

# Counting the Cost

by George Kulp

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*The sermon emphasizes the necessity of counting the cost of discipleship and the importance of seeking true fulfillment in God rather than worldly possessions.*

**Scripture:** Mark 10:17-31, John 3:16, Acts 16:31, Philippians 3:7

**Topics:** "Eternal Life", "Materialism"

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## Description

George Kulp preaches on the story of the rich young ruler who approached Jesus, seeking eternal life. Despite being morally upright and a church member, the young man was unsatisfied and sought further guidance from Jesus. When Jesus revealed that he must sell all his possessions and follow Him to inherit eternal life, the young man turned away sorrowful, unable to part with his earthly treasures. Kulp emphasizes the importance of prioritizing spiritual wealth over material possessions, highlighting the eternal rewards of following Christ and the necessity of fully surrendering to Him for salvation.

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## Transcript

"What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life.?"

Mark 10:17

Our text is the language of a soul that has everything the world seeks after, but lacks the one thing needful. There is no legitimate need but God has for it a supply. For the eye there is light; for the ear there is sound; for hunger there is bread; for thirst there is water. Men, in their pursuit of satisfaction, are like children. The child is satisfied with the toy of today, but on the morrow will discard it for a new one, and will throw that to one side for a still newer. So men turn from one worldly pleasure to another. Apparently satisfied, they seem pleased for awhile, and then are found in pursuit of something new. All the restlessness around us is but a manifestation of the fact that man is seeking for rest in the places where it cannot be found.

Search through the pages of history; read them carefully and learn this lesson -- Man is prone to seek rest everywhere else than where God has provided it. All the world provides is but a failure and men living in purple and luxury have confessed their miserable condition. Tiberius lived in a summer palace outside of Rome. He had everything that an obsequious Senate could provide -- wealth, power, pleasure, luxury -- all his. Every desire gratified; every thought anticipated. One day the Senate wrote him a letter asking "if there was anything they could do that would add to his pleasure, or increase his happiness?" Mark the

answer that came back from this spoiled child of fortune: "Conscript Fathers, what to write you, or what not to write you, may all the gods and goddesses destroy me, worse than I feel they daily are destroying me, if I know." Sad comment on the ability of the world to satisfy a soul

George Gordon Byron was, as the world goes, well born. His genius was acknowledged -- England read what he wrote and crowned him with laurel in their admiration. He was sought after, winned, dined, and feted, and yet was the most miserable creature on God's footstool. Pollock in his "Course of Time" has this to say of Lord Byron:

"He heard every trump of fame -- drank every cup of joy -- drank early, deeply drank, drank draughts that common millions might have qualified -- then died of thirst, because there was no more to drink." We take issue with that last statement of the poet. He died of thirst, true enough, but it was because he never sought the right source to quench it.

Wesley, the poet of Methodism, wrote:

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want,

More than all In Thee I find;

Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,

Heal the sick, and lead the blind."

Just before his death, which occurred in his thirty-fourth year, Byron, the petted, the admired, the surfeited, wrote these words:

"I'm in the sere and yellow leaf,

The flowers, the fruits of life are gone,

The worn, the canker, and the grief,

Are mine alone."

He was a genius stranded, wrecked, and ruined because he neglected the provision God made for every man.

Captain Gardiner was a wit of London, his company sought after, in his presence care seemed to fade away, the joke leaped lightly to his lips and men envied Gardiner. But see him in the hour of midnight, when he is alone with God and with his conscience. As he sits in the room, a little dog passes through and this careless, envied pet of London society points to it, and says: "I wish I were that dog!" The soul needs something more than chaff to feed upon. Of the man who said: "I will pull down my barns, and I will build greater, and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease -- eat, drink, and be merry," -- of that man God said, "Thou fool!" Fool for thinking a soul could be fed on the contents of a barn. Fool for degrading his soul to the level of a beast. Fool for neglecting the provision God had made to satisfy him.

Let us look at the picture of our text, drawn by the Divine Artist. Look at the man -- not at some such specimen as modern society turns out, something "tailor-made," whose highest ambition might be to

adorn a fashion plate, or dawdle away the time in midnight functions of "society," but a man with aspirations after God, a soul crying out for something that will satisfy. "The soul is the measure of the man." "Where shall we bury you?" asked a friend of Socrates. "Wherever you please, if you can catch me," was the reply. They might have the body, but not the man. Our text is the cry of the man, the soul. "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

The man asking the question came to the right One -- he is in the right Presence. He who spake as man never spake delights to meet such hungry, inquiring souls, and ever points them aright. But will the man pay the price? "If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments. Thou knowest them." Quick as a flash he replies, "Which?" And Jesus said: "Thou shalt do no murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Honor thy father and thy mother, and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And the young man said unto Him: "All these things have I kept from my youth up." He was a model man; let us study him awhile.

