

Joe Pease Sermon WPC, **DRAFT WITHOUT COPY EDITING: REVISION 1. 26 Sept 2018**

30 Sept 2018

Title: The Great Reversal, Luke 14: 25-35

=====

Let us pray:

Come Lord Jesus and send your Holy Spirit to prepare our hearts to hear your word.

We ask the Holy Spirit to help me rightly divide the Word of God to honor Him and promote His Kingdom. We ask that You enlighten our minds and illumine our hearts with your teaching. Amen

Last Sunday, we looked at the verses immediately preceding this text. We learned that God is using illustrations and parables to describe how and why He invites people to His Kingdom.

God's love and our obedience to His invitation show that wants us all. He wants His heaven pressed full with people. We understand that all, small and great, are invited.

Now, during this discourse, the situation changes. Jesus finds himself no longer in a house but in a moving large group of people traveling somewhere. They talk as they walk. Because of His growing reputation in the land, this is a friendlier situation than before. People want to be with Him

So, in the crush of oversized entourage, we see Jesus introduce the teaching of who is a disciple of Christ, and what is required of her or him. He is blunt and to the point. In short Jesus questions: If you decide to become a disciple, do you really know what you are doing?

Jesus begins to discuss the cost and meaning of discipleship. The glaring verse that stands out is the one where He says ---if you do not hate father, mother, wife, children and your own life, that person cannot be my disciple. – An astounding statement from the Prince of Peace and loving God!

Occasionally, Jesus exaggerates emphasis. Jesus is not justifying malice, desertion, or ill will toward family members. He means that devotion to family must take a second place to one's devotion to Christ?

Jesus's prime ethic of love is still in place. In the original language, Greek scholars think He might mean conflict, instead of the word hate. In Matthew, Jesus was adamant there is only Way for a disciple. He is the Way and it will cost you to follow Him. There is no other way.

You must enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction. (Matthew 7:13)

Christ is asking for an exclusive commitment to the Father through Him. In comparison to our presence with God, everything worldly should seem strangely dim and frivolous.

Let's be realistic. For the people in this church today, Is Christ worth it? Is He worth that kind of cost of discipleship as He describes it?

Using the Bible to interpret the Bible, let's see what Matthew's Gospel says on the subject. In Matthew, Christ re-states it a different way,

"If anyone would come after me must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mt. 16: 24-26)

This sounds like all or nothing, an ultimatum? To get everything; you must give up everything? Who would accept this thing? -A man who encountered God on a road in the desert.

A person that accepted this ultimatum was the Apostle Paul. Paul suffered greatly for Christ. He endured floggings, imprisonment, earthquakes, assassination attempts, ship wreck, bite of a poisonous snake, rejection by some of his own people, humiliation, false Christians, traitors to the faith, and hunger and cold. He considering his earthly trials less than what he would receive in Christ.

Surprisingly, Paul calls all this experience exalted living. Paul says: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed". (Rom. 8 :18)

This sounds like insanity?

Today, let us briefly explore this subject as laid out in Luke. There are three matters relating to honoring Christ and to understand Christian discipleship:

- The cost of discipleship,
- bearing your cross, and
- the salt of the earth.

COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

To begin, the cost of discipleship may be viewed in different perspectives. Christ example is an unflattering or disparaging way to see humans and who they are. For Christ in this situation, he sees naïve and immature nature at work in people's heart.

The Book of John, it says that "But Jesus would not entrust himself to them. He did not need a man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man." (John 2: 24-25)

His story addresses two types of people one at a personal level and one at a kingdom level: Fools at work building a tower, and Fools at war against another king.

The first foolish way is result of not planning ahead and weighing the cost is that one may be embarrassed before one's neighbors when the tower is abandoned. But for the King at war, and foolishly misjudging the situation, the consequences in the hands of the enemy are direr at defeat.

Both are minor and major decisions that are adverse in consequences to the Fool in charge. The point is declaring it is folly to embark on a venture without being sure one can see all the way through it to its results.

Back in that day, people understood stupidity and ignorance. They also understood the cost of being in a country. If you aspired to become a Roman citizen, you paid a lot for it. Paul, the Apostle, was a Roman citizen by birth and used it well for God, not for Rome. This earthly citizenship had a cost of citizenship. It is similar to us today in this country.

The Desiring God Commentary shows Jesus is unashamed and unafraid of telling us up front the “worst” — the painful cost of being a Christian: hating or arguing with a family (verse 26), carrying a cross from Christ (verse 27), renouncing possessions (verse 33). Jesus is blunt and brutally truthful.

Compared to today’s typical contract or written agreement, there is no small print in the terms and conditions in the back of the document. It is all big and clearly states risks and uncertainties of a faithful life.

The Christian religious philosophy from Jesus is different from any other religion on earth. Most other religions are a religion of works. You have to do certain things and work your way to salvation. You basically gain your goodness and work yourself into goodness and salvation from the outside, inward.

Not so with the Gospel from Jesus. The whole world spiritual order is set on its head. It is reversed because God’s Way is not our way; God’s thoughts are not our thoughts. God wants us to change our hearts to be God’s Will not just do God’s Will. We are to change from the inside outward.

