

Worship Service “Costly”

Pentecost 13, Year C, 4th September, 2022

Philemon 1:8-21 NIV / Luke 14:25-33 NIV

Prelude

Opening Music (Video) [*You Don't Count The Cost*](#)

written by Tom Shapiro and Chris Waters, performed by Billy Dean,
posted to YouTube by Starlight Music.

Welcome Guests / Announcements

Pass the Peace

Opening Music *Holy Spirit, Come With Power* **26**

Call to Worship /Invocation

Loving God, you call us to turn away from our own selfish interests, to take up our cross, and to follow you. To find our lives, may we live them in service of your mission.

As we come before you this morning, give us open hearts and open hands.
Make us eager to hear your voice and seek your guidance.

Open our minds to your ever-present spirit that is always moving within and around us
Open our spirits to your nudging and open our lives to your love. Amen.

Epistle Reading: Philemon 1:8-21 NIV

Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do,

yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as none other than Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—

that I appeal to you for my son Onesimus,[a] who became my son while I was in chains.

Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.

I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you.

I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me

while I am in chains for the gospel.

But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary.

Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever—

no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.

So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.

If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me.

I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self.

I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.

Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

A Time of Prayer

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Today, Lord, I once again take up my cross and follow you.

Forgive me for choosing daily to be complacent. Happiness has been my god and I have believed I'm entitled to it. Forgive me for all the excuses I have for not responding to you immediately, with urgency, and sacrificially. Forgive me for complaining about being bored as I sit and do nothing.

Forgive me for the times I have tried to make carrying my cross more comfortable. I have been too concerned with finding things to make it easier; gadgets and toys to make my cross lighter, smaller, and cushioned. Forgive me for making excuses and not going with you because I was worried about my health, safety, reputation, loneliness, financial security, and ability to handle extreme weather and getting dirty. Forgive me for focusing on my comfort rather than my character.

Forgive me for the times I have not followed you because it wasn't convenient. I didn't want to go out of my way to see the needs around me because then I would feel guilty for not doing something about them. Forgive me for not loving my neighbors— I don't even know their names. Forgive me for trying to pacify my conscience by giving just enough to feel good about myself but not enough to inconvenience my lifestyle.

Today, Lord, I once again take up my cross and follow you. Shake me of my complacency; I want to live daily with an urgency to radically be the change you call me to be. Strip me of my comforts; may my love for you be a driving force to live with joyful surrender. Scratch out my schedule; I don't want my circumstances or timeline to influence my dedication and obedience to take up my cross and follow you. Here I am; Send Me.

May your word pour out of me like water to the thirsty, and may my life be full of the fruit of the Spirit. All I am and have I give back to you with open hands knowing that all my needs you will meet as I go with you. Today I take up my cross and follow you. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Hymn *O Jesus, I have Promised* **447**

Gospel Lesson: Luke 14:25-33 NIV

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said:

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.

And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?

For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you,

saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'

“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?

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.

In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples

Message - “Costly”

Pastor Glenn

What do you think of when you think about the cost of something? Is it a price tag at the store? An amount to be deducted from your account? That's probably the most common response among us. We tend to think in monetary terms when we hear that expression. But there are other ways to think about cost. Sometimes cost is a physical manifestation. Choices we make can exact a physical cost to our bodies, in terms of fatigue, injury, or illness. However, common to all the conceptions of “cost” is a sense of giving up something.

It's defined as what we give up to acquire, accomplish, or produce something. It involves a measure of sacrifice and perhaps loss or penalty in gaining something. Cost requires effort and resources, in whatever form they take. The Greek word for cost, *dapane*, occurs only once in the entire New Testament, in this passage. From the Greek root verb *dapto*, which literally means to tear or devour, there is a real sense of something being torn away and consumed.

In this morning's gospel lesson, Jesus is making some pretty bold statements. It's all centered around this concept of cost, in this case, the cost of being his disciple. It seems that Jesus is saying we need to kick our families to the curb, even our own life, in order to follow him. It's certainly language we can find ourselves getting hung up on, or just brushing past to consider the rest of the passage. Neither course would I recommend.

Throughout this entire passage Jesus is making a point about our priorities. Earlier in the chapter, he tells the parable of the great banquet, where the host chooses to fill his table with outcasts rather than those he invited who had better plans. He also points out that one sometimes has to make tough choices on whether to observe Sabbath laws, or alleviate the suffering of others. This chapter is all about choices and costs. So it should be no surprise that he wraps it up with some clarification.

To follow Jesus means absorbing a cost, a commitment that involves dedication to a different perspective that is often a radical departure from the norms one is used to. It is a life of prophetic witness; witnessing to a way of life often at odds with the norms of life around us, a life with different priorities. As we become disciples, we are expected to give up our possessions, or more succinctly, our need to possess: the urge to acquire, the yearning for success, our petty jealousies, our unfounded stereotypes of others, our prejudices. All those things that hold our attention and distract us from the Christlike walk we are called to.

