



Called and Sent (Part 1)

(Luke 14:25-33)

Jesus' Great Commission for us is to make disciples. This is the heart of our calling. *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:18-20). A disciple is a follower. To make disciples as our Lord commanded us, we must first be true followers of Jesus ourselves. Who is the true follower of Jesus? Is it someone who goes to church? Is it someone who belongs to the Roman Catholic or Protestant faith? Is it someone who was born into a family that identifies as Christian?

I. The context

Luke begins by describing that *large crowds were traveling with Jesus* (14:25a). Jesus had become popular because of the miracles that he was performing — healing the sick, raising the dead, feeding multitudes, and so on. In John 6, when people searched for Jesus and then found him, he said to them, *"Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill"* (v. 26). Many people followed Jesus merely for the benefits. Thousands watched his miracles and listened to his teachings, but they returned to their homes with lives unchanged, with hearts and minds untransformed, because they did not believe in Jesus. When Jesus was later arrested and subjected to a mock trial, the same crowds shouted, "Crucify him!" If they truly believed in Jesus, then they would have repented of their sins, turned from their former way of life, and embraced him as their Lord and Savior.

II. What is involved in following Jesus?

In Luke 14:28-30, Jesus cited the parable of the builder of a tower. One of the first things that you would do after deciding to build a house or any other project is to sit down and calculate the cost. This involves deliberation. Then in vv. 31-32, Jesus referred to a king who was about to go to war. The king thoughtfully considered whether his men could oppose the other king's men. If not, then he would ask for terms of peace. This is how it is when following Jesus. You deliberate. You use your intellect. You don't decide to follow Jesus based on emotions alone.

- a. Deliberate on your need for Jesus as your Savior. The Bible says that *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23) and that *the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Romans 6:23). Without Jesus, we are lost for all eternity, because our sins separate us from God.
- b. Deliberate on your response to God's love for you. Because of God's great love for us, Jesus came to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, so that we might have life. Understand that God will not force us to love Him back. That is a choice that we have to make. In deliberating your decision, remember that there is no other way to be saved apart from Jesus. *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12).

III. Who is the true follower of Jesus?

- a. One who deliberately puts Christ above everyone, including himself or herself (Luke 14:26-27). Jesus said, *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters ... such a person cannot be my disciple"* (v. 26). Now, what does this mean? Jesus taught his disciples to love one another and to love even their enemies, so this verse does not mean that we should hate our family. It means that we should love Jesus more than we love anyone else, including our family. For example, if you have children, do not let their Sunday morning soccer games take priority over Sunday worship services.

Called and Sent (cont'd)

In Luke 14:27, Jesus said, *“And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”* During the time of Christ, the cross was used by the Romans to execute criminals and rebels. A man who takes up his cross begins his march of death. The Christian disciple who carries his cross is on a journey of denying himself, as this person has in fact died to his old self. Colossians 3:1-3 says: *“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”* To deny yourself involves a deliberate decision to give up self-love and self-centeredness, focusing instead on loving Christ with everything we have. In practical terms, it involves holding your tongue, or giving up the need to get your own way, or working without recognition.

- b. One who deliberately puts Christ above everything, including money and possessions (Luke 14:33). God’s Word deals extensively with the subject of money, because love of money is deeply rooted in man’s sinful heart. Jesus said: *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matthew 6:19-21). Where is your treasure and your heart? Do you generously help those who are in need? Do you give your tithes cheerfully?

REFLECTION:

In Mathew 7:21-23, our Lord Jesus said: *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”* Not all who profess to be Jesus’ followers are true disciples. Pause and consider if you are indeed a true disciple of Jesus. Do you deny yourself daily, in the ordinary circumstances of your life? Remember to feed on God’s Word and to ask the Holy Spirit to fill you, so that you may obey Jesus’ commands and become transformed into His likeness. As you die to yourself, you will experience the abundant life that Jesus promised in John 10:10, and you will live for the glory of Christ.

Review (Knowledge)

Please take a few minutes to read the summary above. What is the highlight of last Sunday’s sermon for you and why?

Sharing/Discussion (Practical Wisdom)

1. Please read Luke 14:25-33. What does it mean to put Jesus first in the daily grind of life?
2. Describe how you are struggling in putting yourself or others first before Jesus. How can you grow in putting Christ first above yourself and above others?
3. Read Matthew 6:19-24 and 1 John 2:15-17. Is your heart wholly Jesus’ or is your heart distracted by other things? Please share. In what ways can you grow in putting Christ first above money and possessions?

Prayer

Take time to pray for one another.