We do this counting the cost in courtship and marriage today. Let’s illustrate this situation in view of a marriage. After the lady’s romance is over, she gets married, --then, you have to live with him. The Texans have a saying, “You have to dance with what brung you to the dance.” Just like pre-marriage counseling, the honeymoon will most certainly end. Then, you have to LIVE with Christ who tells you to pick up your cross and go His Way.

In addition, you are part of the Church. The Bible says that the Church is the Bride of Christ. Each of us is part of the Bride of Christ. Jesus is giving

each of us discipleship marriage counseling. It is not just about love, as with a spouse, you have to consider LIVING with the Living Word of God.

So, what if we think Christ demands are too costly? I may not do it. Where do we turn?

What about Satan? He will tell us the good news. He will tell us whatever are itching ears want to hear. The Bible says those times are near:

“For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want them to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.” (2 Tim. 4: 3)

Though not factual there are ways to assess the world versus Christ and His discipleship standards. An entertaining way is C. S. Lewis.

C. S. Lewis wrote the book called His Screwtape Letters which is a Christian Classic. The Screwtape Letters comprises 31 letters **written** by a senior demon named Screwtape to his nephew, Wormwood (named after a star in Revelation), a younger and less experienced demon, charged with **guiding** a man (called "the patient") toward "Our Father Below" (Devil / Satan) from "the Enemy" (Jesus). C.S. Lewis's most popular non-Narnia novel is a delicious, perceptive treatise on the weaknesses of human nature. I recommend you read this book as well as your older children. You will get the picture.

So now, if you choose Satan here is a short summary of the Satanic Eternal Life Prospectus for Discipleship might be:

Unlike the perfect and complete truth of Christ. Satan does not want to burden us with the details. Satan hides his worst and shows only his best. All that really matters in the deal with Satan is in small print on the back page. You do not need to read that back page because it will hurt your eyes.

John Piper, Solid Joy Ministries/ Desiring God, gives a summary that I love. On the front page ---in big, bold letters are the words, "You will not surely die" ([Genesis 3:4](#)), and "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me" (Lawyers call that quid pro quo, right?) ([Matthew 4:9](#)).

But on the back page-- in small print — so small you can only read it with the magnifying glass of the Bible, there is an alleged quote — it says, "And after the fleeting pleasures, you will suffer with me forever in hell."

Compared to Satan, why is Jesus willing to show us his "worst" as well as his best, while Satan will only show us his best? The great Matthew Henry answers, "Satan shows the best, but hides the worst, because his best will not [counterbalance] his worst; but Christ's will abundantly [counterbalance and do it eternally]."

The call of Jesus is not just a call to suffering and self-denial; it is first a call to a banquet-- as we saw last Sunday morning. This is the point of the parable in [Luke 14:16–24](#). Jesus also promises a glorious resurrection where all the losses of this life will be repaid ([Luke 14:14](#)). He also tells us that he will help us endure the hardships ([Luke 22:32](#)).

The Holy Spirit's power is unlimited and given without constraint to us. He tells us our Father will give us the Holy Spirit ([Luke 11:13](#)). He promises that even if we are killed for the kingdom, "not a hair of your head will perish" ([Luke 21:18](#)).

Which means that when we sit down to calculate the cost of following Jesus — when we weigh the "worst" and the "best" — he is worth it. Abundantly worth it ([Romans 8:18](#); [2 Corinthians 4:17](#)).

Not so with Satan. **The Wisdom Woman of the Book of Proverbs says "Stolen bread is sweet, but afterward the mouth is full of gravel. "([Proverbs 20:17](#)).**

CROSS

In today's subject, the next subject is the cross. We will also consider cross bearing like Christ did before His death. Let's do a little ancient history first.

The cross is a symbol of suffering and death. In ancient times, it was called the "upright pointed stake" or "cross bar", where criminals were either hung or impaled.

The earliest accounts were in the time of Alexander the Great, who allegedly learned it from the Persians. The Romans reserved this death process for slave, robbers, assassins and the like who were considered rebellious to Caesar. This why the Jews had to get the Romans to crucify Christ.

In the old part of the Bible, the Jews called it hanged on a tree. They did not crucify living persons as a custom. They did suspend the bodies on a tree for public shame or curse. Men, thus, hanged were accursed by God (Deu. 21:22, 23.)

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 New International Version (NIV)²² **If someone guilty of a capital offense is put to death and their body is exposed on a pole, ²³ you must not leave the body hanging on the pole overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day, because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance."**

This reference to the cross was well understood by the Jews who saw Rome use it as an agonizing punishment for the death of state criminals. Jesus was clear that he was asking for obedience to spiritual death of self. When Christ was crucified, He was also humiliated and made a curse. Crucifixion was abhorrent to the Jews.

For example, when before His death, Jesus told Roman Governor, Pilate, **"You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given to you from above."** John 19:11. Jesus did not fear Pilate because God was in control. The lesson for us of the cross is clear. You have to give up everything; to get everything from God. Leave the consequences to God in faith.

