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Luke 14:25-33

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Whenever it is time for our family to make a major purchase,

- whether it was a house,

- or a car,

- or even a major appliance,

- one of the first things I do is sit down

- and try and figure out

- how much I think we can afford

- With that amount in mind,

- we can rule out certain unrealistic possibilities

- and focus on what we might actually purchase.

- I mean

- the 6 bedroom, 4 Bathroom house

- with a beautiful view on five acres of land

- priced at only two million dollars

- may look fabulous,

- but it doesn't exactly make the list of possibilities.

- This approach is so much a part of who I am,

- that when my children were much younger,

- they know to ask me how much a toy cost,

- because they know

- if it is under \$5 they might be able to convince me to buy it,

- but if it is over \$5 then there wasn't as much of chance

- Most of us learn
 - at some time or another
 - to consider the cost of something we want or need - -
 - it's a part of life - -
 - it's a part of being good stewards of our God given resources.
- Most of us learn
 - to look at what is required
 - and then make a decision about whether this is something we can undertake
- And while
 - it is easier on some level to talk about this in terms of money,
 - the same idea applies to learning a new skill,
 - to participating in a sport,
 - or to a million different things in our daily lives.
- For example
 - people used to ask me if I ever played football
 - and my answer was always, no
 - I liked my knees too much for that
 - and while I always hoped that line would get a little laugh from folks,
 - my answer was also very true.
- I enjoy watching football.
 - I always have,
 - but when it came time to play
- I looked around at friends who'd injured themselves
 - and athletes that I liked who could hardly walk
 - and I thought about the other things I'd have to give up

- like participating in theatre

- and I made the decision that playing football

- would cost more in terms of time,

- singular focus, and injury

- then I was willing to give.

- I measured the cost and made my decision.

- well, - -

- I think in a lot of ways,

- Jesus is asking the crowds that are following him

- in today's reading from Luke

- is asking us

- to consider what it means to follow Jesus

- is asking us

- to measure the cost of discipleship

- before we say

- "I'm a follower of Jesus"

- Jesus knew, - -

- we know, - -

- that God's love is a free gift

- God's love is not something you have to earn or buy,

- but Jesus also knew

- and we know

- that sometimes our response to that love

- means we must make tough choices

- means we might find ourselves at odds with the prevailing

- attitude of the world
- in other words
- there can be a very real cost to believing in Jesus -
- a very real cost -
- in terms of our relationship with others
- and our relationship with the world
- And so
- I think Jesus' words to this huge crowd gathered around him
- are meant as a reality check.
- I don't think
- when Jesus says things like -
- "Whoever does not carry the cross
- and follow me cannot be my disciple."
- and "none of you can become my disciple
- if you do not give up all your possessions.(LK 14:27,33)
- that he is trying to scare folks away - -
- I think his words are meant to encourage people to think about
- why they are following
- and about what they are ready to sacrifice
- to follow him.
- Jesus knows that what awaits in Jerusalem
- isn't going to be pretty
- or fun
- and it's almost as if Jesus is saying to the crowd
- if anybody wants to get off of the bandwagon, - -

- now is the time. - - -
 - What Jesus is asking of his follower, - -
 - to leave their family and friends behind
 - and to give up their wealth and possessions, - -
 - that's an extremely big ask from anyone,
 - which is why I think Jesus is saying - -
 - if you **aren't** ready to place Jesus' mission
 - to love, bless and save the world
 - at the center of your life,
 - then now is the time to Go
 - because
 - that is the singular focus
 - that is asked
 - of those who follow Jesus.
 - Following Jesus isn't necessarily easy
 - Following Jesus requires us to make choices and decisions
 - that can be unpopular in the greater world
 - like welcoming the outsider,
 - loving the stranger,
 - amplifying the voices of the oppressed,
 - Following Jesus, - - calls us to make sacrifices
 - to give of our time and our talents and our financial resources
 - without seeking worldly reward for ourselves
 - And while following Jesus provides hope for a sure and certain future with God, - -

- while following Jesus means
 - knowing the good news that
 - God promises to be with us in all that is
 - and all that will be,
- Following Jesus isn't a magic happy pill that
 - removes all the aches and pains of life
- Following Jesus can be difficult
 - and Jesus wants people to know what they are getting into
 - when they say "I follow Jesus"
- **Now** that is not to say
 - that following Jesus
 - is a dark and gloomy task
 - filled with somber, sad music
 - hushed tones and lots of pain
- NO
 - being a follower of Jesus
 - brings hope and peace
 - joy and contentment
 - purpose and mission
 - to one's life
- it's just that while sometime we may find peace
 - in music or prayer
 - we may also discover hope
 - in the midst of tragedy

- and while sometimes we may find joy
 - in the smile of a child
 - we may also find contentment
 - in knowing that a loved one has been freed
 - from the pain of a long illness
 - and now rests comfortably in God's loving arms
- and while we may find purpose in our lives
 - as we use our gifts to teach and help children,
 - we may discover a mission with people in need
 - by meeting someone who has no place to eat on thanksgiving
- Jesus invites us to follow him
 - Jesus wants us to know the joy and hope and love
 - that comes from being a disciple, - - -
 - but Jesus also wants us to know that there is a cost involved
 - and while some people have interpreted Jesus's words to the crowd to mean
 - that you can only be a Christian
 - if you abandon your family and live in absolute poverty, - -
- it seems to me that what Jesus is saying to the crowd
 - what Jesus is saying to us
 - is that we must be prepared to give up
 - whatever it is that separates us from God
 - if we want to follow Jesus.
- So for example,
 - it may mean that for a season we spend less time with a family member or friend

- whose life and decisions
 - lead us away from God
- it may mean finding a job
 - that doesn't require you to work 20 hours a day, 7 days a week
 - so you can have a healthy relationship with God
 - with others,
 - and with the community around us.
- it may mean
 - thinking and praying about what you do with your financial resources
 - and making a conscious decision
 - to give to ministries you believe in - in meaningful ways
- it may mean
 - giving up a comfortable place of silence,
 - and instead speaking out about the problems of our society like racism,
 - and witnessing to what God's radical, welcoming love looks like
 - in action in the world.
- Being a follower of Jesus
 - means
 - living your life with different priorities
 - and a different set of goals
 - and a different measure of success
 - than the rest of the world has
 - And again I don't think that Jesus is trying to scare any of us away
 - by asking us to consider the cost of following him, - -
 - I simply think Jesus wants us to realize that

- although God's grace and love are a gift given freely, - -
- our response to that gift
 - might put us at odds with some of the prevailing beliefs
 - of our often broken and selfish world.

For when we follow Jesus,

- we discover that God's gift of grace and love is transformational.
 - It changes how we look at our neighbor.
 - It changes our framework for decision making and our priorities
 - It changes our measures of success.
 - It changes the way we view the world around us.
- And even though the cost of following Jesus
 - may **seem** high
 - to those who don't know God's love in their lives,
- the Good news for you and for me as children of God
 - is that God's love for us is a free gift
 - and the cost of responding to that gift
 - is far outweighed by the powerful presence and support we experience
 - as a part of the body of Christ,
 - as a part of the kingdom of God.
- For as we follow Jesus,
 - we discover the unending, unbreakable love and caring of God
 - and the hope and peace that comes from knowing
 - that nothing in all creation can separate us
 - from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