First, He was young, but he came to Jesus. The majority of the young men of today reject Jesus. It is estimated that forty millions of people in this country never attend church. My authority is "The Sunday School Times," of October, 1908. A few years ago the Young Men's Christian Association of Battle Creek, Michigan, put a young man at the front of every saloon in the city between the hours of seven and eight in the evening, to count the number of men who entered, and to note especially the young, and they reported the young men far in the majority, giving the actual figures. The cars that on Sundays carry passengers to the resorts, to the baseball games, to the adjoining or neighboring cities, are filled with young men.

The average young man of today does not want God. "Salvation is for the aged, the sick, and for women," so they say. But the young man of our text wanted God so earnestly that he came running to Jesus, and kneeled down and presented the one burden of his heart -- a cry for eternal life.

He was a moral young man, far ahead of the average young man, American born, of today. Listen! The young German who comes to this country is respectful to his parents, and to the aged. Deference is shown in every move that he makes in their presence. The young Irishman is a model of respect to his parents; it is ingrained in every fiber of his being. But listen to the young American of today, as he speaks of his father as the "old man," or he may condescend to call him "the governor." When he deigns to mention his mother, it is as "the old woman." This young man of our text looked Jesus squarely in the face and said: "This commandment (honor thy father and thy mother) have I kept from my youth up." Where are your young men of today who would not stand condemned in the presence of this man of our text, and yet he confessed: "I need God; I need to be taught; I am not satisfied. What shall I do?"

He was a moral young man, clean in his life, clean in his thoughts. "All these have I kept" -- but his morality did not satisfy him. Morality is a good thing, as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. Henry Ward Beecher said: "Morality is oftentimes only another name for decency in sinning." Morality will not give a passport to the skies -- will not save. You may be a good parent, a good neighbor, a good citizen, and yet be lost; be eternally damned. Your outward life may be such that the law can never touch you, the finger never be pointed at you, and yet in your heart be the blackness, the vileness, that will sink you to the lowest Hell.

The man of the text was a church member, a ruler in the synagogue, a pillar in the Church, and yet not satisfied. "What must I do to inherit eternal life? My church-membership does not do the business. Lord, show me my need." In one thing he was a type of many church members of the present day -- in his

unsatisfied state. The late Dr. Keen said that seventy-five per cent of the church members he has called upon to pray with in their dying hour were unsaved; he had to pray with them that they might get ready. Membership in the church will never save; in fact, an unsaved person in the church is in greater danger and worse off than an unsaved person out of the church. Simon the sorcerer was baptized into the church but his heart was not right in the sight of God, neither had he part nor lot in the Lord's matter.

A few years ago I was in a grove-meeting in Illinois. The Spirit of God worked mightily; men and women were saved; old heart-burnings were canceled; and a Methodist church was built as a result. In calling from house to house I would ask of the spiritual condition of the folks and would be answered, in a number of instances, "Been in the church twenty years" -- "joined the church fifteen years ago." The man of the text was an official member in good standing, and yet not satisfied; no assurance of salvation. What must I do.? What lack I yet?

Jesus told him what he had to do -- just as He will tell every honest soul. It will not do for you to say: "I do not know what is the matter." "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness." You shall know, if you follow on to know. I have seen people praying earnestly and have felt much encouraged, believing they were going through, when all at once down would go their heads, and they would stop praying. What was the matter -- did they know? Aye, they knew well -- they had "run up against something," and then they scream, and cry, and yell -- all a sign of their resisting and struggling, and they never will get peace until they yield.

The Spirit is always faithful -- He does tell us. Listen. "One thing thou lackest." One thing? Will that keep one from eternal life? Jesus said it. ONE THING thou lackest. Well, is the gate as strait, and the way as narrow now as then? Aye, just the same. It costs just as much to get real Bible salvation today as ever in the past.

The "one thing" may be very important. Naaman was rich, honorable, next to the king, but he was a leper -- he lacked one thing -- health. Lacking that, he was doomed.

Here is a caravan crossing the desert. They have pearls, gold, bread, dates -- they lack only one thing -- water -- but, lacking that, they are doomed.

