, <sup>26</sup> and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.”** (Acts 11:25-26)

Our text begins with Luke showing us the context of Jesus’ teaching. **“Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them.”** There were hundreds, and likely thousands of people following Jesus. Luke calls them a great crowd and other translations use the word multitude. Jesus is leading, he stops and he turns facing those following and gives this opening statement; <sup>26</sup> **“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.**

<sup>27</sup> **Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”**

For true disciples or followers - Christ must be above all else in their life. What is going on is there were mostly likely thousands following Jesus but He knew that their commitment was superficial. They wanted Jesus for what they could gain from him, in this world – they sought gain by aligning with Him and hoping to receive a miracle or healing or blessing. They wanted Jesus if he could give them something, but the world was still what they truly desired. They wanted earthly wealth – material or social. Jesus knew their motives were not commendable. Let me ask an open and straight forward question, “Are you a follower of Christ? If so, why? Why are you a follower? Are you a superficial follower, a spectator or are you a committed follower, a real follower, true disciple?” Do not answer outloud or to quickly – examine your heart for an honest answer. Why? Because the answer is one of life or death. As the Apostle John taught throughout his gospel, knowing Jesus does not save, one must believe in Jesus.

The crowd wanted what they thought Jesus would give them. However, the exact opposite was true, following Christ would cost them everything. The same is true for us. Following Christ may cost you everything.

### **Following Christ Costs - Relationships**

Jesus wants to wake the people following him up, he desires to separate the sheep from the goats, so, he turns to face them and speaks boldly, **“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters ... he cannot be my disciple.”** Believe it or not, this is how Jesus did evangelism. This is an evangelistic text. He does not desire to turn away true followers, only those who are superficial. Jesus desires all people to come to Him but in the universal call that goes out not all respond, **“For what can be known**

about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.<sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” (Romans 1:19-20) There is God’s specific call to those he has chosen, at the end of history, when Jesus returns for the final battle, we read, “They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.” (Revelation 17:14) In other words, a call to discipleship, to be Christian, means that Christ has your total allegiance, one lives by faith in Jesus and none other.

To give oneself completely to Christ does not mean we are called to hate others in an abusive way. We are not called to hate our family. What we are called to do is to love Jesus much more than we love anyone else. So, our earthly love for others is less and by comparison to our love for Christ, it could seem to be hatred. This Love/Hate language is very typical of ancient hyperbole. Jesus is not inconsistent, earlier in chapter 6 he teaches, “I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,<sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.” (Luke 6:27-28) The point is, there are times when following Christ will in itself bring about conflict within the family. When the son of a lost father comes to Christ and senses a call to missions and the father desires the son to pursue a law degree; this will cause conflict. By the way this was true in the life of both Luther and Calvin. They chose to follow Christ, not the desires of their fathers or others. Let me ask, “Are you willing, if need be, to forsake family in the pursuit of following Christ?” It also means, in the broader sense, to follow Christ one will live in conflict with the world. As I said at the beginning the bottom-line

is, **True followers of Christ, true Christians MUST be ready, if God calls, to give up everything, even one's life.** This brings us to one's personal cost.

### **Following Christ Costs - Your Own Life**

Jesus is God and therefore has the right to demand complete loyalty. He says in verse 26, **“If anyone comes to me and does not hate ... even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”** As Christians, we must be ready to forsake family if need be in order to follow Jesus. But, as verse 26 continues, Jesus goes further, He commands all Christians to even be ready to give up their own life. Again, let me ask a question, **“Do you love your life so much that you would rather deny Christ than give it up?”** Foxe's Book of Martyrs first published in 1563 has been revised and updated over the centuries. It contains the short stories of those willing to give their lives to remain faithful to their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. You would find it beneficial reading. A fact that may be shocking is; more Christians were martyred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century than all the centuries before combined. In the two millennia of Christian history, about 70 million faithful believers have given their lives for Christ, and of these, 45 1/2 million — fully 65% — were in the last century, according to research found in *The Newly Persecuted* by Antonio Succi, published in 2008.

Denying oneself is the way of life for disciples of Christ as we learned in chapter 9 when Jesus taught, **“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”**<sup>24</sup> **For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.**<sup>25</sup> **For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?”** (Luke 9:23-25) True discipleship is not a new teaching here in Luke 14, for Jesus has been teaching what it costs to follow from the beginning of his ministry.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says, <sup>34</sup>“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup> For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ... <sup>38</sup> And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup> Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matthew 10:34-35 and 38-39) The crowds were increasing in number. Jesus wanted to make sure they knew His what was required to be his disciple.

It seems the American standard of “the bigger the better” has many preachers today trying to gain large crowds of followers. They will do almost anything to increase the size of the congregation. This is because, they think, with more people comes more prestige, more money, more buildings, more programs and more ministries. I visited with an internationally known pastor with a mega church and asked if he felt it was a problem that he drained outlying areas spiritually with people leaving their communities and traveling 50 plus miles to attend his church. He said it was the price he was willing to pay to have the numbers to fund his seminary and ministries.

On a few occasions, Jesus being in the midst of a large crowd of followers, would turn to them and confront them with the cost of being his disciples. If I was a rancher, I would say Jesus was culling the heard. He would explain that following Him would require a loss in this world. So, very clearly, Jesus is not out to gather a large crowd of followers but a smaller number of true disciples. Quality over quantity was His desire. Sold out disciples, not spectators was his goal. In the realm of Jesus' evangelism, He very clearly tells all would be followers that coming to Christ may cost one their family and even their life. But Jesus does not stop there – he continues.

## Counting the Cost

Reading from verse 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?

