

Who we are and Where we are going//Luke 14:25–35

Last week we finished up the *Still Standing* series, and next week we start a series from Exodus called “Presence.” I thought I’d take advantage of the inbetween time... you see, we’ve grown by nearly 1000 in the last 12 months... Thought it would be good to take a moment to review who we are and where we are going. **Luke 14**

My best friend, Bruce Ashford, member of our church here, told me this story about a kid at his high school named “Jean.” Jean was tall (6’6”). Bruce said you wouldn’t call him chiseled or “coordinated” (ironic: neither is Bruce). He told me... you know the guy you joke about, who trips over his own feet into the trash cans. Jean actually did that.

But size is a big deal in basketball, so Jean was back-up center. Bruce told me that their senior year they had made it to the championship game of some tournament. Well, with 8 seconds left on the clock, the starting center fouled out. Now, they were down by a point, and the other team had possession of the ball, inbound it from mid-court. Guess who the coach put in? Jean. The other team inbound the ball; somebody tips it, there was skirmish; bodies flying everywhere, and Jean ends up with the ball. He grabs and takes off toward the basket, outrunning everybody, and with only a second left on the clock just throws it down; hammers it; into the wrong goal. So instead of losing by 1; they lost by 3.

Moral of the story: *Every once in a while you need to stop and make sure you’re going the right direction.*

I want us to do that as a church, and I want to look at a statement by Jesus I’ve been studying a lot personally that I think speaks to this for us. Now, it’s one of the most difficult statements Jesus ever made about being His disciples—and that’s who we are, disciples, that’s what a Christian is, no exceptions—there are some really difficult things in there that hard for us to hear but that we really need to hear. (For me, I’ll tell you, I’ve kind of found this passage to be like hard candy... if you try just to crunch down into it, it might break your teeth. But if you spend some time with it, let it work on you for a while, there’s some great stuff in there.) So we’re going to take this passage apart, and then reflect on what it means for who we are and where we are going as a church.

25 Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, **26** “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

27 Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

Now, what on earth does he mean by this?

- There's a phrase in there that trips everybody up: "Hate your father and mother." For some of you, that statement seems absurd—hate your father and mother? What? What's that all about? For others of you, it is unnecessary, because you are like, "Well, I already hate my mom and dad."
- What did Jesus mean by this? Well, no one really thinks Jesus means hate in the sense that you should curse them... After all, Jesus taught us to love all people, including our enemies. And it has been the experience of countless people through the last 2000 years that when you begin to really follow Jesus you start to love your family and wife and your children more, not less. So nobody really thinks he meant that you should make an exception with your parents and hate them.
- I would say, instinctively, you probably know what he means... He's drawing a comparison between our love for Him and our love for everything else.
- Use e.g. from the Bible. (The best way to interpret the Bible is the Bible...) In Genesis there is a story of a guy named Laban who had two daughters, Leah and Rachel; evidently Rachel was incredibly beautiful, and so Jacob wanted to marry her. But Leah was older, and so Laban, the dad, wanted Jacob to marry Leah instead. So Laban agrees to let Jacob marry Rachel, the younger, hot one, if he'll work 7 years of slave labor for him. And Jacob agrees.
- But on the night of the wedding, Laban puts a little Jack Daniels in the pre-wedding punch, and he tricks Jacob into marrying and sleeping with Leah instead. Well, Jacob, wakes up, sobers up, and is angry... (I know, like an OT Jerry Springer show), but what's done is done... but he's so in love with Rachel, that agrees to work another 7 years for her. (Which had to make things awkward in the house with Leah. How was work honey? Tough... but one day closer to getting that new and improved you.)
- Now, Jacob was so in love with Rachel that it says in Genesis that all those 14 years of slave labor were like "just a day" to him, he was so enthralled with Rachel. And it also says in Genesis that Jacob hated Leah (that's the word used in Hebrew) and loved Rachel; and it doesn't mean that he bore any disgust or ill-will toward her, just that he was so much enthralled with Rachel and driven by her, than in comparison to her, what he felt for Leah was like hate. He prioritized Rachel above everything. He would do absolutely anything to possess her.
- If you've ever fallen in love with someone, you know what this is like. When I fell in love with Veronica, it's not that I started to hate or dislike other girls, just they didn't move me anymore! I had the Ferrari of women.
- That's how you must be with Jesus... He is the one thing you must desire to possess above all else; commitment to

Him as so absolute that compared to it, your commitment to everything else, even great things like family, looks like hate.

