

**COUNT THE COST**  
**Parable: Building a Tower and Going into Battle**  
**Sermon 12**  
**Lk 14:25-35**

## I. ILLUSTRATIONS OF TOTAL COMMITMENT

**‘STUPID’ SACRIFICES?** [apocryphal stories?]

- **Alexander—ordered 10 soldiers over the cliff—convinced besieged city to surrender**
- **Shaka Zulu—ordered regiment to do same—to demonstrate his soldiers were fearless**
- **Blogs ridicule this as stupid—senseless—nobody would really do something so dumb!**
- **Western culture—does not understand absolute commitment—self-sacrifice**

**REAL COMMITMENT—THE ‘DIVINE WIND’**

- **After allies won Battle of Midway (1942)—tide turned against Japanese Navy**
- **After Battle of Philippine Sea (1944)—Japanese naval air was ineffective**
- **They had planned for quick war—underestimated length and attrition**
- **Allies bearing down on Japanese Islands and homeland**
- **Solution—destroy enemy ships with suicide attacks**
  - **Kamikaze = ‘divine wind’**
  - **Special attack units formed Fall 1944**
  - **Samurai principle of Boshido code—honor and loyalty to the end**
  - **Death before dishonor, defeat, capture, or shame**
- **Yukio Seki—born 29 Sep 1921—Iyo Saijo**
  - **Only son of antique dealers**
  - **Graduated Japanese Naval Academy one month before Pearl Harbor—age 20**
  - **Served at Battle of Midway**
  - **Flight school—trained as dive bomber**
  - **One of the best pilots—instructor at flying academy—age 23**
  - **Sept 1944—left bride of 4 months, Marika, in Yokohama with his widowed mother**
  - **In Philippines—commanded 301<sup>st</sup> Fighter Squadron attached to the 201<sup>st</sup> Flotilla**
- **When Group Commander Asaici Tamai asked him to lead the first Special Attack Unit**
  - **Closed his eyes—lowered his head—thought for 10 seconds—then replied:**
  - **“Please do appoint me to the post.”**
- **Took off early Wednesday morning— 25 Oct 1944—over Leyte Gulf**
  - **Mitsubishi A6M Zero**
  - **Loaded with one 550-pound bomb**
  - **Enough fuel for a one-way trip**
- **Scored a direct hit on escort carrier USS St Lo**
  - **First ship sunk by kamikaze attack**
- **Japanese Navy failed in overall objective**
- **But pilots achieved their goal: death before dishonor and defeat**
- **3800 pilots died—19% succeeded—sank 47 ships—damaged 368—9700 casualties**
- **VADM Takijiro Nishi—ordered kamikaze missions—committed *harikari*—16 Aug 45**

## II. SETTING AND SITUATION

1. JESUS WAS TEACHING ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM
2. HE HAD JUST TOLD THE PARABLE OF THE DINNER—WHERE ALL WERE WELCOME
  - Matthew’s version warns—one must be dressed properly for admittance—[22:11-14](#)
3. LARGE CROWDS WERE THRONGING HIM—HIS POPULARITY WAS AT ITS ZENITH
4. JESUS DID SOMETHING MOST PREACHERS TODAY WOULD NEVER DARE DO!
  - He put on the brakes—and raised the stakes!

### III. BIBLICAL TEXT—Lk 16:19-31

Lk 14:25-35—25 *Now large crowds were going along with 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 carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. 28 For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? 29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, 30 saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ 31 Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. 33 So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. 34 “Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? 35 It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

### IV. EXPLANATION

#### A. BIBLICAL CONTEXT

1. NO PARALLEL PARABLES
2. BUT FIVE OTHER HARD CALLS TO DISCIPLESHIP
  - a. When He **sent out the Twelve**—[Mt 10](#)
    - They would become like **sheep among wolves**
    - Handed over to **courts** and **flogged** in synagogues
    - **Stand before governors** and kings as witnesses
    - **Betrayed** by brothers and children
    - **Hated** by all persons because of Him
    - **Persecuted** from city to city
    - **But**—He **encouraged** them—**do not fear** them
    - Closes with passage parallel to this one—[vv37-39](#)

- b. After **Peter's confession** at Caesarea Philippi—**Lk 9**  
*If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*
- c. After the **Transfiguration**—**Lk 9**—He responded to eager followers
  - 1. *I will follow you wherever you go*
    - **Response:** Foxes have holes, birds have nests, but the Son of Man . . .
  - 2. *Lord, permit me to go and bury my father*
    - **Response:** Let the dead bury the dead
  - 3. *Lord, first permit me to say good-bye to those at home*
    - **Response:** No one who puts his hand to plow and looks back is fit for Kingdom
- d. **Rich Young Ruler**—**Mk 10**  
*Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven—then come, take up your cross and follow me*
- e. **James and John** wanting prime positions—**Mk 10**  
*Can you drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?*

