

Message Summary

Great crowds are exciting, and often drive people to do crazy things in order to not be left out. Jesus, however, knew better than to be impressed with crowds. He loves crowds of people deeply, enough to tell them to truth. Even more than the crowds, Jesus loves His heavenly Father, and aims in all things to please Him above the surrounding crowds. Consequently, Jesus refuses to exchange the gospel message for ear tickling, watered down half-truths.

The stakes of discipleship are high – the highest stakes those in Jesus’ day, or any day, could imagine. In order to follow Me, Jesus teaches, you must *hate* your parents, spouse, children, siblings, and even your own life (v. 26). You must take up a device of cruel torture for condemned criminals every day (v. 27). If you will not, Jesus says, find something else to do, because you cannot be my disciple. “Hate” in Hebrew idiom signifies a lesser love. Of course love for one’s family is good (cf. Jn. 19:26-27; Eph. 5:22-64; 1 Pt. 3:1-7). But love for Jesus must transcend all other loves. Jesus Himself is in a separate category from all others. He is not just another prophet or good teacher; He is God the Son, the Creator of everything! Likewise, our love and worship of Jesus must be so much higher that it is in a different category altogether from our love for created things. By doing so, Jesus seeks to free us from idols in the world, often good things turned into “gods.” Christ discipleship costs everything, because Christ Himself is worth everything.

Two examples illustrate. First, someone building a tower first calculates how much the tower will cost, lest he build the tower halfway and leave it uncompleted (vv. 28-29). Likewise, a king who wants to conquer foreign lands first sits down to count the cost, to see whether his troops are sufficient to win the war (vv. 30-32). If not, a wise king will rescind his plans, lest many lives be lost in vain. Calculation comes first, action second. But, Jesus presses, what is more important: towers and territory or eternity? If even the world recognizes the costs of secular gain, how can disciples not recognize the cost of following Jesus? We who plan ahead for buildings and war, how can we give less attention to planning for eternity? True disciples will be the kind of “salty” disciples who influence everything and everyone around them, rather than the unsalty disciples who are good only for the manure pile (vv. 34-35). The cost is undoubtedly high. Jesus’ question remains the same for us today as for the disciples many years ago: Are you a disciple-making disciple? Are you all in?

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Read 2 Timothy 4:3-5. What is the allure of ear tickling messages? How does Jesus resist the temptation to preach them, even to an already-vast crowd? How does Paul say to combat them? (See esp. 2 Tm. 4:1-2).

Why is “hating” even the good things in our lives essential for true discipleship? How can we love family and friends as good gifts without idolizing them?

Pastor Deric closed his sermon by saying, “When you love God first, you will for the first time love people, not just use them.” How does love for God first free us to love people around us well as “salty” disciples (vv. 34-35)?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don’t have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

1. On the graph of concentric circles representing people (core, committed, congregation, crowd, and community), where are you?
2. What earthly towers or earthly wars distract you from seeing discipleship as the most important aspect of life?
3. Does half-hearted commitment compel you to exchange the gospel message for watered-down versions of the truth in your life (cf. Mt. 13:20-22)?
4. Does the fear of man cause you to exchange the gospel message for watered-down versions of the truth in your evangelism and Christian witness (Prv. 29:25; Jn. 6:66-71)?
5. What good things in life are you prone to make into idols?
6. Are you more influenced by real Biblical preaching through the hard truths and passages of Scriptures or by watered-down versions of "Christianity"?
7. Are you "salty," active in discipling those around you? Or are you passing up opportunities in sloth and making yourself "of no use" (v. 35)?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God for bearing the cross, an instrument of torture for criminals, on our behalf. Thank Him for the gospel that frees us to love others around us well.
 - Pray that our love for God would be far higher – in a different category altogether – than our love for worldly things, even good ones. Pray that we would be faithful to "*keep yourselves from idols*" (1 Jn. 5:21).
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray that the Lord would preserve and clarify the truth of the gospel in the midst of a "*crooked and perverse generation*" (Phil. 2:15) that waters it down. Pray that God would make Christ Fellowship active in preaching the "*whole counsel of God*" (Acts 20:27).
 - Pray that the Lord would remove the fear of man that can so easily keep us from preaching it.
 - Pray for a great harvest of souls in Gadsden who count the true cost of discipleship to Jesus, costing everything, and find Him worth it.
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray for Buddhists in India, especially West Bengal, where the goddess Kali is worshipped. Pray that the Lord would raise up many workers for this vast harvest field. Pray that God would reveal the futility of earthly idols – false gods, family, success, etc. – and cause the people of West Bengal to embrace the full cost of Christ discipleship.