- **Ever think about the audacity of that statement!** “Jesus never claimed to be God.” How on earth could you ever make a statement like that? “I want you to love *ME* so much that compared to me every other love you have looks like hate.” Who but God could claim such absolute obedience and devotion?

That’s the first thing about discipleship: It is **(1) Total**

- There is nothing, absolutely nothing, in your life, that comes before Him. Not even great and important things like your father or your mother or your children; not your dreams, your desires, nothing!
- A lot of people come to Jesus as way of getting a better family... At some point in your life, usually around the birth of your first child, you start to decide that God should be a part of your life... or, you lack purpose or friends or need help in your marriage and so you go back to your church. Or Jesus becomes the way you escape hell.
- But Jesus is not a means to anything. He is the end. Some commentators point out **(v. 26)** that Jesus takes people through a whole life progression—father, mother, wife, children... and says that you must love Him supremely to all of those things. You don’t acquire Jesus to get better family, more purpose, power... you use every part of your life to try and get more of Him!
- And if you ever have to choose between obeying Him or serving and possessing or being close to them, you always choose obedience to Jesus.
- **John Bunyan...** “Being here is like pulling flesh from my body. Not just because I miss them, but because I am here by choice (I could get out if I’d deny the Gospel) know I am causing them so much hardship! But I must do it, I must do it...”
- When I first sensed God was calling me into ministry... to go overseas, I was afraid of what my parents would say. In retrospect, I see that that was silly, as they only wanted me to obey what God told me. But I thought they were going to be mad... at the time they were paying for me to go to college and study law... so I braced myself... but I knew that as much as I wanted to please them and needed to honor them, Jesus came first.
- Nothing can come before Jesus. Discipleship is total. There can be no ifs; no exceptions; no conditions.
- The other image he uses here was one of the cross. Think about what that meant to them. Man carrying a cross was a condemned criminal, under a sentence of death. He was under arrest. He was no longer free to do what he wanted. Man carrying a cross couldn’t say, “You know, this really isn’t working for me. At first, I thought this would be purifying... but I’m done with this.” You were under arrest. Discipleship is TOTAL.
- **Illus.** Driver’s ed: steering wheel and brake pedal. Who was in charge? Me...or him, who could override and veto every decision. Who owns the brake pedal?

- There can be no partial surrender to His authority. He's the King; He's the absolute monarch. He doesn't come to be a good influence on you; He comes as your Master.
- Many people in our culture want a meek and mild Jesus who carries our burdens and comforts and helps us to be moral, good people. Jesus didn't say "take up my teachings," or "take up my moral code," but "take up my cross." Jesus doesn't call us to moralism; He doesn't offer us a spiritual makeover; He calls us to absolute surrender. He is the King.
- Have you ever come to Him this way? A false discipleship... accept Jesus as your Savior... He'll help you in a jam, take you to heaven. One day you'll mature into obedience.

(2) Emotional

- Here's the thing that strikes me about this passage. Jesus could have made the point that He was to be fully in charge using different words... I've got to be most important, or supreme; but He chose to put the question in terms of love and hate.
- Real Christian discipleship is not begrudging duty to Jesus; real Christianity is emotional. The highest of your affections and your passions are for Him. That's why I use Rachel as an example.
- I say this because a lot of people's relation to Jesus is very mechanical, very duty-oriented... and they feel like because they live a certain way and do certain things and are a cut above everyone else, that everything is OK. But that is not Christianity. God doesn't want begrudging obedience any more than a wife would. Or if I took my wife out for a special dinner... arranged for child care, bought her a necklace, flowers... and she said, "Why? What's all this for?" And I said, "Two reasons, really. A) There's some things I really need from you, and I figure you won't do those unless I do junk like this; and, B) I really want a reputation as a good husband, and the manual says on page 53 that every 6 months I need to do something like this... so, there's honestly a lot of other stuff I'd rather be doing tonight, but, duty calls. In fact, honestly, there's a lot of other girls I'd rather be here with... but, good husbands don't cheat. So, I'm here with you." What do you think she says back to that? "Wow. You are a great husband. I'm grateful for you." Why would God be different? Paul said it, 'I could give up my BODY to be burned, but if I don't have love, it doesn't make any difference to God!'
- What Jesus did for you was deeply emotional... He wept over us; He loved us to a depth we've never been loved.
- And His desire is not to constrain you with rules, but for you to love Him more than anything. The Jesus who is saying to you, "follow me," is the Jesus who poured out absolutely everything for you.
- I struggled a little with this wondering how those of you whom life has really beat up recently—you come in w/ pain—how you would hear this... you come in needing a word of hope... and then you get this... "this is not helping," But listen... it does. This whole passage means that when you really know Christ, when you see Him, you see that He is worth infinitely more than fathers and mothers and wives and even your own life... So when you lose those things—health,