## B. PURPOSE

- 1. JESUS' INTENTION
  - Jesus was not interested in large numbers—He did not want diluted quantity
  - He sought sincere, dedicated followers—He wanted enduring quality
- 2. HE WAS LOOKING FOR **GENUINE** DISCIPLES
  - Who count the cost
  - Who weigh the consequences
  - Who make a sincere and total commitment
- 3. TWO **DIMENSIONS** OF THESE PARABLES
  - a. Jesus **Himself**—had already counted the cost
    - He was building—God's kingdom
    - He was engaging in battle—with Satan and his spiritual forces
  - b. Jesus challenged would-be **disciples**—to weigh their commitment
    - Could He count on them to finish building the kingdom—and win the spiritual battle?

## C. FIRST JESUS GIVES—THE HARD CALL OF DISCIPLESHIP—**vv26-27**

- 1. JESUS' CALL WAS RADICALLY DIFFERENT
  - a. Rabbinic discipleship

- Was a commitment to the **Law**—and Jewish **cultural** way of life
  - Followers attached themselves to a **rabbi**
  - In order to learn how to follow the Law—and be a good Jew
- b. Jesus' call was devotion to **Himself**—as absolute Lord
1. To personal **fellowship**—**identifying** with the Master—personal **obedience**
    - Not to follow a theological system
    - Not to argue a philosophic position
    - Not to obey a set of rituals
    - Not to promote a cultural way of life
  2. But to **follow** Him—and the way of the **Cross**
2. A NEW ALLEGIANCE—**v26**
- a. Willing to give up old loyalties—for total loyalty to Christ
  - b. Hating family and self— is a hyperbole of love
    1. '**Hate**' = comparative meaning—compared to love
    2. **Gen 29:30-31**—Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah
      - Hebrew term 'saneh' = He *hated* Leah—did not mean he *literally* hated her
      - Rather—his love for Leah was like hatred compared to how he loved Rachel
    3. Explained by **Mt 10:37**

*Whoever loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me*
    4. Meaning = your love for me is so great, it makes your love for family look like hatred
3. BEARING THE CROSS—**v27**
- a. Willingness to die—death of self
    - **Carrying a cross—in Roman times**—meant one was on the way to execution
    - Shifts focus from self-centeredness—to submitting completely to another
  - b. Taking up the cross—7 times in Gospels—3 occasions
  - c. Cross-bearing
    1. **Jesus** set the **example**—He was about to do this literally
    2. Our goals and lifestyle are set by following Him—the way of the cross
      - **Not self**-fulfillment—but accomplishing the purpose for which He created us
      - Not a one-time event—but **continuous** (present tense)
 

*anyone who is not continuously carrying his cross and following me*
    3. **Seriousness**—Jesus made this truly **hard**—raised the bar!
      - **Three** times—He says—*he cannot be my disciple if*
        - **v26**—you don't **hate** your family

- v27—you don't take up your **cross**
- v33—you don't **give up** all your possessions

**D. THE PARABLES—LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP—vv28-32**

1. TWO DIFFERENT WAYS TO MEASURE COMMITMENT

- a. **Count** the Cost—vv28-30
- b. **Weigh** the Consequences—vv31-32

2. **FIRST**—COUNT THE COST—THE TOWER PARABLE—vv28-30

a. Jesus the Carpenter

- Probably saw more than one derelict tower abandoned
- Maybe He even worked on some—carpenters were stone masons

b. Tower—was in vineyard—Is 5:2 and Mk 12:1

- To protect it against robbers during harvest time
- **Example—unfinished building**

Ryugyong Hotel—Pyongyang, North Korea—Construction began 1987  
 Kim Il Sung's goal—build massive—world-renowned modern showcase  
 Plan—tallest hotel in the world—105 stories—1080 feet pyramid  
 Estimated cost \$230 million—to open 1989—for 13<sup>th</sup> World Youth Festival  
 Poor planning drove up cost—\$750 million—2% of country's GDP  
 Abandoned 1992—government broke—foreign investment collapsed  
 Construction resumed 2008—to celebrate Kim Il Sung's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday  
 Still unfinished—face fitted with LED lights—to show animated film scenes

c. Jesus' message resonated—in a **shame/honor** culture

1. Discipleship should be

- a. Product of careful decision-making—not instant and flippant carelessness
- b. A total commitment—to work hard to the end—and *finish* the Lord's work

