

Title: Let goods and kindred go....
Text: Luke 14.25-35
Theme: The cost of genuine conversion
Series: Luke
Prop Stmtnt: Jesus demands everything because he alone is worth it.

Have you ever had buyer's remorse? You know the regret that comes from overpaying for something like timeshares, kitchen gadgets, treadmills, hot tubs, camping gear, and extended warranties. Instead of owning the item, the item owns you and, in some cases, it keeps costing you money without giving you the benefit that you imagined. Most of the time, buyer's remorse comes from impulsive shopping. You had to have this item for this event. You wanted to make a statement, fit in, look trendy, etc., and now you are stuck with the payments long after the event happened. Perhaps you were talked into the purchase by a slick salesperson who knew what buttons to push that got you to say yes. I recently read the accounts of people who took out student loans and are crushed by them. They didn't read the fine print. They believed the hype. Going to school was cool. Fun now, pay later. But in their 50's they can't buy a house, they can't get a loan for a car, they can't save for retirement and what they owe now is greater than ever.

The ultimate buyer's remorse is buying what this world is selling by believing what this world is teaching. Satan not only switches the price tags, but he hides the fine print. The story of this world is the story of people, who believe him because they want to. Jesus, on the other hand, is the ultimate example of truth in advertising. He lays out all of the terms of what it means to follow him. There are no surprises. But the terms are intimidating. Beloved, Jesus plays for keeps. He demands total allegiance because he knows that he is worth it and he knows that no one else can save you nor will anyone love you like he does. There have been many seasons in the 2,000-year life of the church when it has been trendy to be a Christian. Genuine Christianity is not built on trends, nor advanced by fans. Jesus calls for discipleship and there is a cost to being a disciple of Jesus. In one sense it costs you nothing because you cannot pay for your salvation. On the other hand, it costs you everything because by following Christ, you give up all claims to your life.

Read Text:

1. **Jesus is not impressed with big crowds.** (25-27)

We are emotional beings. Emotion gives color to our lives, but our emotions can be manipulated, particularly by others and especially by large crowds. Last Saturday night over 112,000 people went to a concert at the Big House in Ann Arbor. The effect of a like that crowd can be deafening and overwhelming. Crowds can be exciting. When we see everyone running to something or pointing at something or talking about something or buying something, we are curious and interested. Immediately we are inclined to follow the crowd because, if everyone seems to be doing it, then it must be worth it and we don't want to miss it. On the flip side, nothing seems to be more deflating than a sparse crowd, especially in a large place. That was

part of the dynamic in our text from last week. We like crowds. We like momentum. We like the enthusiasm and energy that comes from large crowds. And our text says, *“Now great crowds accompanied him (Jesus).”* Great crowds are impressive because they appear to be validating. Look at all the people! Look at all the likes and the reviews. For the disciples, who likely had some family members who thought they were crazy for giving up their jobs and following Jesus, the great crowds would appear to validate them. Great crowds! This is a media department’s dream. The event organizer is stoked. The sponsors are excited and of course the crowds are hyped. However, Jesus is not into hype nor image. He demands your heart and will not settle for anything other than your all.

At this point (middle of v.25) Jesus *“turned and said to them...”* Jesus knows that he has a lot of fans. There is a lot of emotion and excitement. He turns to them and speaks. What would you expect a leader of a new movement like this to say to this growing crowd? *“Wow, look at you all. This is amazing. Thank-you for coming out today, this is incredible. I remember in the early days how the doubters and the haters all tried to throw cold water on us, but we believed in our cause, and now I think they hear us and they fear us. But we ain’t stopping here. We’re coming for you Jerusalem. We’re taking you back. We’re getting our nation back. We don’t fear the enemy, the enemy fears us and should because after Jerusalem, we’re going for Rome.”* The roar of the crowd crescendos like a wave. People are jacked up. Then with fists pumping and music playing, Jesus tells them how to sign up and volunteer for the next steps. There are t-shirts, stickers and posters for sale, petitions to get signed and volunteers to recruit. This is what we have been waiting for, except Jesus doesn’t say that.

It's as if he sees the crowd and knows, this is too many. Jesus is not interested in fans, he wants disciples. Do you remember what happened to Gideon when he was getting ready to fight the Midianites? God told him that he had too many soldiers in his army. How do you have too many soldiers? The army of Israel went from 32,000 to 10,000. That had to be rather demoralizing. But God said there were still too many. After getting it down to 300, God said, *“ok.”* This is like a Gideon moment.

