

hurt Mary! But in that moment, Jesus was letting even Mary, his mother, know that she did not have a right to get between Jesus and his work of saving us. Or one time Peter—one of Jesus' three closest friends—told Jesus he didn't have to die. Do you remember what Jesus said to Peter? *"Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men"* (Matthew 16:23). "Jesus, that's not Satan. That's your friend Peter!" But the moment Peter got in the way, he was Satan's tool. Jesus didn't let anything get between him and you. I want you to know the cost Jesus paid for you: His family.

It doesn't make sense, does it? Why would God the Father send his Son to die for you? There's only one possible answer: He must love you—a lot! Why would Jesus stop at nothing—not even his own mother—to die on the cross for you? There's only one possible answer: He must love you—a lot! God must love you more than anyone and anything else in the world! There is nothing more wonderful than knowing the cost that Jesus was willing to pay for you and for me. Jesus considered you worth it to die to take away what got between you and him—your sin.

If I believe that, how can Jesus not be my dearest treasure? If you believe that, how can Jesus not be your dearest treasure? Jesus doesn't ask us for anything other than what he has given us: Everything. He doesn't force us to live for him. He gives people the ability to push him aside and live for whatever they want. But he invites you to know that there is nothing better than knowing your Savior Jesus. And that means that whatever is coming between you and Jesus isn't worth it. Whether it's money, or work, or a relationship, or even your mom or your wife or your kids... Whatever is coming between you and Jesus isn't worth it. Not when you know the cost he paid.

The truth is, it's only knowing what Jesus has done for you that will allow you to have the relationships you are looking for. If you don't have Jesus as you're best friend, you can't be a good friend, because you will expect your friends to do for you what only Jesus can. If you don't have Jesus as you're best friend, you can't be a good spouse, because you will expect your spouse to do for you what only Jesus can do. If you don't have Jesus as your best friend, you can't be a good parent, because you will place this pressure on your kids to do for you what only Jesus can do. You can't pay money from a bank account that you don't have. You can't give out love to those in your life unless you are filled with love.

So Jesus invites you to love him first. There is only One strong enough to be our God. There is only One strong enough to support you. The best thing to help your marriage is for you to grow closer to Jesus. The best thing for you as a parent is for you to grow closer to Jesus. In Jesus and only in Jesus do you learn what truly makes a relationship work: Forgiveness, underserved love, forgiveness, sacrifice, and forgiveness. And if, in the end, your relationship with Jesus separates you from those you love, then you can understand what Jesus has given up for you. Know the cost—his cost! Amen.

Luke 14:25-33
Pastor Nathan Nass

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²⁵Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶"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. ²⁷And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸"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? ²⁹For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, ³⁰saying, "This fellow began to build and was not able to finish." ³¹"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? ³²If 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. ³³In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

Know the Cost

I love football, but it's been harder than usual to watch the NFL this year, and not just because the Vikings beat the Packers. I few months ago I watched the movie, "Concussion." Have you seen it? It's changed the way I look at professional football. "Concussion" tells the story of a doctor from Nigeria—Bennet Omalu—who studied the brain of a former NFL star who had committed suicide. He realized that year after year of collision after collision in the NFL had permanently damaged this man's brain and caused his death. When he made this discovery, Dr. Omalu was sure that the NFL would be grateful to find out! But they weren't. They did everything they could to disprove him and silence his findings. But Dr. Omalu didn't give in. He insisted that players needed to know the cost. He said that a soldier going to war knows the cost. He could die. So an NFL player deserves to know the cost, he could damage his brain. Well, just this last week, the NFL donated \$100 million to study head injuries. It's good to know the cost.

That's exactly what Jesus wants you to know. He wants you to know the cost. Not the cost of playing football. The cost of following him. There is a cost to following Jesus. He used two stories to illustrate that. First: *"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?"* ²⁹For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, ³⁰saying, *"This fellow began to build and was not able to finish."* If you want to build a new house, it would be foolish not to make sure you have enough money to complete it! Can you imagine the ribbing you'd get from your friends if you built just half a house? You've got to know the cost!

Or Jesus says, *"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? ³² 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.” This is more serious than building a house. Before a country goes to war, it’s necessary to know whether you have the resources to win. Any leader knows to calculate the cost before going to war. It’s obvious. You’ve got to know the cost!