relationships, job—you have in Christ, something of so much greater value, and more deeply satisfying, than all those things. And if you've had to let go of those things this morning, you can rejoice that you possess an even greater treasure in Him.

(3) Sacrificial

- Jesus said, (v. 27) "If you will follow me, you must take up your cross." Now, the cross for Jesus was about more than obedience and rule-keeping, it was an act of sacrifice. Jesus going to the cross was not about simply obeying God; He was pouring His life out for us. He was loving us, saving us.
- He says, "Those who follow me will take up their cross." They will live with great personal sacrifice, like I lived.
- This is pretty staggering when you think what it was like for the audience who first heard this. For them, the cross was not a pretty piece of jewelry or a sentimental symbol of their faith; it was an instrument of oppression and torture and execution. Imagine a politician saying this today... "Come join my party... strap yourselves to the electric chair. Put on your blindfold and wait for the crack of gunfire that will let bullets slice through your chest. Yes we can! This is slow, painful death you can believe in!"
- To follow Jesus means that your life is characterized, like His, by radical commitment to His mission and radical generosity toward the lost.
- As I said a moment ago, for most Americans, Jesus is something that simply adds value to their lives: meaning, fulfillment, purpose. Now, we know He has certain things that He requires... right? "Tithe, volunteer, come to His house, church, fairly often." But those things are kind of like the tax that Jesus requires. If you'll keep Him paid off, you can go on about your life.
- Think of a tax for a minute: A tax is what you pay so you can go on with your life. It's your civic duty. Very few of us in here love and live for the government and wipe away tears as we pay our taxes, thanking the sweet IRS for a chance to be involved in this great pursuit. Right? But we know that good Americans pay their taxes (or, if not they go to jail); in the same way we know that good Christians tithe, live morally, come to church... and these are what you do to pay your taxes to Jesus so He'll bless you as you pursue your goals and dreams.
- Jesus is talking about something altogether different. He's talking about a life where His mission *is* the goal. He's talking about a life that is spent pouring itself out for others: **12** *He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. 13* *But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14* *and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.*
- He's saying, "If you are my disciple, most of your parties will be for people who can't pay you back."
- Your whole life will not be a gradual progression toward more and better stuff, but to greater and more meaningful

service. You don't ask, "How much do I have to give to keep God off my back." You say, "How can I more greatly impact the Kingdom? How can I give away more for the Kingdom, to people who can never pay me back."