<sup>29</sup> Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, <sup>30</sup> saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’

<sup>31</sup> 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? <sup>32</sup> And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup> So therefore, **any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”**

Many modern-day evangelists, especially those on TV, tell people that if they come to Christ, they will begin living the good life – health and wealth. Is this true? Is this the message Jesus is sharing with us? Is this the Gospel? It is true in the eternal sense. It is true that you will be blessed in many ways. In Mark’s gospel account, “Peter began to say to *Jesus*, ‘See, we have left everything and followed you.’” (Mark 10:28) after Jesus was crucified and had risen, he appeared to his disciples for the third time and Jesus said to Peter, “Feed my sheep. <sup>18</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” <sup>19</sup> (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.” (John 21:17-19) Nothing further about Peter’s death is in the scriptures, but writers tell us when Peter died as a martyr. When he was given the choice of how he should die, he said, “I’d like to be crucified up-side-down because I am unworthy to die as my Lord died.” You see Peter had come to the point he understood what Jesus had said earlier, “Peace I leave with you; my peace



I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” (John 14:27) Peter gave his life for the cause of Christ and died, not happy, not in wealth, but in peace. What Jesus is teaching here in Luke chapter 14 and what Peter came to understand and the over 70 million martyrs that followed – following Christ comes with a price and you need to understand that before you declare you are his disciple.

In America, many Christians have not had to give up anything to follow Christ. They see Christ as gaining themselves salvation and wealth and happiness. The question in my mind is, when times get difficult will they throw in the towel? Jesus taught about these people in the parable of the sower, “As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy,<sup>21</sup> yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.” (Matthew 13:20-21) On the other hand, as Joyce and I worked in Muslim countries the people knew there was a real chance that rejecting Islam and becoming disciples of Christ could cost them and their family their very lives.

Let me ask, why have you come to Christ? Is it to get something in this life or the life to come? Jesus met a rich young ruler who asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ...<sup>22</sup> 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.”<sup>23</sup> But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.<sup>24</sup> Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, “How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!<sup>25</sup> For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” (Luke 18:18, 22-25) For many who are rich, and most American are rich by the world’s standards, their material

possessions mean more than Jesus. Of course, there are other examples of what people place above Jesus and God's Word. As Americans look for a church here are common questions; Do you have programs for my children? Do you have a youth group? Do you have a Wednesday night service? Is your church crowded? What is your worship music like? What all these questions have in common is they want to know what the church will do for them. If I come to church here what will I get out of it? As a Pastor what I desire to hear is; How do you preach the Word of God? I would like to serve Christ' church, what needs does the church have? How does the church serve others? How can I get involved? God wants his children to be givers, to be servants, to use our lives to glorify him and to use the blessings he gives to help others in His Name.

Jesus does not stop here, but points out something freighting – especially in today's view of Christianity.

### **Exception**

Taking up passage in verses 34 and 35, “Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? <sup>35</sup> 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.” What's Jesus telling us in these 2 verses? I believe he is saying, I have set the terms for discipleship and here they are: Give up everything and follow Me. If need be, turn your back on family, friends, your stuff and even your own life in order to follow Me. Jesus will not play second fiddle to anyone or anything.

According Jesus (not according to me), anything less is not Christianity at all. Claiming to be a follower and not following wholly is an empty claim. It means nothing. It is like salt that is not salty. It does not even make good fertilizer. Its only purpose is to take its place in the trash heap.

One thing Jesus does here, is, in a roundabout way, he claims deity. If He commands His followers to have no other loyalties except for Him, then He is God. Give up everything, all relationships all your stuff even your life, but do not give up Jesus. Everything else you can afford to lose but do not lose Christ.

Jesus has made the call to discipleship so restrictive that on one occasion everyone left except His disciples - in John 6, He asks them “Are you leaving also?” Jesus says, “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. <sup>64</sup> But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) <sup>65</sup> And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” <sup>66</sup> After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. <sup>67</sup> So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” <sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, <sup>69</sup> and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” (John 6:63-69)

My beloved, I think it is time the bar is raised back to the place of biblical Christianity. I am afraid in America; we have been living in a fairytale world of make believe. The demand of Christ upon all followers is total allegiance. He will tolerate no rivals to His Lordship. King Jesus will not bow to you or me; we must bow to Him and swear allegiance.

Jesus is telling us straight up, there is no fine print on the back at the bottom of Jesus’ brochure of discipleship. When you sign up you are signing over all your allegiance and if need be, even your own life. This is Jesus’ demands for His followers. I hope you understand better why I began this morning with - **True**

**followers of Christ, true Christians MUST be ready, if God calls, to give up everything, even one's life.**

Here is what I would like you to take away with this morning. Here is some food-for-thought. Let's, you and me, place ourselves in another make-believe situation. Let's imagine right now, this very second Jesus calls you to move overseas and begin working among an unreached people, sharing the love of Christ with them. Would you do it?

Here are possible answers; both Jesus and I have heard them.

The First answer is, No, I could not possibly I have (various reasons) why I cannot go. I would love to but I just cannot. What are some reasons? Health, family, house, career. This was my first answer. I had worked too hard to establish my career. However, after fighting with God, which is never good, for 2 years I submitted and left my career, sold everything and my family and I left the USA to be missionaries.

Second answer, the right answer, Yes, I can and will. Where do I sign up?

If Jesus has called you to follow and He is leading to serve in our church, to another town, the inner-city, to the poor or overseas - to not go is disobedience and means turning away from following Him. Those who turn away, have just shown themselves to be superficial or false followers.

Are you a disciple? Are you a follower? Are you a Christian? The answer must be yes to all of the questions or no to all.

I pray you are willing if need be to forsake everything to follow Christ.  
Amen!