Here is the *“fine print”* in bold letters. *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. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”*

What do you think that did to the crowd? I doubt there were too many fists pumping the air after this, nor were they doing the wave. The only wave was the murmuring that began to work its way through the audience as they probably questioned one another, like some of you are doing. Did Jesus really say that? Does he really mean that? Yes and yes. We are going to unpack this in the 2nd point, but before we do that, this is a good place to ask ourselves a couple of questions.

What does this say about how we view our worship service?
What does this say about how we “market” the church?

2. Jesus demands supreme commitment. (26-27)

This sounds radical. It sounds radical because we think that Jesus is supposed to help us love father and mother, spouse, children, and siblings. What is this? I will speak to that in a minute. It also sounds radical because many people have a wrong view of the supremacy of Christ. The way that Christianity has often been “marketed” and “sold” has contributed to a wrong view of Christianity. People have pitched Christianity as the cure for loneliness, a bad marriage, healing from a disease, unemployment, poor finances, etc. In other words, Jesus is a means, a vehicle to get you the life that you have always wanted. So, what is the goal of life? If you could get the life that you always wanted, what exactly would that look like? What is that? If you were told that Jesus could help you get that, wouldn’t you want to try Jesus? What is the problem with that? Jesus is not King in that picture. Jesus is not the goal in that picture? Jesus is not supreme in that picture. Jesus is just a means, a tool to get you to have what you have always wanted. Do you want eternal life? Do you want to live forever where the streets are gold, where there are no problems, where you don’t get sick, go to the doctor...? Of course. Well then, pray this prayer and you get to go to heaven. Do you see the problem with that? In that picture, heaven is not about the glory of God, but our comfort. As long as we have eternal comfort, does it really matter if Jesus is there or not? While that is how some people have tried to “sell” Christianity, that marketing plan is not the gospel. Jesus is not the means to an end. He is not the ticket to get on the train for your best life now. Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and therefore rightly demands supreme commitment.

A. Jesus is worth more than your closest family.

If you are going to be a genuine follower of Christ, then you need understand this: Following Jesus means to value him over everything and everyone. The word “hate” here is not an emotional word. This does not mean to despise or detest. It means to reject one by placing supreme value on the other. Let me give you an example. I shared the gospel with a guy who understood what I was saying. However, he had a dear friend who had died who did not believe the gospel. This guy did not want to believe that his friend had died without hope. He did not want to believe that his friend could be in hell. So, he did not trust Christ because to trust Christ felt like he was choosing Christ over his friend. And he was right. Choosing Christ would be choosing Christ over his friend and over everyone. However, his loyalty to his friend while it felt noble, was foolish, because it was damning him. Your parents, spouse, children, siblings cannot save you. Only Christ can save you.

I was a guest speaker at a church in India and was asked to help baptize some of the new converts that day. One of the young ladies I baptized was going back to her home expecting that all of her clothes and belongings would be in a pile by the street. Her father told her that if she got baptized, that he would remove her from the family because of the shame she was bringing on the family. She loved her family, but loved Jesus so much more that her dad took her love of Jesus as a rejection of him. In a way it was. This is what Jesus is saying. While you may not experience that kind of consequence for coming to faith in Christ and expressing that in baptism, you need to be willing to.

Some have tried to water this down by saying that there are two levels of Christians. There are those who are saved and going to heaven and then there are those who are saved and are at the level of disciples. They try to say that you can be saved and not be a disciple. A disciple is a follower of Christ and only those who are saved are those who trust in Christ and give evidence of that trust by their following Christ. So, this sounds harsh, but it is actually reasonable because Jesus is worth trusting in. He is worth our complete faith. He is worth our worship. When we worship, we are ascribing to Jesus and the Father and the Spirit, the worth, the adoration, the praise they are due. There is no one like God. Therefore, we are to esteem God above all others. God commands us to love and honor our parents, to love our spouse and children, but we don't worship them and we dare not love them above God. When we do that, we have made them idols and your family makes lousy idols. Your family cannot save you. Only Jesus can. Abraham was told by God to offer up his son Isaac on an altar, not because God is sadistic and cruel but because he is worth trusting completely. There were times in Abraham's life when he did not fully grasp that, but he did now and in that moment, he demonstrated that he loved God above all. Since you cannot save yourself...