- I've really struggled, personally, with this point, because most of us, as we get older, increase in our net worth. We drive nicer cars, live in nicer houses. A little more in savings. When I graduated from seminary, like everyone else I lived paycheck to paycheck... going out to eat meant hitting the Hardees up once a month. Well, I live in a nicer house now, I'm more established—and places in the Bible talk about how God prospers you and blesses you and rewards hard work, and that wise people build wealth (Proverbs)... so that's not altogether wrong. But at the same time, I know that following Jesus means living like He lived. He didn't just pursue His dreams; He gave Himself, at the cross, for us... ***So what does it mean for us to follow Him?***
- Honestly, I'm not totally sure yet... I feel like Veronica and I are on a journey ourselves with this. **But I know it means we run our entire lives through the grid of what is best for Jesus' Kingdom.**
- Think of it like a **movie**... main character and minor characters. What happens to the minor character is inconsequential... major character! Top Gun...
- This is completely opposite of all you hear in your culture... This isn't what Oprah said last year at Duke... "It's about you and your dreams. Make the most of your movie! You only get one shot!" Carrying the cross means you play a role in a movie not about you at all...
- **First time I saw a sacrifice**... gruesome sight... I never understood what Jesus meant when He said "take up your cross," "be a living sacrifice" as I did right then. Who is ready to sign up for that?
- Carrying your cross means that you are dead to all of the dreams you have for yourself. It means that Jesus is now in full charge of your life. You are like a man with a cross, under a death sentence, with no more rights and demands. Jesus decides where you live, where you work, what kind of car you'll drive, what kinds of clothes you'll wear. He decides where you'll live and what you'll do with your profession.
- Have you ever done that?
- **For some of you, that is going to mean that you do what** Curtis Alan did with his family a few years ago... I know God hasn't called everyone, but I've wondered, why is that the exception? With 4 billion people on the earth with little to no access to the Gospel, with 30,000 kids dying today of either hunger or a preventable disease, why is that the exception? Jesus loves those people as much as you love your children... How can we say we carry the cross and this story not be much more common?
- For some of you, that may not mean that you go yourself, but that you begin to radically increase your giving... Where is the family that downsizes... or drives a used car when they could have a new one, or scales back their vacations... so they can invest more in the mission?

- In Long Beach, Ca there is a boat that is harbored called “the Queen Mary.” It was built in the early 20th century as a high end cruise liner. It was huge: it could accommodate 3000 wealthy patrons with all the luxuries and amenities that would attract the highest clientele. When Great Britain went to war in WW2, it was turned into a transport for troops, where it could accommodate 15,000 troops. (It’s now a museum, you can go into it and see what it looks like as a luxury ship and compared to when it’s re-engineered for mission.) Which one does our lives look like? Many of us have taken God’s blessings and just seemed to forget there is a mission of eternal importance in front of us; we’ve lived our lives like the Queen Mary outfitted for luxury, and that is not OK. **The Gospel is only good news if it gets there in time.** We make that happen!
- It means when you make job decisions, the only question is not where you can make the most money but where you can serve God the best.
- **Students:** re-evaluate your life goals in light of what is best for God’s kingdom. Up until now most of you have looked at your life goals and they are not about you, but the Kingdom of God

(4) Not optional

- A lot of people hear this and say, “Oh, this is like for super-Christians.” Just about everyone thinks that there are 2 classes of Christians. Regular, run of the mill Christian and then really devoted followers. That stratification does not exist in Jesus’ mind. Notice, vs. 25, this is what He says to the crowds who are just starting to follow Him. This is His new recruits speech!
- This is not something in the FINE PRINT...
- **Like a hotel...** \$88/night and then when you check out the next day they hand you a bill for \$140...shower drain fee; and a vanity tax for looking in the mirror twice
- No, this is right up front: He’s saying, “If you are you need to think about it.” We present the Gospel in our culture like it’s “hey... everybody, Jesus really needs followers. Do Him and us a favor and join up.” Jesus is saying, “Actually, I don’t need followers that bad. I want to save you, but I don’t need you, you need me, and if you come to God, you come on His terms, not yours.
- He puts it right up front and tells you to consider it: **Like those Marines’ commercials...** Just about every guy I know would have liked to have been a Marine... including me. I’d love to be a Marine. Then I noticed that in every commercial for the Marines, they were running. Always running. And I hate running. But, you know, that commercial let me know something... if you are going to be a Marine, you’re going to be doing some running. Imagine showing up at boot camp and being like... “Yeah... I’m not really into running yet. I’ll be over here with my Diet Coke and a box of Krispy Kremes... let me know when it’s time to get the snappy uniforms and the bayonets. Those looked *awesome*.”

- Jesus doesn't pull back... Listen, He doesn't need you as a follower. He really doesn't. He's the God of the Universe. He's the King.

33 So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. **34** "Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? **35** It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away." How's that for an insult? You half-committed people, you're not even fit for the manure pile. You'd ruin dung!

Can I make it any clearer? The mission Jesus is on, the mission He has called our church to, is too important for half-committed people.

