

Counting the Cost?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 October 2017

Preacher: Alistair Chalmers

[0 : 00] Thank you very much, Sabina. Well, good morning. Let me add my welcome to Ian's. My name is Alistair. I'm on the staff here at Brunnsfield. Now, as Sabina read that passage, I'm sure there was some stuff in there that was pretty hard-hitting, some things that maybe we don't like.

So let me just pray before we look at this passage and ask for God's help. Loving God and Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for your word. We thank you for what it has to say to us, for what it has to teach us.

And Lord, I pray this morning, as we look at a difficult passage, that you would help us, that you would help us learn from you. In Jesus' name, amen. Have you ever been in a situation where there were hidden costs?

So when my family and I first moved to Romania, we discovered that if you ordered food in a restaurant, that that was all you would get. So for example, you'd be sitting in a restaurant, you see this menu, and you see this burger, and you'd be like, oh man, that looks so nice.

It looks absolutely amazing. And then, of course, it's cheap, so you order it. But what we didn't realize is that if you ordered it, that was all you would get. So you're sitting there, and the waiter brings out this burger, and you're disappointed.

[1 : 17] There is no chips. There's no sauce. There's no salad. There's no nothing. If you wanted anything else, if you wanted all the trimmings, you had to order them separately. So suddenly that cheap burger isn't that cheap anymore.

There were hidden costs. Well, maybe you've received an email, or you've seen on a billboard that you can fly away to this dream destination for as little as 15 pounds.

You love it. So I looked this week to see how much a flight to Romania would cost. My parents would love it if I went for a visit. And I saw a flight for 15 pounds. It's next to nothing. But they catch you with a hidden cost, because you realize that that flight is one way.

The taxes haven't been added on. There's no luggage. That you might even have to pay to check in. You might even have to use the, you have to pay to use the toilet on some planes. It's insane. So suddenly that flight, which was 15 pounds, or 14.99 as they like to put it, is suddenly 150 pounds. That cheap deal was full of hidden costs.

[2 : 20] But we like to know exactly the price of something. We like to know what something costs, so that we can adjust our lives accordingly, don't we? And I think this principle also carries into many other areas in our lives.

So take faith, for example. I want to know what it is that I believe. And I want to know what implications my beliefs will have on my life. I want to make sure that there are no hidden costs in the Christian faith.

And the passage that Sabina read to us earlier, in it Jesus explicitly tells the crowd that was around him about the cost of following Jesus. Jesus makes sure that there are no hidden costs.

So if you have a Bible in front of you, I'd encourage you to keep it open. And you'll see from verse 25 that Jesus is speaking to a crowd. So throughout the book of Luke, there's a distinction between the crowd and the disciples.

The disciples were a group of people who had given up everything that they had to follow Jesus. They went everywhere he went. They ate with him. They listened to all of his teaching and they acted on it.

[3 : 29] These men were dedicated. They were true disciples. But the crowd weren't like that at all. You see, curiosity is one thing, but being a disciple, being a follower of Jesus is another.

There were many people who accompanied Jesus, but they weren't really following him because they weren't really learning from him. They simply wanted to benefit from his ministry.

They didn't want it to have any implications on their lives. So they followed Jesus at a distance in a way. They listened to his teaching. They might have even enjoyed it. But at the end of the day, they went home and carried on life as if nothing had ever happened. These people were not counting the cost. And all through Luke's gospel, they've been following Jesus.

They've heard his teaching about the kingdom of God. They've heard his teaching about how to get there through the narrow door. They heard last week as Paul took us through the free invitation of God to this great banquet that will be heaven.

[4 : 33] The kingdom of God is the language that the Bible uses to describe the place we call heaven, where God and man dwell together. And in the previous section, Jesus illustrates this kingdom of God, illustrates heaven with a banquet.

But now the crowd are going to hear a sobering truth. And that is that there is a cost to the kingdom. Jesus explains to them, if they want to be in the kingdom of God, then they have to count the cost. If they're to be followers of Jesus, they don't only need to listen to Jesus' teaching, but they need to act on it. They need to respond to it. They need to count the cost. Salvation is so valuable that if receiving it as a gift involves losing everything else, we would be foolish not to accept the loss. And so the big question that Jesus is asking the crowd and asking us this morning is are you counting the cost? Jesus mentions three costs in this passage.

The first is that Jesus must come before yourself. Sorry, Jesus must come before people. Secondly, Jesus must come before yourself. And thirdly, Jesus must come before your possessions.

[5 : 50] So Jesus is asking this morning, are you counting the cost? If you want to be a follower of Jesus, if you want to have a seat at this great banquet that is heaven, have you considered what it takes?

Are you counting the cost? So let's look at these costs and see what Jesus has to teach us. The first cost of the kingdom is that Jesus must come before people in verses 25 to 26.