2. Following Jesus **is not**

- a. Just initial **enthusiasm**
- b. Just joining a cause that is **honorable—popular—or profitable**
  - ☆ **Example Cicero**—advised public officials not to think only of the honor but to consider whether he had the ability to succeed—*“In a word, before undertaking any enterprise, careful preparation must be made.”*

c. Just **occasionally** following

- ☆ **Seed on shallow ground**—withered in noonday sun of persecution

☆ **Seed among thorns**—choked by worry and worldly concerns

3. **SECOND**—WEIGH THE CONSEQUENCES—THE BATTLE PARABLE—**vv31-32**

- a. **Weigh** the risks—make a **choice**—and live with the **consequences**
- b. **OT example: 1 Kgs 22:1-40**
  - **Jehoshaphat and Ahab consult—whether to do battle with Syrians**
  - **False prophets—led by Zedekiah—give bad advice—fight!**
  - **Micaiah—prophet of the Lord—gives right and wise advice—do not fight!**
  - **Ahab was killed in battle of Ramoth-gilead**
- c. Two consequences—when presented with the discipleship opportunity
  1. **Either** take up the cross—**or**—do not take up cross
  2. **Doing so**—means **losing** one’s self-life now—but **gaining** everlasting life
  3. **Not doing so**—means **gaining** self-life now—but **losing** everlasting life

*Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses . . . Lk 9:24*
- d. **Delaying** the decision **is not a neutral** option—it is making a decision!
  - The king going into battle—has limited time to sue for peace
  - For salvation—sooner or later—time will run out—to make the right decision

**E. GIVING IT ALL UP—JESUS SUMMARIZES—v33**

1. FOLLOWING CHRIST CHANGES OUR WHOLE PERSPECTIVE

- a. Are we willing to ‘**give up**’ everything to follow Christ?
  - Does not mean ‘give **away**’—but give **up** to the Lord
  - Instead—yield ownership of all we are/have—to Him—to be used for His purpose
- b. Willing to live **not by worldly standards**—but adopting **kingdom values**
  - Give up love of **power**—for humble service
  - Give up love of **wealth**—for poverty of spirit
  - Give up love of **self**—for spirit of generosity

2. CONTINUOUS PROCESS—NOT JUST A ONE-TIME DECISION

- o Keeps on giving—*giving up all his possessions* = verb is continuous present tense

**F. DISCIPLES MUST BE USEFUL—THIS IS OUR PURPOSE—vv34-35**

1. WE ACCOMPLISH THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH GOD DESIGNED US

2. PURPOSES OF SALT

- o **Preservation** of food—to save it
- o **Seasoning**—to flavor it
- o **Purifying** agent and antiseptic against decay

- o **Fertilizer**—growth agents
- o **Wages**
- o **Covenants** made with salt

### 3. DISCIPLES AS SALT

#### a. Biblical **passages**

- *You are the salt of the earth*—Mt 5:13
- *Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with others*—Mk 9:50

#### b. Disciples' three **purposes**

1. **Saving** agents—delivering the Good News—of **everlasting life**
2. **Moral** agents—acting as preservatives
  - Do we bring moral **accountability** to society?
  - Not just in word—but also in deed
3. **Social** agents—seasoning agents in society
  - Are we **distinctive**?
  - Do live as **examples** of a distinctively **godly** lifestyle

## V. APPLICATION

### 1. THE GOSPEL IS NOT

- a. **Easy believism**—so popular in America today.
- b. **Prosperity** gospel—that blesses us because we have a positive attitude
- c. About popular **marketing** strategies—that will boost church attendance
- d. **Only about** going to **heaven**—but also about how to live this side of heaven

### 2. THE GOSPEL IS FREE—BUT IT IS HARD

- a. Being **sold out** for Christ—all the way!
- b. **Dying** to self—taking up our **cross**—the one He calls each of us to carry—**obeying** Him
- c. **Renouncing** the **power of things** to possess us—it is important to **say no** to the world!
- d. But even more powerful—is **saying yes** to the Lord—**persuasive power of new affection**

## VI. INVITATION

**'TIS SO SWEET TO TRUST IN JESUS**

**Lord, You give the great commission:  
Heal the sick and preach the Word.  
Lest the Church neglect its mission,  
And the Gospel go unheard,  
Help us witness to Your purpose**

With renewed integrity,  
With the Spirit's gifts empower us  
For the work of ministry.

Lord, You call us to Your service:  
In My name baptize and teach.  
That the world may trust Your promise,  
Life abundant meant for each,  
Give us all new fervor, draw us  
Closer in community.  
With the Spirit's gifts empower us  
For the work of ministry.

Lord, You make the common holy:  
This My body, this My blood.  
Let us all, for earth's true glory,  
Daily lift life heavenward,  
Asking that the world around us  
Share your children's liberty  
With the Spirit's gifts empower us  
For the work of ministry.

Lord, You show us love's true measure:  
Father, what they do, forgive.  
Yet we hoard as private treasure  
All that You so freely give.  
May Your care and mercy lead us  
To a just society.  
With the Spirit's gifts empower us  
For the work of ministry.

Lord, You bless with words assuring:  
I am with you to the end.  
Faith and hope and love restoring,  
May we serve as You intend  
And, amid the cares that claim us,  
Hold in mind eternity.  
With the Spirit's gifts empower us  
For the work of ministry.