He's counseling against hasty, emotional decisions. Jesus did not come to build an audience. He came to call radically committed followers. Before I get to what it means for us as a church, let me just ask you a question...

Have you ever come to Jesus on His terms? Giving Him total control; saying "I'll live for your mission entirely."

- In our culture, especially the South, we have preached a Jesus who will save you but for whom obedience and reorientation of your life goals and radical sacrifice for His kingdom are optional. But for the real Jesus they are not. Tragedy is that it's kept some of you deluded into thinking you have the real thing.
- **Fajar:** your conversion may not be as dramatic, but it can be no less absolute.
- **I know this turns some of you off...**that's because you haven't seen Jesus. If God would open your eyes, it would not seem burdensome, you would see He is of so much greater value... so my prayer is "open their eyes to see who Jesus is!"

Now, I told you I wanted us to think about this specifically in relation to where we are going as a church.

Our goals as a church

- **We want to radically extend ourselves to reach our community.** This church is in the middle of a **mission expansion project** called "Believe," where we are trying to increase our capacity to reach people.
- We call this a "Mission expansion project" because the point is not building a building; the point is expanding our mission to reach our community.
- You see, this passage means that our mission cannot simply be to build a great beautiful building—with a bunch of amenities for Christians, like a Christian club or something—Bible town; 6 flags over Jesus—no, we have a mission that is too important for us to bury our money in buildings and luxuries for ourselves.

- We want to build only Queen Mary the mission ship; not Queen Mary the luxury liner.
- We want only enough building for us to get the job done.
- Buildings for us are tools. Principle: “Good enough.” For a lot of our stuff, we say, “It may not be as nice as it could be, but it’s good enough to get the job done.” Or, “ghetto is one of our values.”
- We know that to reach people here we need a basic building... that is safe, functional... (people don’t want to drop their kids off in an unsafe environment), we need a place that is safe and functional, and that’s what we want to use the money to build. Not a bunch of luxuries for Christians.
- So our believe project is not about building beautiful monuments... we want to buy or build a place here in BC, and we want to be able to open some new campuses.
- **This passage also means for us as a church that we give away a significant portion of our income to the poor and the unreached.**
- Right now we give away about 20% of our income to ministries that reach lost people and take care of the poor (that doesn’t include ministries we run right here through this church). **Newspaper article... FAMILY!**
- RDU is a city of haves and have nots, and beautiful church buildings litter the landscape of the haves. Churches have spent their money on mostly on themselves. We need to renounce Southern-style Christianity and embrace biblical Christianity and throw our parties for people who can’t pay us back. Guys, don’t you think this is what the South most needs to see? A group of Christians who say “Christianity is not about the acquisition of stuff... about a God who is more valuable than stuff, a God we desperately need more than stuff.
- **We want to send out church planting teams to places around the world that have no access to the Gospel.** 1000 churches. In the last 7 years we’ve been a significant part of 4 N American church plants: NYC; RVA; Youngstown, OH; and Greenville. At this church, we measure our success not only by our seating capacity but by our sending capacity. That’s what carrying the cross means for us as a church.

What it means for me:

- As a pastor, to teach the Bible, fearlessly, and call people to discipleship... even when it ticks people off and makes them leave... A lot of us as pastors get our validation by the size of our audience and not from our calling by God. When that happens; when you get validated in ministry by the size of your audience, mark it down, *you will compromise the message*. Jesus didn’t care about losing the audience... He was fine with having a big huge audience, preaching one sermon, and everyone leaving. You guys need me to be willing to preach texts like this one and be willing for people not to come back.
- Jesus was the greatest teacher who ever lived... thousands of people came to hear Him speak. Plus, He could do

miracles. Isn't it odd that when He died, His church was only 120 people big! Why? He drove the others away. But those 120 changed the world.

- (One clarification... a lot of you in here are spiritual seekers. Not sure who Jesus is. Do I need to leave? No... not talking about you. **I'm talking about people who know Jesus is Lord, but just want to accessorize their lives with Him rather than really follow Him in total, emotional, sacrificial surrender.** If you're not sure you're ready to follow, you are welcome here, and you take all the time to mean.)
- The other thing this passage means for me is that I need to be one of you... Jesus calls me to carry the cross and pour my life out, too. Some pastors can tend to become Kings at their churches. Nothing worse than a pastor who is a King. Absolute power corrupts in whatever context. I am part of a leadership team here... and I lose votes sometime. Now, I'm always right, and after like 2 years I say... "see, I told y'all." And that means I serve and sacrifice like everyone else. I need to live my life (and throw my parties) for people who can't pay me back. This whole thing should not be a big party for me that I benefit from. Carrying the cross is first for me.