"One thing thou lackest; go sell that which thou hast and give to the poor, and come follow Me, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven." Now he knows the terms; he knows what it will cost to get eternal life; in plain words he is told -- part with everything that stands between you and life. Will he do it? Will he pay the price? I see him counting the cost. He looks at the things he has. The devil is a master painter; he magnifies our possessions when we are called upon to give them up. They never appeared so great, so valuable, as now. A ruler in the synagogue, a man of reputation among his people, a possessor of wealth -- and now to give it all up, part with it all, SELL out -- to get the prize!

And then on the other hand, follow this Man! He says Himself, "Foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." He came to His own and His own received Him not. The rulers have not believed on Him. Shall I? Shall I give up all -- sell out -- part with all these?

The angels of Heaven are looking over the battlements of the Celestial City, interested in the conflict. A soul is about to make a decision for weal or woe -- for life or death, and for all eternity. Look at him, he turns away sorrowful, for he is very rich. No wonder Jesus said: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of Heaven"! His affections are set on things of earth, his soul is chained down to

material things, he can turn away -- he can break the chain -- but he WILL Not. Right here let us notice; he made a mistake by not considering "and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven." Not that it does not pay now to follow Jesus, to sell out. Real Bible salvation pays NOW -- pays HERE. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life till at now is, and of that which is to come.

An old peddler, well saved, but in close circumstances, sat on a stoop one day, his pack by his side, while a fine-showing, spanking team of bays went by, driven by the leading saloon-keeper of the town. A man who knew the peddler, and who often heard him testify in meetings, said to him at this juncture: "Look there. See that fellow? He rolls in luxury, drives the finest team in town, lives in one of the finest homes. He is a sinner out and out. You are a Christian. You say your Father owns the cattle on a thousand hills. But look at you, and then look at that fellow. Who has the best of it?" The peddler looked at his pack. He knew he was poor in this world's goods, but, looking up in the face of the questioner, he replied: "When you think of my circumstances, compare Heaven with them. What then?" Aye, he was right. Take in this life and the life to come -- the child of God shall inherit the earth and the "treasures hereafter."

"A tent or a cottage, why should be care?

They're building a palace for him over there

Tho' exiled from home, yet still he can sing,

All glory to God, I'm the child of a King."

Jesus put before the young man the treasures hereafter and they were a part of the reward. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despised the shame," and He would have us like Moses of old, having "respect unto the recompense of the reward." What if man labors here, suffers here, battles here; what if he endures the contradiction of sinners here -- aye, resists even unto blood? In the midst of it all, he can scatter dismay among devils, astonish Hell, cheer the saints, and make Heaven's welkin ring, as in all his trials he sings aloud:

"My rest is in Heaven, my rest is not here.

Then why should I murmur at trials severe?

Be hushed, my dark spirit, the worst that can come

But shortens thy journey and hastens thee home."

Amen, and when he cannot enter upon the stirring scenes of life; when owing to age and the infirmities that accompany it, the firing-line is only a precious memory; when he cannot sing, nor testify, nor preach, as in days gone by; when he knows that he is decreasing, while the younger, called of God, are increasing; then, bless God, he can revel in the prospect of his future possessions, and say:

"I am thinking of home, of my Father's House,

Where the many bright mansions be,

Of the City whose streets are all paved with pure gold,

Of its jasper walls, pure and fair to behold,

which the righteous alone ever see.

"O home, sweet home, sweet home,

I am thinking and longing for home.

Beyond the pearly gates many loved ones wait

For the weary ones who journey home."

Thank God, in the Christian's inheritance there is not only present rest, but there is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away.

It pays to sell out now -- to part with everything that stands between us and God. An old Scotchman was on his death bed, about to take his departure for the better country -- that is, an heavenly. In his lifetime he had been very generous, giving away much of this world's goods -- sending on his possessions ahead. His rich, unsaved brother stood by his side and, as he looked at him, he said: "Sandy, what did I always tell you? Your religion has made a pauper of you." "Pauper?" said the dying man, "call me a pauper? My brother, I have a Kingdom I have not begun on yet." And it's true. Bless God, we have riches untold here, and an eternal Kingdom hereafter.

"Do you get a glimpse of Jesus?" said the friends of a saint just on the border of the other world. "Away with your glimpses! For forty years I've had a full look at Him." Why? Because he had sold out, had parted with everything between him and God. "These things are preached that ye might believe and that believing ye might have eternal life through His name." "The gift of God is eternal life." You may have it and have it now, but you must pay the price -- never any more than now; never any less. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel."

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