

Count the Costs

by Stephen Kaung

Stephen Kaung emphasizes the importance of counting the cost of discipleship and the necessity of total commitment to Christ above all else.

Duration: 55:28

Scripture: Matthew 22:37-39, Luke 14:25-35, Ephesians 6:2, Hebrews 11:24-26

Topics: "Discipleship", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of counting the cost before following the Lord. He uses the example of Abraham being given three days to think over sacrificing his son as a reminder that God does not rush us into decisions. The speaker also mentions the illustration of building a tower, where one must sit down and count the cost before starting, or else they may not be able to finish it. The message is that in the spiritual warfare of the Christian life, we must be willing to give our all, just as Jesus did, in order to be victorious. The speaker concludes by stating that discipleship requires forsaking all and choosing to love and follow the Lord above all else.

Transcript

Will you please turn to the Gospel according to Luke. Luke, chapter fourteen. We'll read from verse twenty-five through verse thirty-five.

Luke, chapter fourteen, verse twenty-five. And great crowds went with him. And turning round, he said to them, If any man come to me, and shall not hate his own father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yea, and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple.

And whoever does not carry his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you desirous of building a tower, does not first sit down, and count the cost, if he have what he needed, to complete it, in order that, having laid the foundation of it, and not being able to finish it, all who see it, do not begin to mock at him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going on his way to engage in war with another king, does not sitting down first, take counsel, whether he is able with ten thousand, to meet him coming against him with twenty thousand.

And if not, while he is not yet afar off, having sent an embassy, he asks for terms of peace. Thus then, every one of you, who forsakes not all that is his own, cannot be my disciple. Salt then is good, but if the salt also has become savourless, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is proper, neither for land, nor for

duck, it is cast out.

He that is ears to hear, let him hear. Let's have a word of prayer. Dear Lord, as we continue in thy presence, our hearts are open to thee.

We desire to hear thy own voice. Lord, we are tired of hearing our own voice, of hearing people's voice. But Lord, we long to hear thy voice.

So do pray that thou will cleanse our heart, our ear, our whole being, that we may be able to hear what thou hast to say to thy people. Dear Lord, our heart's desire is thou should have the first place in our lives. We want to follow thee.

We want to be where thou art. Lord, have mercy upon us. We commit this time into thy hands.

We pray that thou will bless this time and make it something that will continue to eternity. We ask in thy precious name. Amen.

The Lord seems to put upon my heart on this matter of count the cost. I think, brothers and sisters, we have all counted his blessing. But have we ever count the cost of following our Lord Jesus? To me, I feel this is a very important thing that we must do in our Christian life.

And I do look to the Lord that he will open our hearts and understanding and be willing to sit down and count the cost. You know, our Lord Jesus one day was walking and great crowds followed after him. As you read the scripture, you'll find it is not just one crowd.

Great crowds, multitudes, thousands of people are following the Lord. But to our estimate, this will be the sign of success. Today, we look for crowds.

We measure success or failure of a person by how many people are following him. How many people he's able to draw. And today, people try every means to court the favor of the people.

But our Lord Jesus is very different. When great crowds follow him, he turns around and he says to them hard words, impossible words. As if he's driving the crowds away.

Why? Because our Lord is not looking for quantity. What he looks for is quality. He wants those who can satisfy his heart, who can fulfill his purpose.

Not just numbers, but reality. When you hear what he said, you almost feel that probably you have heard wrong. Can one who is so loving say such unloving words? If anyone come to me and shall not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yea, and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple.

Have you heard right? Probably you would think probably there is a mistake in translation. I look through a number of versions, and every version comes out the same. There is no mistake.

Is our Lord mad? Doesn't the word of God said, honor your parents? And this is the first commandment with promise. Isn't it the word said, love your wives? Isn't it the will of God that we shall love our children? We shall love our brothers and sisters? And is it not true that God wants us to love ourselves for his sake? Not to hurt ourselves. Now why is it that our Lord shall say such opposite words? When we believe in the Lord Jesus, he does it all.

He does not require us to do anything. He has finished the work of salvation. It is grace.

All he asks for is that we come, and believe, and receive, and it's yours. No condition. But here when our Lord Jesus is talking about disciples, you find he lays down impossible conditions.

Humanly impossible. Brothers and sisters, we are. Believers.

We believe in him as our personal savior. And by believing him, our sins are forgiven. We are given a new life.

It is all free. It is grace. Nothing required of us.

We receive everything. Now after we believe in the Lord Jesus, do we continue to come to follow him? Now if we continue to come to follow him, then you'll find our Lord Jesus has a calling to us. A challenge.