What it means for you:

- **Get off the sidelines and get involved.** Jesus didn't die to create an audience of half-committed sideline sitters. He feels that churches full of sideline sitters would ruin dung!
- (Before I became a pastor, I travelled and spoke to groups. I quit doing that because I hated the audiences of people who would sit and listen to me.... (I didn't hate them, but...) I knew God has called me to lead and develop a group of disciples.
- But here we are... now there's like between 3 and 4000 people here on Sundays... about 2000 of you are covenant members...
- But only 40% of our covenant members are in a small group (I'm not talking about the other 2000 of you) Of the *members*, only 40% are in a group.
- Only about 1/3 of our members volunteer
- About ½ of you give in a way that shows you are invested in this church
- I'm back to the group...
- Summit, God has blessed us.
- I talked with a Muslim girl... Atheist... **Religion: It has been a painful process from being lost and burned out by religion to being surrounded by faith only in Jesus but God showed us in the Summit Church a side of Christianity we have never seen. Never have we experienced the love, balance, patience, and pursuit of only Jesus the way.**

- Hispanic campus... reaching a whole new segment
- We've grown by 1000 in the last year
- 250 people jammed into the Bay last week investigating a call to church planting
- Summit, God has blessed us... because of the sacrifice of a number of you. Now it's time for the rest of you to get involved.
- In light of this passage, It is not OK for you to be a spectator... Help in students, kids, greeting...

Where we are:

- Started this Believe project... (Since then: Hispanic campus; we're looking to either buy this place or build right down the road; we've got some upgrades to do at our WCC, CMR campuses). We want to start new campuses.
- A lot of you are involved and I want to thank you, and encourage you to keep going. I want the rest of you to join up with it.
- I want you to financially invest yourself here in our mission. To expand our mission, to send people out to these places takes resources. Some of us will have to choose to live like Paul, content with a simple life, rather than a luxurious one... QUEEN MARY the troop transport, not the luxury ship. Because we recognize there is a mission...

I'm going to pray, and then our campus pastors will give us instructions.

Bullpen:

- So, it's not a building, it's about a mission.
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- Now, I want to make clear... we do want to have the facilities necessary to partner with your family effectively... nice, safe, fun kids areas... we want to be able to reach people who don't understand the mission and don't want their kids playing in a construction area.
- So, we want to do it an attractive, safe way... I'm just saying we don't plan to build in a lot of luxury.

In fact, He goes on and says this: **28** For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? **29** Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, **30** saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' **31** Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? **32** And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. **33** So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

- What He does in these verses is gives you 2 different analogies. A guy doing a building project, and a king going to war... doesn't he stop and figure out how much he's got, and how much he can borrow, before he plunges into it?
- Jesus is counseling against hasty, emotional decisions. The building Jesus is building; the war He is waging, for the hearts and souls of people, it too important for half-committed people.

See, vs. **34** "Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? **35** It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away." How's that for an insult? You half-committed people, you're not even fit for the manure pile. You'd ruin manure!

There is no room, no place for people in Jesus' Kingdom who are not radically committed to His authority and His mission.

John R. W. Stott: *The Christian landscape is strewn with the wreckage of derelict, half-built towers, the ruins of those who began to build and were unable to finish, for thousands of people still ignore this warning of Christ and undertake to follow him without first pausing to reflect on the cost of doing so. The result is the great scandal of Christendom today, so-called nominal Christianity. In countries to which Christian civilization has spread, large numbers of people have covered themselves with a decent but thin veneer of Christianity. They have allowed themselves to become somewhat involved; enough to be respectable but not enough to be uncomfortable. Their religion is a great, soft cushion. It protects them from the hard unpleasantness of life while changing its place and shape to suit their convenience. No wonder cynics speak of hypocrites in the church and dismiss religion as escapism.*