This was a passage that resonated with Reformation theologian John Calvin. Calvin proposed that the Christian life should be understood from a few basic implications of Jesus' teaching. The first implication he identifies as self-denial. For Calvin, self-denial did not mean the embrace or enjoyment of self-destructive tendencies. He saw self-denial as the way that Jesus offers us freedom from selfishness and, as he put it, the 'deadly pestilence of strife and love of self.' Self-denial is the gift Christ gives us that enables us to dedicate ourselves to God and to seek the things which are of God's will. The person who fails to deny themselves is not able to love God or neighbor, but self-denial leads to the very positive affirmation of the power of love in human relationships of God and neighbor. His second insight, cross bearing, is for us the dimension of self-denial that enables us to face suffering. To bear our cross means to obey God even in our pain and loss, in facing the tragedies, trials and griefs of life.

The image of the cross of Christ appeals to the Christian imagination to elicit our patience in bearing pain. Calvin teaches that the cross of Christ is healing medicine for the diseases and injuries of life, punishment and correction for our mistakes in life, and above all, comfort

when we are persecuted because we stand with God's justice. So according to Calvin, the cross of Christ brings us cheer, honesty to acknowledge our hurt, and a freedom from bitterness. Finally, when Calvin interprets Jesus' call to self-denial and cross bearing, he finds a reliable foundation for our *proper use of the gifts of God in daily life*.

Scripture teaches us "the right use of earthly benefits," both things of necessity, or needs, and things of delight, or pleasures. Calvin counsels a simplicity of life in which we understand ourselves to be on an earthly pilgrimage toward home. We become free from both undue severity and from excessive indulgence. We seek only that which we need, and do not seek after that which we do not need. The resources we are blessed with by circumstance we share as others need and with Calvin's perspective, which is not unlike the Brethren mindset, we will be patient when we find ourselves wanting. If we are blessed with what we need, Jesus isn't implying that we give it all away and leave ourselves destitute. Then we would willingly become a burden and worry for others.

His implication is to reset our priorities away from trying to keep up with the selfish standards of success that the world has to offer and orient them towards looking at the others around us, through the lens of Christ's love for all. The housing and economic crises experienced by so many, particularly in our own backyard in Seattle; the damage to the earth by our addiction to fossil fuels; and the hunger, poverty, and pandemics suffered by people in all parts of the world are certainly calling us in the church to give Jesus' call to costly discipleship a new lease on life.

Which brings us back to our original question. What is your cost? Life meets almost everyone with choices that are emotionally costly. Which brings us to the question of our relationship with our family. Jesus is not saying we abandon our families but that our families now include all who are on this discipleship journey together. We don't avoid risk to our blood family at the expense of our family of faith. We're all in this together. But sometimes our loyalties are tested and we feel competition for our attention and affection.

Along with family, one often has ties to their livelihood, community, their country, their flag and their church, among others, and God. Usually one can keep various loyalties and obligations in balance, but sometimes interests come into conflict. Should one salute the flag and keep the mouth shut when that flag flies over terrible injustice? Should one keep quiet when family members stand for beliefs and practices that fly in opposition to Christ's teachings just to keep the peace, to not make family gatherings uncomfortable? Should one just devote an hour and commute time on Sunday to God, then not inconvenience ourselves in time and effort the rest of the week? Is your cost high enough?

In a country that still draws a line between different people, lifting some and pushing others down, sometimes into the ground, is typing a comment or sharing articles on social media enough? In a city with affordable housing in short supply and homelessness at epidemic levels, is watching the news, or maybe writing an email or making a donation enough? With all that going on, is this hour on Sunday all that this body is called to, is this costly enough?

I think Jesus is saying pretty clearly today that we need to step out of our comfort zone, that this faith can be costly. If you go about your routine and your faith causes you no inconvenience, then it's time to reexamine your faith walk. Carrying a cross entails bearing some weight doesn't it? But that's also the beauty of a family that extends beyond bloodlines. We can help each other bear the load. But when only half try to carry the load, that cross doesn't travel very far.

So my question for you this week is, how can you increase your cost? What more can you do to be a prophetic witness for Christ? How can you make your life less convenient as a follower of Christ? And what more can you do to further the work of his body in this world? I pray you count the cost, and that the cost that is counted is enough. Amen.

A Call to Serve

The cost of discipleship is bold and radical. It requires a countercultural giving of possessions and self. Let us risk the safety of ordinary and choose to build with God by sharing our tithes, offerings, and our very selves.

A Time for Reflection - *Musical Interlude*

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Gracious God we thank you for the opportunity to give our time, talent, and treasure for the building of your Kingdom on earth.

Bless every gift, tithe, and offering that's deposited into your Kingdom today; we offer this prayer in your mighty name. Amen

Hymn *Take My Life* **389**

BENEDICTION - Pastor Glenn

Go now to live and share your faith with all. Love Christ more than even family or Friends, and, in Christ, love all God's people. Do not cling to possessions, but take up your cross and follow Jesus.

And may God shape you in the ways of love and justice; May Christ Jesus refresh your heart; And may the Holy Spirit surround you with grace and peace.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, *In the name of Christ. Amen.*

Postlude