So here’s the cost of following Jesus: *“Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”* That’s well-known phrase today, “Carry your cross.” It must have shocked Jesus’ disciples. A cross in Jesus’ day was the most dreadful thing imaginable. It was as if Jesus were saying, “That terrible thing that people get nailed to until they die, be ready to carry that around as my disciple.” Sound nice? This is a hard saying from Jesus! If you follow Jesus, you can expect to carry a cross—sufferings that will test your faith. Anyone who promises earthly peace and prosperity for believers in Jesus is lying. There is a cost to being Jesus’ disciple: Carrying your cross.

I want you to take note of a word Jesus used—“disciple.” We don’t use that word very often. We’re used to the word “member,” like a member of our church. In the Bible, Jesus doesn’t talk about being a “member” of a church. He talks about being his “disciple.” God’s goal for you and me is not just to be members of an organization. He’s not looking for an hour or two a week. His goal is for us to be his disciples, which means life-long followers of Jesus, growing every day in his Word. Maybe you’ve never thought about this. Are you are member of a church or a disciple of Jesus? It’s not always the same thing.

Here’s one way that you can tell. Ask yourself, “What’s my dearest treasure?” Is it Jesus? “What is the most important thing in the world to me?” Is it Jesus? We just started a new Bible study on Sunday mornings talking about our idols. An idol isn’t just a statue that people worship, it’s whatever captures your heart. Whatever fills and excites you more than anything else. What is that for you? Of course, we know the right answer—Jesus! But I don’t want the right answer, I want the truth. What’s your dearest thing? Is it Jesus? Or is it your money? Or is it your accomplishments? If it is, you’re not a disciple of Jesus. That’s harsh. But that’s what Jesus says!

So what’s your dearest thing? Jesus isn’t going to let you off easy today. He’s going to hit home. He knows one dear thing that can come between us and him—our families. So he says, *“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.”* That is hard to hear! God wants you to refuse to let anything get between you and him. Who is it that we’re most tempted to love more than Jesus? Family—Parents, spouse, and children. Could that be wrong? Think about this: A woman once said to me, “Pastor, you don’t have to worry about my faith. I love God almost as much as my kids.” When you hear that, is that wrong? That woman has an idol. Her kids. She is not Jesus’ disciple. God wants you to love your parents and love your spouse and love your kids, but he wants you to refuse to let

them get between you and God. He even uses the word “hate” to show how serious this is. Know the cost of being Jesus’ disciple: If God is first, then God is first, even over my family!

Last spring, there was a surprising story out of the NFL. Chris Borland, a 24-year old linebacker, was coming off a great rookie year with the San Francisco 49ers. He was set to earn \$540,000 in his second season. So do you know what he did? He retired. People were shocked! But he had thought through all the risks. He had read about the danger of concussions. He knew the costs, and he decided it wasn’t worth it, not even for \$540,000. So he retired at 24. I think a lot of people are deciding that about Jesus. They hear what he asks for—our lives. They hear what he wants us to be willing to give up—everything. And they decide it’s not worth the cost. There are a lot of 24-year olds retiring from Jesus... 44-year-olds are retiring from Jesus... 64-year-olds are retiring from Jesus. “He’s not worth it!”

So what about you? Is following Jesus—being his disciple—worth it? Because there really is a cost: Your life! Not an hour or two here or there. The willingness to give up everything, including your family and your life. Know the cost! Is Jesus worth it? Jesus wants you to consider that, like a builder getting ready to build a house. Is Jesus worth the cost? Jesus wants you to consider that, like a king preparing to go to war. Is Jesus worth the cost? There’s no better place to look than to our own families. Is it easier to disappoint God or your family? Whom would you rather give up—God or family? I know that’s a terribly hard question, but this is serious stuff. Who’s your god?

Before you make that decision, I want you to look at the other side. It’s true that there is a cost of discipleship. God asks for our lives. But you can’t even consider that without first realizing what God has given up for you. What was God’s cost to have a relationship with us? His family. His Son Jesus. God gave up his family, so that we could be his family. God gave up everything, so that we could have everything. Just think about this: God the Father knew the cost to save us—even before he made the world. His only Son. Would you have done it? God did. He made you and me so that he could save you and me. I want you to know the cost: God’s own Son. God doesn’t ask from us what he hasn’t already given us.

Now think of Jesus’ cost—God the Son’s cost. Here’s what we heard earlier in our second lesson: *“⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”* You got all that? Jesus is God, and yet he decided to become a human being too. That’s not moving up the ladder! He didn’t just become a human being, he became a humble servant. And then he died. I want you to know the cost that Jesus paid for you: His life.

Even while he was alive, Jesus refused to let anything get between him and you—not even his family! Once when Jesus was preaching, his dear mother Mary and his brothers decided it was time for him to stop. Do you know what Jesus did? He refused and said, *“Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother”* (Mark 3:30). That must have