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- A few years ago I read the biography of John Bunyan, the Puritan who wrote Pilgrim's Progress...lived at a time in Europe when He was told not to preach any Gospel that differed from the state religion. He refused, and went right on preaching. They put him in prison, and told him he could get out if he would swear not to preach. But he would not. His family was already poor, but now with him gone, they had next to nothing. And he wrote about that in prison...*"The parting with my wife and poor children has often been to me in this place like the pulling of flesh from my bones. And that is not just because I am fond of them, but because I am aware of the many hardships, miseries and wants that my poor family is meets with due to my imprisonment, especially my poor blind child who lay nearer to my heart than all I have besides. The thought of what my precious blind one is going through breaks my heart to pieces! But yet I must venture all with God. Oh I have stayed in this condition, I am like a man pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and his children, yet, thought "I must do it. I must do it."*
 - Your situation is probably different. But the question is the same: Would you obey Jesus like that? Would you put him before father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even your own life?
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- Some of you have looked at your life like, I may not be sold out, but I'm fairly committed. I'm 80% committed." That category doesn't exist. If I say to my wife, "I've been 85% faithful to you." "Wow, that's like a B. Above average." Faithfulness to your spouse is not something you establish in percentages. Either I am a one-woman man or I am not. Either Jesus is Lord or He is not.
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- Lewis: Jesus didn't invite us to come to Him as bad people who need to become good people; but as rebels who must

lay down our arms.Stats:

- Two new books have come out recently, put forward by the UN. One is called 'God is Back' they debunk the theory that we are all heading toward Europe which has been the idea that we are all heading toward unbelief, but what it is showing is that religious belief is resurging in Europe and they are coming back toward us in America. 20 year olds in Europe are flocking back to Christianity in droves and it's very confusing to the secularists. Then there is the coming global Christendom which is the explosion of Christianity in China, India, Africa, and South America.
- In the last 30 years, we've cut the unreached people groups in half. In the last 10 years the number of national believers we are training over there has increased 800%. We are realizing that the Great Commission is not the white man's burden. It is the property of believers in every nation, and we are recognizing that they are more than capable of doing it.
- But still, there are 6000 UPG's with no access to the Gospel. 1.48 billion people have NO access to the Gospel. 3.06 billion have little (or nearly no) access to the Gospel.
- John Piper makes this observation: If they are to hear – and Christ commands that they hear – then cross-cultural missionaries will have to be sent and paid for. All the wealth needed to send this new army of good news ambassadors is already in the church. If we, like Paul, are content with the simple necessities of life, hundreds of millions of dollars in the church would be released to take the gospel to the frontiers. The revolution of joy and freedom it would cause at home would be the best local witness imaginable. (*Desiring God*, pp. 166-67)
- 12.5 billion; Less than .04 on every dollar went overseas.
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- This is Jesus who invites us to follow... the Jesus who gave it all up for us. Where would you be without Him? If the God of the Universe opened Himself up to death for us, ought we not to open up full control of our lives for Him? If Jesus, who was rich, for our sakes became poor so we could be rich in Him, ought we not to offer our lives and our riches and our talents back to Him?
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- There are not 2 categories: run of the mill Christians and really devoted followers... Those who recognize the full Lordship of Christ; and those in rebellion. No middle ground.
 - Veronica: I have been 99% faithful to you. Not a percentage question. Is Jesus your Lord, yes or no?
-
- Then He talks about a king going out to war... a lot of commentators think that what He's saying is that you're like the King going out to war against God, and when you realize you can never win against God you settle for peace... absolute surrender.
- The point is: you need to think about it!

- You can either make war against God, or you can come to God with total surrender. In other words, following Jesus will cost you everything; not as much as not following Him will cost you, but it costs you everything.
 - Jesus did not come to build an audience; His intention for this church (and every church) is that we be an army of cross-bearing people.
 - We have a largely Christianized culture... sometimes I read the Bible, what Jesus said about following Him and I think, “there is no way we can really get it!” Ever get that feeling? American Christianity has two characteristics:
- **Indo sacrifice... who’s ready to sign up for that?** Following Jesus ought to be characterized by giving away your life to people who can never pay you back. Your only reward is the resurrection of the just... What is there in your life that you have given up... emptied yourself of it, and you don’t expect to get anything back from it until you see Jesus.