Jesus before people. So here we see Jesus continuing his journey to Jerusalem. He's on his way to the cross. He's told the crowd about how they can be saved, how they can be in the kingdom of God, that heaven is like a banquet that all people are invited to.

It's a free invitation. Now this is an amazing truth. That there even is a possibility, there is a way for us to dine with the king of kings.

What a privilege. But for that to happen, for us to get to that great banquet, we need to put Jesus before people. Now the language that Jesus uses there in verse 26 is tough stuff, isn't it?

[7 : 01] Now you might be sitting there thinking and asking this question, are you telling me that for me to be a follower of Jesus, I need to hate my family? That I need to hate people and put Jesus and think only about Jesus?

Is that what you're telling me? No. That is not what Jesus is saying. Jesus never says, never says that we should reject our family or our loved ones.

But Jesus is saying that a disciple should love Jesus more than people. Jesus needs to be the priority. Jesus is emphasizing that a disciple must love him more than their family.

A disciple needs to put Jesus as their first priority in their life. Jesus is saying that the love that one of his disciples should have for him is so great, so great that love for anything else would look like hatred.

Now that is difficult stuff. Everyone in the room will know to some extent just how big this cost is. So let me ask you some questions. If you are a son or daughter here this morning, do you love Jesus more than you love your parents?

[8 : 18] If you're a parent here this morning, do you love Jesus more than you love your children? If you have siblings, do you love Jesus more? If you have friends who are just as close as family, do you love Jesus more than you love them?

And if you're a husband or a wife in this room this morning, do you love Jesus more than you love your other half? That is what Jesus is asking. That is the cost of being a follower of Jesus.

Are you counting the cost? Charles Studd was an English missionary in the 1800s and he gives us an amazing example of what this would look like.

Every day he encouraged his wife to say a little poem so that she could keep her life in perspective, so that she could have her priorities right. So every day Priscilla Studd would say, Dear Lord Jesus, you are to me dearer than Charles ever could be.

Could you say that? This really hit me this week as I was preparing this message and I was thinking, can I honestly say that I love Jesus more than I love my wife?

[9 : 26] That I love Jesus more than I love my family? That I love Jesus more than I love people? If I'm honest, probably not. It's difficult.

Jesus says that he is to have our absolute loyalty and commitment. This is what kingdom people should be living like. Jesus first, Jesus before people.

This is one cost of the kingdom. Jesus will not share his heart with another. Jesus will not share the heart of a person with another.

He must come first. If we are followers of Jesus, then we can serve only him. He must have our full allegiance. And Jesus is saying to the crowd, If you wish to be my disciples, if you wish to be in this banquet, in the kingdom of God, then you must surrender all to Jesus.

So let me ask you the question this morning. Are you counting the cost? Have you thought and considered with seriousness what it takes to follow Jesus?

[10 : 35] If you haven't, and you wouldn't say that you're a Christian, I want you to see that there is a cost. Life as a Christian is not a bed of roses, but it is a life of sacrifice and submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.

But let me make one thing crystal clear this morning. Salvation is so valuable that if losing everything else, if it means losing everything else, then we would be foolish not to accept the loss. We would be foolish not to accept the loss because Jesus himself gave up everything so that we can get the most important thing, which is the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with our creator. And Jesus isn't asking us to do this as someone who doesn't know what it's like. In fact, Jesus knows exactly what it's like to have God as a priority in his life.

Remember where he is. He is on the road to Jerusalem. He is on his way to die on a cross. He is on his way to take the punishment for the sins of the world, even though he was sinless.

[11 : 53] Jesus also isn't saying that if we live like this, it will save us. He has made that clear in Luke's gospel. The only way to be saved, the only way to be made right with God is by believing in Jesus, by repenting of our sins, of our wrongdoings, and turning to God.

Jesus isn't asking for moral people, but he's asking for people who understand their brokenness, people who understand their need for forgiveness, and people who turn to him because only Jesus can forgive us.

Only Jesus can reconcile us with God. He is the only way to be saved, not by living a good moral life. Do you see the significance of Jesus' example?

This is the Son of God. This is the person in whom and through whom the world was created and who holds it together. And he stooped down and died on a cross.

Jesus counted the cost. Jesus knew where he was going. Jesus saw the cost and with absolute certainty, he said, yes, I am willing to pay it so that you and I can be reconciled with God.

[13 : 12] Now maybe you're here this morning, you say, yes, I believe this. I understand it. I have counted the cost. And I look out this morning and I know some of you are in difficult circumstances.

Some of you feel this cost so heavily weighing on your hearts. Well, let this passage encourage you that Jesus understands. Jesus knows what you are going through.

He knows your struggle. I also want you to consider what this means for your personal evangelism. What does this mean for you as you go and tell people about Jesus and the gospel?

