

Jesus' Greatest Hits

The Unfinished Tower & The Unprepared King

Part 5 – June 3, 2007

[VIDEO: CONSTRUCTION SITE]

Ever start a project and just not finish it? Maybe it cost more money than you thought it would. Maybe it took more time than you were willing to give. Or, maybe it just stopped being fun. In the parable of the Unfinished Tower and the Unprepared King, Jesus urges us to calculate the cost of true discipleship, and to carefully consider what it takes to get the job done.

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." - *Luke 14:25-35 NIV*

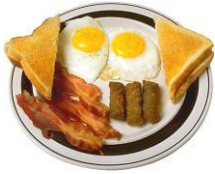
In every movie about Jesus' life, there's a second act (in the middle) where He's really popular. He's teaching them, healing them, feeding them, and the crowds love Him! That's when I want to stop watching. I like *popular* Jesus - Jesus the "superstar". But I know the inevitable is coming in act three.

This parable takes place at the height of His celebrity. "Large crowds were traveling with Him" to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem. They were so excited, so eager, because they *really* believed He was the Messiah; and they just knew He was going to establish His Kingdom at the feast (and deliver them from Rome).



And then Jesus does it ... He begins act three! With one shocking statement after another, He thins this "heard" by separating the onlookers and the admirers from the *true* disciples, because He's calling committed followers, not casual followers.

A lot of these folks were uncommitted followers. They had an *interest* in Jesus, and a *positive attitude* toward Jesus, but they hadn't devoted their lives to Jesus.



It's like the chicken and the pig who pooled their resources, and offered bacon and eggs to feed the poor. The hen was making a contribution, but that ol' pig was making a *total* commitment!

Q: Am I making a contribution or a commitment?

Jesus says if you don't hate your mom, hate your dad, hate your wife, hate your husband, hate your kids, hate your brother, hate your sister, and even hate yourself, you can't be a disciple. That's a lotta hatin'!

Q: Aren't we supposed to *honor* our father and mother (*Luke 18:20*), and *love* our wives as Christ loved the church (*Eph. 5:25*)?

Q: First, Jesus says to *love* your neighbor as yourself (*Mark 12:31*); and now He says to *hate* your neighbor as yourself?



In the Jewish culture of Jesus' day, the word "hate" wasn't used exclusively to describe an emotion. It was also used to express a "lesser love" or "lesser devotion" to those you cared about. So, Jesus isn't talking about emotion, but submission. He must be first among our loyalties.

Whenever the advice or authority of a close relation conflicts with Christ, a *true* disciple chooses Christ. It's stated and translated more clearly in Matthew, chapter ten:

Anyone who loves his father or mother **more than me** is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter **more than me** is not worthy of me; and anyone who doesn't take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. - *Matthew 10:37-38 NIV*

Rabbis demanded great respect, but in Jewish tradition only *God* could command the wholesale devotion that Jesus demands here.

Jesus lists three things true discipleship will cost: First, it's my utmost loyalty ... and secondly, it's my very life! He says we must "carry our cross and follow Him"; eerie foreshadowing. And it sure doesn't bring up happy thoughts of roasting marshmallow 'round a campfire and singing kumbaya!



Crucifixions were a familiar sight. This crowd had seen the condemned carrying the horizontal beam to the upright stake where they'd be tortured to death amid a jeering mob. Jesus doesn't want a commitment that expects only blessings. To *live* for Christ, we must *die* to self - living sacrifices. He must be first among our priorities.

Whenever *my* will crosses *His* will, I must be willing to surrender my ambitions, image, comfort, and pride.



It costs my loyalty, my life, and [verse 33]: Everything else! Are you starting to get the picture? All it costs is everything! There's *no* room for compromise or concession. You either give your life to him completely, or keep it for yourself. If He's not Lord of all He's not Lord *at* all.

To put a person, possession, or plan above the Lord is idolatry! And the cost of discipleship is tested again and again, and in our weakness we do not always put Him first. But a "bacon and eggs" disciple, will *always* regret, repent, and realign.

There's a commercial where a guy is getting the name "Donna" tattooed in a heart, on his arm. Halfway through he asks how much it'll cost. It's \$50, and he's only got \$41. Cut to a sidewalk, his girlfriend Donna is storming off. They zoom in on the tattoo; it reads: I love Don

Jesus wants us to count the cost *before* we make the commitment. And He gives us two short stories to illustrate this:



1. The carpenter who gave up his building (towers were common in vineyards and orchards to protect produce).

He lays the foundation, he quits, and he's ridiculed.

Here's the thing: Christ is our foundation. If we begin to build a life on Jesus, and then abandon Him, not only does our faith look foolish, our Savior is slandered, and God is dishonored. The onlookers in our culture see the half-built hypocrisy and because of it, call into question the credibility, authority, reliability, integrity, and trustworthiness of the Gospel.



2. [And then there's] The King who gave up his battle.

He has half the men; 10,000 versus 20,000. He's going to need a strategic plan, determination, and perseverance. It's not only his life hanging in the balance, it's also the lives of all those he impacts, influences, and inspires.

Jesus is very clear regarding those who abandon Him as their foundation, and desert Him in the midst of the battle.

Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. – *Luke 14:34-35 NIV*

Q: How do you know if something is salty?

A: It makes people thirsty.

Q: Do you cause others to thirst for the Lord?



No one expects you to construct a mansion, but they do need to see you swinging a hammer.

- It's not about ability, it's about willingness

Q: Is progress being made on your foundation?

Q: Do they see you marching onward as to war?



When water evaporates around the Dead Sea, white crystals form on the shore. Some are salt, others are gypsum. They look identical. But, what was known as "salt without the flavor" had no useful purpose.

True salt was mixed with manure while composting, to preserve it for the soil as fertilizer ... the gypsum couldn't even do that.

And from this, Jesus makes a strikingly blunt point.

If you're an uncommitted *follower*, someone who's lack of devotion diminishes the message of the Gospel, someone who looks like, but doesn't act like a disciple, then you ain't fit for ... Manure is such a safe word. I wish I could say it in a way that would impact *you* the way Jesus impacted His listeners that day.

Jesus was an skilled at shocking people out of complacency, and intentionally offending the religious dead-beats. Poo-poo? Dung? Fecal matter? Uh-uh, sorry they just don't cut it. If you received Christ as Savior but refuse to follow Him as Lord, then you ain't fit for shhhh; we can't say that word in church.

- It's time for you to regret, repent, and realign!

TRUE OR FALSE

Let's see how well you've been listening; answer *true* or *false* when I ask the questions. In this passage, we've learned that:

1. Jesus is more into big crowds than big commitments.
2. God *longs* for the genuine and *loathes* the counterfeit.
3. It doesn't matter if we split our loyalties just a little.
4. Discipleship that costs nothing is probably worth nothing.