Affluenza

A Jesus without authority (vv. 15–24)

16 But he said to him, “A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.” **17** And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ **18** But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.’ **19** And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’ **20** And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ **21** So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’ **22** And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ **23** And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.’ **24** For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.’ ”

- These are not people who didn’t believe, or were out sinning... Didn’t put the weight on Jesus invitation.

Affluenza

If you know who you are, you usually know where we are going (Albert Einstein: Young man, I know who I am, I can’t

remember where I'm going.)

- At every point, Jesus has to be your most cherished possession; that which you seek above all else. In American Christianity Jesus is often a means to an end. At some point in your life, usually around the birth of your first child, you start to decide that God should be a part of your life... or, you lack purpose or friends or need help in your marriage and so you go back to your church. But Jesus and his Kingdom are not a means to anything... they are the end.
- Here's the other word: cross... Pretty staggering when you think what it was like for the audience who first heard this. For them, the cross was not a pretty piece of jewelry or a sentimental symbol of their faith; it was an instrument of oppression and torture and execution. Think the image of the gas chamber for the Jews in the Holocaust.

BELIEVE

- New campus
- WCC doubled space
- Technological upgrades
- 2 options

September vision: Who we are and where we're going...

- Multi-campus (runpee.com)
- Alabaster flask and Jesus' parable about inviting the lame to our parties
- Love is powerful... When Mother Theresa spoke to the intellectual elites at Harvard, she got a thunderous standing ovation (*A Praying Life*, 128).
-

I feel like looking at the American church, we just don't get it...? Specifically, the radical generosity we are to display. With our church, it means sacrificing to reach people and plant churches.

Discover what God is doing and do your part

- Your life as a movie
- It's not about you... at all! The point is not living and dying but in all things giving glory to God

Living in response to the Gospel...as Jesus has loved you, you should love others.

- 2 Cor 8:9
- Where would you be without Jesus? Same place others are without you! The Gospel is only good news if it gets there in time.

12 He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid." **13** But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, **14** and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

- Radical inexplicable generosity
- What are you doing that can't be explained?

15 When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" **16** But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many." **17** And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' **18** But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' **19** And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' **20** And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' **21** So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' **22** And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' **23** And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.' **24** For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.' "

- Absolutely no rivals

34 “Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? **35** It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

- You ruin manure!

This we never talk about... Marines, always running... I like playing sports... always hated running. If you're going to run, do something to add some adventure... shoot a ball, let people try and tackle you, whatever...

What it means for me personally to live like this:

- Not King, but servant. I get validated not by how many people come to the church but by my calling

What it means for the church:

- Not about programs and buildings, but we want you in ministry

What it means for you

Living sacrificially... not just being served or playing referee

Luke 14:12–14... Parable: loving people who can't love us back

- In American Christianity we have removed the part of Christianity that says":
 - “Deny yourself, take up your cross...” Following Jesus means “purpose,” and “fulfillment.” Yes, it also means: Your whole life is His (no areas over which you retain control), and it is one, like His of sacrifice...
 - **Indo sacrifice... who's ready to sign up for that?** It means a life that is lived, like His with little thought to personal gain, giving to people who can't give back to you! The world says “you're crazy, look at your talents and what you could do with that!” but in your radical generosity people see a picture of Jesus and learn of Him!

God has put into the hands of his delivery people resources... John 6: "don't waste any of it." (Alcorn, *Money*, 296)

I want us to be as excited about giving to the poor as we are about any building project

We have affluenza

Live simply that others may simply live.

4 words from 2 Cor 8–9 about giving

- Response
 - (proves love is genuine)
 - That you get the Gospel
- Stewardship
 - "he who had much had nothing left over" (God gave it to us to give)
 - "increase our seeds for sowing"
- Love
 - Seeing fruit develop in others
- Eternity:
 - investing in eternal fruit

Mission stats from Rankin

Christians go from privilege to non-privilege

- *Chronicles of Narnia* the way He describes Lucy, one of the children, finds out Aslan (who represents Jesus) is a lion...
He's a lion? That sounds terrifying. Is He safe? Little beaver says, "Safe? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the king I tell you."