So often I think we try to make the gospel more attractive. We like to sugarcoat it. We don't like talking about judgment and sin because nobody likes to hear that. But if we are to be faithful in our witness of Jesus, then we need to tell people that there is a cost to following him.

And the first part of that cost is that Jesus must come before people. Jesus before people. The second cost is that Jesus must come before yourself.

[14 : 19] Verse 26 to 27. Jesus before yourself. Jesus goes on and he says that we are to hate our own lives. Again, we need to remember that Jesus is saying that the love for our family and our own life must come secondary to the love that we have for him.

Look at verse 27 with me. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Jesus is saying that if we are to be followers of him, if we are to seriously count the cost of being in the kingdom, then we need to pick up our cross and follow him.

Now I don't think the seriousness of what Jesus is saying here comes across in our culture today. So when people think of the cross nowadays, they would usually think of Jesus.

Maybe they'd think of a church building or something like that. Or maybe they'd link it with an emotional point in their lives where the cross was an encouragement to them. So they look at the cross with fondness.

We all see things differently based on the culture we're in. So for example, I would have absolutely no problem chucking on some wellies and some dirty trousers and t-shirt and jumping into a pig pen.

[15 : 35] I used to work in a farm which had pigs so I'd actually quite enjoy that. But the Jews of Jesus' day, if they would have even heard that, they would be appalled. They wouldn't even go anywhere near a pig pen because pigs were unclean animals.

So do you see how culture changes the way we see and hear things? So we might look at the cross with fondness but the crowd, the cross only meant one thing to the crowd and that thing was death. And what Jesus says would come as even more of a shock because he says that they are to carry their cross. Now a person, when they were to be crucified, they had to carry their cross until the point where they were to be put to death.

So in the minds of the crowd, you can imagine them thinking and asking the question, in order for me to be in this banquet, are you saying that I have to die? Well in a sense, that is exactly what Jesus is saying.

If we are carrying our cross, it means that we die to ourselves. It means that you can't carry anything else if you're carrying a cross. You've given everything to Jesus.

[16 : 48] If we are following Jesus wholeheartedly, if we are to count the cost, we must take up our cross and follow him. We need to put Jesus and his kingdom first.

Jesus has mentioned this before. If you want, you can turn back with me to Luke chapter 9 in verse 23. Luke chapter 9, beginning of verse 23. Jesus says, whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it. But whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world and forfeit or lose their very self?

If we are to be followers of Jesus, then we must count the cost. This means that we have to pick up our cross and follow Jesus.

We need to put him as our priority. Now let me encourage you this morning and say that I am seeing so many, I am seeing this in so many of your lives.

[17 : 58] You understand the cost of the kingdom. You have counted the cost and you're living it out. I know it isn't easy. Jesus knows it isn't easy. But it is such an encouragement for me to see so many of you leading the way as examples of what it means to put Jesus before yourself.

Are you counting the cost? Are you putting Jesus and the kingdom of God above everything? This means that decisions are no longer simply made between myself and I.

Or decisions are no longer made between Sabina and I. But instead, putting Jesus first means that my decisions are evaluated not by what is best for myself, not by what is best for my comfort or for my finances, all of which are good things.

But all of my decisions are made with this question or should be made with this question in the back of my mind. Will the outcome of this decision lead to me leaving a comfy life?

or will it lead to me carrying my cross for Jesus Christ? We see this so evidently nowadays in North Korea, don't we?

[19 : 13] Where if anyone decides to follow Jesus, they face imprisonment, torture, and sometimes death. But still, there are approximately 300,000 Christians there.

Why? Because they have counted the cost and they are carrying their cross daily. Practically, for us in the UK, this might mean not accepting a job promotion because it would mean that we can't serve Jesus as much.

This might mean that you get ridiculed at work because of your faith. This might mean that you get shunned by your family because you've just become a Christian. The cost is real.

This sounds difficult and that's the point. This might sound too difficult but let me say that salvation is so valuable that if receiving it as a gift involves losing everything else, we would be foolish not to accept the loss.

Maybe you aren't a Christian this morning and I want you to consider an eternity with God. Consider eternal freedom. Consider the forgiveness of sins and a relationship with your creator.

[20 : 30] What is better? To live for an eternity, the eternity for which you were created or to live these few years that you have here on earth for yourself?

Are you willing to count the cost and put Jesus before yourself? the last cost of the kingdom is that Jesus must come before your possessions verses 28 to 33.

Jesus before possessions. Now Jesus uses two illustrations to express the importance of counting the cost and each little story has a rhetorical question in it which is used to point to the obvious answer.

So the first story is a man who wants to build a tower. Now obviously if he's going to build something he needs to estimate how much it's going to cost. So he's going to hire himself an architect to draw up plans.

He's going to see how much planning permission is going to cost. He's going to approach different construction companies and contractors to get different quotes and he's going to check his bank.

