

Counting the Costs
Luke 14:25-35

Introduction

Please turn to Luke 14:25–35 and follow along as I read the passage for our study this morning. ²⁵ *Now large crowds were going along with 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 carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”* ²⁸ *“For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?”* ²⁹ *“Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him,”* ³⁰ *saying, “This man began to build and was not able to finish.”* ³¹ *“Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand?”* ³² *“Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.”* ³³ *“So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.”* ³⁴ *“Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned?”* ³⁵ *“It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

Our previous studies in Luke 13 indicate that Jesus is somewhere in the region of Galilee teaching in the various cities and villages as He makes His way slowly toward Jerusalem. Luke does not give us a time indicator about how soon this occurs after Jesus was hosted by a ruler of the Pharisees for a Sabbath meal. Luke simply points out that a large crowd is following Him. We have seen in the past that Jesus’ presence could attract a large multitude of people even when He was in rural areas. My guess is that due to Sabbath travel restrictions, either Jesus was in a city or this was some day following the events recorded in Luke 14:1-24. As Jesus is going along with this large group following along, He decides to take advantage of situation and challenge the people about the sacrifices they would have to make in following Him. He wanted them to carefully consider the cost of being one of His disciples.

The word “disciple” is used a lot in Christian literature, but not always according to its Biblical usage and meaning. Strong statements such as in this passage about the sacrifice necessary to be a disciple of Jesus have led some to make being a disciple some sort of higher plane of Christianity. In their view you first become a Christian and then become a disciple sometime later when you make Jesus your Lord. That is contrary to the meaning of the Greek word translated as disciple (μαθητής / mathētēs) and its usage in the Scriptures, but it became a popular idea and a point of conflict within evangelical Christianity in the late twentieth century.

I recall the first time I met someone who held to this view. I was a seminary student at the time and just finished preaching at Union Rescue Mission in Los Angeles. The men who go there are generally desperate enough to endure a preaching service in order to get a meal or a bed for the night or even to sleep in a chair, uncomfortable, but safe from the dangers of being out on the streets. This fact leads most of those who would preach there only periodically, such as I was doing, to proclaim a gospel message to the unsaved. That night one of the men confronted me about the need to preach to the Christians that were there, and then one of the workers started talking to me about how many of the men there were “Christians” but not yet “disciples.” That did not make sense to me, but I did decide that after that I would direct my sermons to those professing to be Christians about walking with Christ and include Paul’s admonition in 2 Corinthians 13:5 to *“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?”*