He challenges. If you come to me, he said, there is a condition you must fulfill. To believe is free.

Grace. You receive life from above. There is nothing better than that.

But to follow the Lord, to be a disciple, it is a condition. And only by being his disciples, the life he has given us will fulfill its purpose. Our Lord Jesus says, if anyone, no exception, if anyone come to me and hate, not.

Now brothers and sisters, when we hear the word hate, we think back. Immediately there is a rejection in our heart. How can we hate? But we have to remember, hate or love are only emotional expressions.

If people do not know how to hate, they will never know how to love. God loves sinners to the extent of giving up his only begotten son. There is no greater love than that.

And yet, God hates sin. Sin. So brothers and sisters, the word hate or the word love, yin itself is neutral.

It depends on whether you are able to hate what needs to be hated, or love what needs to be loved, and not do the wrong thing. Furthermore, this matter of love or hate is also a matter of comparison. When you compare two things, and you have to choose between these two things, then you have to make a conclusion.

What to hate, and what to love. You remember our Lord Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, no one can serve two masters. You either love the one, or you hate the other.

You cannot serve God, and serve mammon at the same time. If you love God, you hate mammon. If you love mammon, you hate God.

In 1 John chapter 2, if you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you. In other words, when we are faced with choice, then it is a time when you make the right reaction. What to hate, that is, what to despise.

What to forsake, and what to choose. What to love, what to embrace, and what to follow. So here you find our Lord Jesus in this matter of discipleship.

Now brothers and sisters, oftentimes we think that the Great Commission is evangelizing. You remember in Matthew chapter 28, our Lord Jesus gave the Great Commission, and it is commonly understood that

the Great Commission is the Lord wants us to go to the whole world, to evangelize the world. But you read carefully what the Lord says.

He doesn't say evangelize, He says disciple. Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And enjoin them to follow all that I have taught you.

And I will be with you to the end of the world. We are going to have a baptism immediately afterwards. But do you know what baptism means? Why being baptized is not enough if I just believe.

The Bible said if you believe you are saved. Then why should I be baptized? Baptism is the door to discipleship. When you are baptized, you buried yourself.

You come to the Lord and give yourself to Him. Acknowledging Him from now on as your Lord. Not only your Savior, but your Lord.

And that opens the door of following Him, of obeying all that He has commanded us. Brothers and sisters, are we following the Lord? If we are not following the Lord, why should we be here? Just believe and you are saved. Eternity is secured.

Why bother reading the Bible? Why bother praying? Why bother meeting, assembling together? Why bother following the Lord? It is not because you want to be a disciple of the Lord. And discipleship is His purpose. His purpose is not just saving us.

To fill heaven with people. No. The reason why He saves us, that we may be like Him.

He wants to disciple us, to train us, to bring us to be like Him. That is His purpose. That is the reason why, after we believe in the Lord Jesus, we do not just stop, but we press on.

We continue to follow the Lord. Why? That we may be like Him. But this is not a small thing.

So the Lord, at the very outset, He does not want us to be not knowing what we are doing. He wants us to know from the very beginning, the full impact of being His disciples. He said, listen carefully.

If anyone, any man come to Me, and shall not hate his own father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yea, and his own wife too, he cannot be My disciples. It does not mean that our Lord Jesus wants us to hate our father and mother. No.

Look at our Lord Himself, how He loved His mother. Even when He was on the cross, suffering, He did not think of Himself. He thought of His mother.

He asked His disciple John to take care of His mother. And yet, at the same time, when his mother stepped in to demand of him something outside of the will of the Heavenly Father, he said, woman, my time is not yet come. That word woman is a dear word, not a harsh word.

And yet the Lord said, I have to wait for my father's time. I cannot be directed by man, even by my mother. I have to be directed by my Heavenly Father.

When His mother and His brothers came to Him, great crowds were sitting there, they could not get to Him. So we're saying to Him, Your mother and Your brothers are there, they want to talk to You. Our Lord just looked around and said, who is my mother? Who is my brother? Who is my sister? Those who obey

the word of God.

That's hate. Love and hate work together. Love when it is right to love.

Hate when it is right to hate. When the Lord said, you must know how to hate the dearest to you. You must know how to hate your long life.

These people are your life. So the Lord said, and your life too. You must know to hate yourselves, and whatever is dearest to you, in order to follow me.

Otherwise, when you think of yourselves, when your brothers and sisters began to think differently from what the Lord wants you to do, or when your wife or husband is standing in the way of the Lord, or your father and mother, or even yourself, what will you do? Will you love the Lord more than anything else? Will you allow the Lord to be the first? Or do you yield to those that are dearest to you, and even to your own flesh? What will you do? You remember, even in the Old Testament times, when God called Abraham, he said, leave your own kindreds, your own city, and go to where I want you to go. Abraham, Abraham, talk to his father. I believe his father will try to persuade him not to do such a foolish thing, not knowing where to go.