[21 : 33] He's going to see if he has enough money. There is no point him diving into this project because before he realizes it he might not even have the foundations down and he's run out of money.

Nobody builds a mansion when their funds only allow them to build a garden shed. No, instead this man is going to count the cost. And the second story is of a king who's going to go to war with another king but he is hugely outnumbered.

So he'll sit down with his army advisors. He'll look at war strategies. He'll count his men. He'll check out the landscape to see if he has the upper hand or not.

He is not going to simply rush into war with a smaller army because he thinks he's got it in the bag because he thinks he can do it. No, he is going to sit down and count the cost.

And with these two stories Jesus is stressing to the crowd that has been following him for a while. the crowd that have listened to his teaching but done absolutely nothing about it. They've benefited from his ministry.

[22 : 39] They've gotten out of it what they wanted but they haven't thought about what it would mean for them to be true followers of Jesus. They hadn't counted the cost. And Jesus uses these stories to say that they need to sit down and seriously think about it.

They need to seriously think about whether or not they can handle the cost and whether or not the cost outweighs the rewards. And then Jesus takes it a step further.

And he says that if they do not give up everything then they cannot be his disciples. Jesus is thinking right now of material possessions.

Do you see that with the tower and the city? With a tower a man is focused on his tower. He's not concerned about anything else. With a city he's focused on his city, his property.

If he's going to submit to this other king he needs to probably hand over some of his city. So it's all about possessions. Jesus comes before possessions.

[23 : 45] All of the things that we own need to be as good as lost to us. And we need to put Jesus first. Now Jesus isn't saying that it's bad to own things because it isn't.

But the priority in our lives matters. Now this can affect you if you are rich or if you are poor. Is your constant desire to have more money?

To have a nicer car because you've been driving around in a hand-me-down for the past few years? Do we constantly think about a desire to own our first home or maybe our second or a holiday home?

Now none of these are bad things but if they come before Jesus then we have a problem. We haven't counted the cost. Now this is difficult. This is tough stuff.

The costs are real but are you counting them? Are you counting the cost? Can you say that you put Jesus before people? That you put Jesus before yourself and that you put Jesus before your possessions?

[24 : 55] Now Jesus doesn't ask this of people without knowing what it's like. In fact Jesus knows better than anybody what it's like. He put God's kingdom above his family because in his ministry he travelled around Judea and Galilee preaching about the kingdom of God.

Jesus put the kingdom above himself because he literally took up his cross and went and died so that we could be forgiven and reconciled with God.

Jesus put God's kingdom above everything because Jesus the son of God who was born in an animal shelter without a bed. The son of God lived a life on the road travelling towards Jerusalem.

He died a criminal's death even though he was completely innocent. The only innocent person that ever lived. Jesus the son of God became nothing. he gave up everything. Doesn't that make our cost seem minimal? Seems small? If all I have to do is love Jesus more than anything surely that is small in comparison to the salvation and forgiveness that Jesus has offered me.

[26 : 09] Are you counting the cost? If we go through life counting the cost and following Jesus this will lead to us being distinct and being different it will lead to us being salty if you will.

That's what verses 34 and 35 are talking about. They say that a Christian, a follower of Jesus, if they count the cost and live it out then they will be living a salty life.

These verses encourage us to be committed to living this life. Only then are we salty if we are committed and we stick it out. So let me ask you this morning as an individual and let me ask us this morning as a church family, how are we tasting?

Are we salty? Are we living lives that are distinct and different? Are we carrying our cross? Are we putting Jesus before people, before ourselves and before our possessions?

are we making people aware that there is a cost to following Jesus? The cost is huge but it is insignificant in comparison to the greatness of an eternity with God.

[27 : 28] Salvation is so valuable that if receiving it as a gift means that we lose everything else we would be foolish not to accept the loss. Jesus counted the cost and he paid it.

History is filled of men and women who counted the cost and live lives glorifying God. This room is filled with godly men and women who are counting the cost and are living examples of what it means to be salty, of what it means to live a life wholeheartedly dedicated to God.

The challenge I want you to think about this morning is can you wholeheartedly repeat the words of this song? All to Jesus I surrender All to him I freely give I will ever love and trust him in his presence daily live.

I surrender all. I surrender all. All to thee my blessed saviour I surrender all. As I close this morning let me ask you that question.

Are you counting the cost of the kingdom? Are you counting the cost? Let's pray together. Loving God and heavenly father we thank you so much for the free offer of salvation.

[28 : 52] We thank you that you sent your son to die on the cross so that we can be reconciled to you. Lord we confess that the cost for us is big and we feel it in our lives.

Lord give us strength to carry our cross. Give us strength to live lives that are wholeheartedly dedicated to you. Not that we would be glorified Lord but that people would see you in us and that they would see that you are a great God.

we ask this in your son's most holy and precious name. Amen.