Let us move away from the cross, and, now consider cross bearing. You spiritually convey your discipleship daily in real life - cross bearing.

Our basis is the cross of Jesus. Jesus's cross stood as the symbol of God's unique purpose for Him. It was a symbol of both of the divine Will for Jesus, and Jesus's voluntary submission to that will. (Mark 14:36; Phil. 2:8)

We here today in this church are expected to imitate Christ in exactly the same way as we both bear our own cross and walk in His Way. The cross rids for us all the things that block us from God. work that Christ begins continues to this day to every person in this church and community.

What is cross bearing from God's point of view?

What did our discipleship cost Christ at the Cross? The suffering, shame, and humiliation that Jesus endured (Heb. 12 :2) for the human race, indicates the depths to which He was willing to go to lift up the worse and lowest of men, including us here today.

Each of us has our own cross to bear. It is not someone else's cross but design by God to be only our own. Fear not, faithful Christians, Jesus's death has turned it from a curse on a tree to both an affirmation from God and a sign glory of eternal life with Christ, the first fruits of them who sleep.

We join Him in the Great Reversal. The curse of the Cross has permanently been changed to a Cross of Glory.

In a word, Jesus and the Cross are the Great Reversal in world history. Because of this completed act of salvation, we, too, should look away from this world and allow Him to do this reversal transformation for us because of the Love He showed to us.

But today's life is full of bad news, death, sickness and all kinds of bad things. Your God already knows this. These are not necessarily obstacles for God's children, but His appointed Way for them, --including accompanying each person with his cross through the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

God asks for us to obey Him and does not require us to understand His will, just obey it, even if it seems to be unreasonable. Therefore, when we obey God, He is responsible for the consequences. Our conscience is set free and God's Joy abounds in us.

The Salt of the Earth

We come to the last of the three topics -- salt.

In the Middle East, one of the places where salt is found in great quantity is in the Dead Sea next to Israel. In an arid climate, salt is vital. It was a condiment, like it is today. Before refrigeration, it was used as a preservative for food to halt putrefaction. In the religious laws in Israel, it was occasionally a required ingredient to meet the needs of the law. (Lev 2:13)

One of the most famous salt stories in the Old Testament concerned Lot's wife. Also, the story of Lot's wife supplement meaning of the passage. Lot and his wife were told to escape Sodom and Gomorrah (Ge. 19:26) because God prepared to destroy it utterly. They are to flee quickly.

As the family fled, Lot's wife fell behind from the group. As she was behind them, she stopped and turned to look back at the cities. She became a pillar of salt.

When Jesus asked for discipleship, we should not look back to the fallen state we were in. We know this because we will visit her in later chapters in Luke (17:21-33) Jesus uses this event as warning to others not to look back once embarking on your obedience to God's instruction.

Another interpretation is once the salt has lost its saltiness and cannot be restored and used for the intended purpose. It is useless and must be thrown out. You cannot make salt, salty again.

Jesus closes this passage us Christians as disciples have another name other than Christian from Jesus in the Beatitudes. Jesus at the Mount says, Matthew 5:13-15

13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

14 "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

Apostle Paul agrees (Col. 4:5-6) **5** Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. **6** Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Salt represent the saving efficacy of the church and the Gospel of Jesus. in the world. When we have salt in ourselves, we are at peace with each other. Our good ethics are gratitude to God.

DISCIPLESHIP: WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF CHRIST'S TEACHING TODAY? DO WE REALLY KNOW WHAT WE ARE GETTING INTO?

Christ is not looking for tag-a-longs or superficial commitments from people. Some preachers or churches present the Gospel like selling a used car. Have you ever been caught in the fine print of a purchase? You did not look hard enough? With Crist, there are no "I gotcha's".

The language of the Cross has become corrupted by over use or diverted to conforming more to the cares and political issues of this world. Cross bearing requires deliberate sacrifice and exposure to both risk and ridicule to follow Jesus. It has nothing to do with our current situation of illness, pain, physical conditions, or trying family relationships.

In our lives, Jesus demands a Great Reversal. Jesus was never impressed by His own success on earth. He knew people and their reality. The Bible metaphor says. We are spiritually to die to self, to be re-filled by the Holy Spirit, to live with Christ in us. To live is Christ...

The Apostle Paul say in the Bible.

“...If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not, also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” Rom, 8: 31

2 Corinthians 4:7-12 New International Version (NIV)

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

¹⁰ We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. ¹¹ For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. ¹² So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

We are the salt of the earth and will have a victorious life in Christ. Each day' s evil is sufficient to the day; but each day's grace from God abounds and has no end.

We do not live for ourselves but for Christ in us and His Kingdom. The great reversal from darkness to the Great Light of God is complete. Our personal reversal from a sin nature to a God centered nature has started and will certainly be completed.

Apostle of Paul says to the church and us disciples of Christ:

“I thank God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to the completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 1: 3-6.)

Amen

=====

Let us pray:

To Jesus Christ, who loves us
And freed us from our sins by His blood
And made us to be a kingdom,
Priests of his God and Father, and Disciples of Christ,
And the joy of unity in the House of the Lord,
To him beglory and dominion forever and ever,
Amen