And when Abraham insisted, the father said, all right, I will take you there. And he took Lot too. He took the initiative, and the result was, they stayed in terror.

No word of God coming to Abraham until Tara died. And God spoke the same word to him, emphasizing, and your father. Brothers and sisters, there is a choice you have to make before you follow the Lord.

Otherwise, your following will be in vain. Sooner or later, you will say, this is too hard. Who can hear it? And many of his disciples departed.

Remember Moses. In Hebrews chapter 11, we are told, Moses, when he was 40, he had to make a choice. Whether he will continue with the pleasure of sins in Egypt, or to suffer with the people of God.

Whether he is willing to bear the reproach of Christ, or enjoy all the riches of Egypt. He had to make a choice. Thank God he made the right choice, because he saw the unseen one.

Dear brothers and sisters, our Lord is so glorious. Oftentimes, we talk about, we sing about, the glory of the Lord, but what is glory? Where is his glory? If he is not all, if he is not first, if he does not have the supremacy, if he does not have all in your life, then where is his glory? The glory of God is that he is supreme. He is above all.

He is worthy to have of all. That's the glory of God. And it is as if the Lord is afraid we may be mistaken in what he says.

Because he says, hate your father and mother, brother and sister, wife, husband, children, even your own life, if you want to be my disciple. Now he, I think he knows us. He is afraid that we may mistake what he says.

Thinking that naturally we are to hate our father and mother, and so forth. No. So, he adds an explanation.

He said, and whosoever does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciples. In other words, when your father and mother do not constitute a cross to you, you love them. You should not hate

them.

That's the will of God. God wants us to love our parents. If your wife or your husband is not a crossroad with Christ.

Christ goes one way, and your wife or husband go another way. If they do not constitute a cross, then you love your husband. You love your wife.

If your children, brothers and sisters, do not become a cross to you, then it is natural. It is of God that we shall love them with all our hearts. And if yourself is not in conflict, in contradiction, in opposition with Christ, then you should love your own lives.

Take care of your life, because this is the body that belongs to Christ. But when it crosses Christ. Now, who is to be crossed out? Think of that.

You or Christ? This is your cross. Cross is when the will of God, and your will, or the will of those who are dearest to you, are at odds, are enemies, then a cross is formed. Are you willing to take up your cross and follow Christ? Follow the Lord.

Cross is something we can choose. You can take it up. You can lay it down.

You can bear it, or you can bypass it. It's your choice. So the Lord said, what it really means is simply this.

If you want to be his disciples, are you willing to put yourself absolutely, completely, without any reservation? Keep yourself to him, so that he's able to have free hand to make you like him. Isn't that wonderful? Cross is not rosy. Today, people put their cross around their neck as an ornament.

But when Christ died on the cross, it's suffering. When your flesh suffers, you want one way, and the Lord asks for another way. Your flesh suffers.

It is as if death, but blessed death, because there is resurrection. No death, no resurrection. No cross, no crown.

Brothers and sisters, there's discipleship. That's the condition. The Lord laid it down at the very outset.

He does not want us to go on following him and then discover it's too difficult, too much, and let him. So what does the Lord ask of us? Here you'll find the great crowds following him, coming to him. The Lord said, this is not a matter of emotion at the moment.

This is not a matter of impulse. The Lord said, no, this is a matter you need to consider seriously. Sit down and count the cost.

Dear brothers and sisters, we who have been following the Lord all these years, have we ever sat down and counted the cost? This is the advice of the Lord. Don't rush into it. Don't be impulsive.

Sit down. You know, when God asked Abraham to offer his beloved son, he gave Abraham three days journey to think over. He does not rush Abraham.

He told Abraham very clearly, give me your son, your only son, your beloved son. The Lord did not say do it immediately. Gave him three days journey.

To think over. That's the Lord. Now why is it this matter is so serious? Our Lord used two illustrations.

One illustration is, he said, if you are building a tower, you should first sit down and count the cost. Whether you are able to finish that tower. Because if you rush into it, without thinking carefully about it, you may lay the foundation, and yet you're not able to finish it.

And everybody that sees it will mock at you. You begin, but you cannot finish. Now, brothers and sisters, do you know that we are building a tower? Not the Tower of Babel.

But we are building a tower. A tower. What is meant by a tower? You remember when man first showed their rebelling against God by building a tower? Why did they build a tower? They say we should make a name of ourselves.