B. Jesus is worth more than your life.

The history of Christianity is full of stories of people who were asked to denounce Christ or die. Many people in the 1st and 2nd centuries professed faith knowing that this was the likely outcome. Times of persecution have ebbed and flowed, but there is more persecution now in terms of numbers of believers being persecuted than in the history of the church. It does not cost us our life yet, but what if our world does become unified by one economic system and what if a world ruler rises to power and demands your worship in exchange for you to have access to your money and be able to buy and sell. I would love to promise you that believers will not be here because of the rapture will happen before that. I am not confident that I can. Are you willing to follow Jesus if it leads to that? You need to know that following Jesus means that you are willing to die. That is what it means to bear a cross.

C. Jesus is worth more than any sacrifice you have to make.

There is only one reason why someone bears a cross and that is because you know that you are going to die. Do you realize what Jesus is saying here? Following him means that you have to be willing to die for him. He is worth more than any sacrifice you would ever be called upon to make. He is worth more than your family, your job, your home, your comforts, your health, your reputation, your esteem, your toys, your career, or retirement. He is worth any sacrifice you could make because he is so ultimately worthy. There is no sacrifice that I could make that could begin to compare to the value of Christ. Bearing your cross is like dying to yourself. This is what Paul is talking about in Galatians 2.20. The Christian life is glorious because his dream is way better than any of ours. If it were left up to our dreams, we would be satisfied with playing in the mud and rotting leaves in the sewer drain, when Jesus offers us a life that is so meaningful and hard, satisfying and challenging, joyful and demanding, and eternal and free. If you are consistently frustrated and anxious about not getting what you want, do you think that it may

be because you want God to make your puny dream come true, when he is lovingly prying your fingers off of that, so he can give you something better?

In Acts 5 Peter and the apostles were arrested again for speaking publicly about Jesus. This time they were beaten, not just threatened. It wasn't too long ago that Peter wilted under pressure and famously denied that he knew Jesus. He feared losing his life. Now he understand what bearing a cross is about and you get the sense that he was itching to get another chance to demonstrate that he really did love Christ. And he got his chance. In chapter 4 and 5, Peter did not wilt. 5.41 says, *"then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name."*

We sing it, "let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also, the body they may kill, God's truth abideth still, his kingdom is forever."

3. **Count the cost.** (28-32)

Jesus is telling the crowd that there are 3 conditions for discipleship. 1) You have to love me more than anyone and your own life. 2) You have to be willing to bear your own cross and live a life that is marked by dying to yourself. Now comes the third. 3) Count the cost.

There is no arm twisting, sob story, emotional manipulation here at all. Jesus wants you to think about it. He is not desperate for followers. The truth is, he doesn't need us. We need him. But are you willing to follow him? If you are going to build a building, you have to know how much it is going to cost so you can figure out ahead of time, how much this is going to be. Some of the stories I read about people trapped in student debt revealed that people took out loans they did not take the time to understand. That is foolish! If you cannot handle the payment, don't do it. If you cannot handle the pressure, don't do it. If you don't want to give up your claim to rule your own life, don't follow Jesus. Count the cost, not only in resources, but what king goes into a battle without knowing the size of his army and the size of the enemies' army? A king who will not be king very long. Going into battle is serious.

J.E.B. Stuart was the cavalry commander of Robert E. Lee's confederate army. The cavalry functioned as the eyes and ears whose responsibility was to keep Lee informed of the troop movements and size of the northern army. In the early days of the battle of Gettysburg, Stuart was absent and Lee did not know all that his enemy was doing. He was outnumbered, out maneuvered and out positioned by the Union army. On the third day, Lee ordered General Pickett's men to advance. 12,000 men began to cross a nearly mile-long field in order to take the fight to the Yankees. Pickett's charge was a full-scale disaster. The civil war changed at Gettysburg. The glory of uniforms, marches, drum cadence, drills and marching all fade when you have to explain to thousands of widows, mothers and children that their men will not be returning home because you failed to count the cost. It would be better not to go into battle, than to go arrogantly and ignorantly. What is true about a battle is true about following Christ. Before you say that you are in, count the cost.

What does this say about our understanding of the gospel and how we share the gospel?
What does this say about how we think about children who profess faith in Christ?

4. **Are you in?** (33)

Is there anything that you are unwilling to give up? For some of you this is a hypothetical question. Are you willing to give up your claim to anything for the sake of Christ? You can only answer, I think so. By God's grace, yes. But for others of you, there is something in your life that you do not want to give up now. But in order to follow Christ, you have to renounce that sin, that illicit habit or relationship. Jesus plays for keeps. He will only take disciples, not fans. Fans are like tasteless salt. It is thrown away.

Conclusion: (34-35)