Tower is connected with name. That the name may spread. Now you remember the Proverbs chapter 18 verse 10.

We sing that song. The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run into it and it's safe.

And in David's footnote, the word safe can be translated unapproachable. Unapproachable. The name of the Lord is a strong tower.

What tower are we building? Are we building the Tower of Babel to spread our own name? Are we building the Tower of God that His name may be known throughout the world? A testimony. That is what we are living for. Brothers and sisters, how can we spread the name of the Lord without putting ourselves completely, absolutely, unconditionally surrender, abandon to Him? It takes our all.

If you want to reserve something, keep that something, you won't be able to finish it. So sit down and count the cost. Christian life is not only a life of testimony, exalting the name of the Lord.

Christian life is a warfare. So the Lord said if a king is going to fight against another king, the other king came with 20,000 men, but he is only willing to give 10,000 men. In other words, he wants to reserve that something.

Then the Lord said, it is better that you ask for the term of peace because you will be defeated. In order to fight that battle, you have to be willing to sacrifice your all. No reservation in spiritual warfare.

This is what it is. Our Lord Jesus gave His all in that spiritual warfare. Even His life, and He triumphed.

If we do not give our all, we will not be able to win the battle. We will be a victim instead of victor. Brothers and sisters, Christian life is a serious matter.

I spoke to myself again and again. Can I lay back? Can I be complacent? Can I expect an easy time? If I follow the Lord, am I ready, prepared to pay any cost? So, our Lord concludes by saying, thus then, every one of you who forsakes not all, that is his all, cannot be my disciples. That explains the two parables.

You have to give your all. You cannot make any reservation for other purpose. The Lord is all, or the Lord is not the Lord at all.

Whatever is your own, forsake it for the Lord. That's the condition of discipleship. He is asking the impossible.

With man, it is impossible, but with God, all things are possible. Brothers and sisters, do not think that we can do it. Nobody can do it.

It's only when the love of Christ constrains you, then it is done. We need to see the Lord. We need to see the glory of the Lord.

Only when we see the Lord, his glory, his love, his giving all, then we are constrained to give back to him our all, because it's his. Brothers and sisters, as you read church history, biographies of those who give them all to the Lord, you know what they say. Cost? You cannot talk about cost.

This is nothing. How can you say cost, when you think of the Lord? Nothing. He deserves it.

It's all his. He gave and he takes. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Then our Lord concludes, sought then is good. You remember Matthew 5, ye are the sought of the earth. Who are the sought of the earth? Those who bear the cross, character of Christ.

You have the Beatitudes first. In the Beatitudes, you see the character of Christ began to characterize the disciples. And that character of Christ in the disciples is the sought.

There is a taste. Different. Strong.

A sought. We who follow the Lord, who are his disciples? We are the sought of the earth. We have a special taste.

The world does not have. And sought is so necessary. All the offerings must have sought in it.

In other words, sought is that which preserves from corruption. Sought gives you a taste, a heavenly taste. That's what we are.

But if the sought has lost his flavor. How can a sought lose his flavor? When you dilute it, dilute it, dilute it to the extent then it becomes soughtless. And when it is soughtless, what can be done to make it seasoned? It is not proper to put in the land.

It is not proper to throw it in the dunk. It is cast out. Brothers and sisters, the land here speaks of the kingdom.

When the kingdom shall come, are you able to reign with Christ for a thousand years? That's the land you inherit, the promised land. What is the dunk? The dunk is where you throw away things. That's Hades.

It's no use. Forever it's useless. But brothers and sisters, we who are believers, we cannot be thrown into Hades, into hell, forever useless.

No, it is not proper to do that. But neither is it proper if we have lost our taste to enter into the kingdom and reign with Christ. Then what will happen to us at the coming of the Lord? Cast out.

The Bible said, cast out into outer darkness and there will be the gnashing of teeth. In other words, you will regret that you have held back from the Lord. But thank God, you are still saved, but barely saved.

Dear brothers and sisters, so after our Lord has said all these things, He said, He that has ears to hear, let him hear. For the Spirit says to the churches, let him that have ear to hear, hear it. Shall we pray? Dear

Lord, I spoke with fear and trembling.

Who am I? Who am I to say such words? It is not me. Lord, this is Your Word. I'm only trying to convey it to Thy own people.

So Lord, do speak to each one of us. Do not allow us to evade, nor to rush in. But show us how to sit down and count the cost.

Oh, may Thy love appear to us. May Thy glory appear to us. That we, by Thy grace, may be able to do the impossible.

Here we are. Take us, Lord. In Thy precious name, amen.

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