

The Journey: It's Worth the Cost

1. What's the biggest trip you've ever taken? Did you take the great American Road Trip to Yellowstone? The Grand Canyon? Wally World? Maybe it was a mission trip to Mexico, or you studied for a semester abroad in Asia. Maybe it was a two weeks in Europe? You pondered works of art in the Louvre, looked out over Paris from atop the Eifel Tower, sailed the canals of Venice, and marveled at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.
2. Think about your biggest trip. How much did it cost you? How long did you have save? Or how long did you spend paying it off? The truth is we will spend lots of money for a journey we think is "worth it." We have a term for destinations that aren't worth it– tourist trap. But there are some places we will save for years, just so we can go there, and see it, and do it. We want to have the experience. We want the memories. It's worth it.
3. I want to talk to you this morning about another journey that is worth it. We are going with Jesus on his last journey to Jerusalem. He has an appointment with destiny there. Over ten chapters in Luke, Jesus slowly makes his way toward Jerusalem, and he knows full well what awaits him there. He knows the trumped up charges, he knows the abandonment and betrayal of his followers. He knows the beatings and the abuse. He knows the cross and the death he will suffer.
4. As Jesus makes this journey, he teaches his followers, both then and now, both them and us, what it really means to follow him. We aren't just following Jesus in this journey. We are following him in the journey of life. And the big idea for this morning's message is this: The journey is worth the cost. Jesus is worth whatever it costs to follow him.
5. Jesus' journey to Jerusalem stretches from Luke 9:51 to chapter 19:41. Jesus has several encounters and teachings over this period where he actually seems to be discouraging people from following him. Every time someone wants to follow him he throws cold water on their enthusiasm for following him. I mentioned last week that Jesus reaches the peak of his popularity with the feeding of the 5,000 in Luke 9. But they didn't love Jesus. They didn't want to follow Jesus. They were just interested in his benefits. But once he starts heading to Jerusalem, he seems more interested in thinning the herd, if you will. Oh, he's still looking for followers, but he wants FOLLOWERS, if you get my meaning.
6. Let me give you quick tour of this journey. At the end of Luke 9, Jesus encounters three potential followers and he stresses the hardships and demands his followers will face. Toward the end of chapter 12 he offers this stark warning.

Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law. (12:51-53)

7. In chapter 13, someone asks Jesus if only a few people are going to be saved. He tells them to strive to enter through the narrow door. He says that there will be many people who will try to enter, but God will say, "I do not know you."
 8. In chapter 14, there are large crowds traveling with Jesus, and Jesus drops this bomb— unless they hate their wife and children, take up their cross, and count the cost before following him, they cannot be his follower. In Luke 18, a very wealthy and influential synagogue ruler comes to Jesus and seems very interested in following him. We would see him as highly qualified, but Jesus turns him away, leaving him very sad, because Jesus asked him to sell everything he had and give it to poor.
 9. All of these encounters center around one basic idea— the cost of following Jesus. This is one of the great mysteries of the faith. Salvation is free – but it costs you everything you have. Following Jesus costs you nothing and everything.
 10. Let's back up to chapter 9, and begin with the passage there. There are three costs that Jesus says we need to be willing to pay to follow him. We pick up the story in verse 57. Jesus is walking along the road. He is travelling in his journey, and as he's going there are several people that are interested in following him.
 11. Potential follower 1 seems like the kind of follower Jesus would really want. He says, "*I will follow you wherever you go.*" He's like, "I'm on board. I'm all about this. I'm with you wherever you go." We'd be all over this guy. Sign him up. He's committed.
- I. The Convenience Cost – Jesus is worth more than our comfort**
1. This brings us to the first cost of following Jesus. It is the convenience cost. Following Jesus is worth more than your comfort.
 2. If you read between the lines, Jesus' response to potential follower 1 is, "Really? Will you really follow me wherever I go? Jesus says, "I'm not one of those rock star Rabbis who travels from village to village in style with his yes-men posse in tow, staying in the nicest hotels, and collecting hefty offerings from his adoring fans.
 3. Remember where Jesus is going. He's on a journey to Jerusalem. He's going to die on a cross. This man is saying, "I will follow you wherever you go," but he has no idea where Jesus is going. He was

envisioning power and glory and riches, and honor, but he didn't think there might be pit stops on cross or in tomb on the way.

4. Jesus tells him just how uncomfortable and inconvenient it can be to follow him. "*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.*" Jesus says, "We're essentially homeless. Even wild animals have a place to call home, but not us. Do you wanna sign up for that?" The King of Glory, for whom heaven is his throne and earth is his footstool, on this journey, doesn't even have a place to lay his head. He definitely wasn't promising this guy his best life now.

5. Jesus sees another potential follower, and Jesus gives him an invitation, "*Follow me.*" And the man doesn't reject Jesus. He doesn't say, "No." He even calls him, "Lord." He has just one seemingly reasonable request. "*First let me go and bury my father.*"

II. The Relationship Cost – Jesus is worth more than our loved ones

1. And with this we see the second cost of following Jesus– the relationship cost. Jesus is worth more than our loved ones. We would see this guy as a good prospect. We would pray with him, ask him if there was anything we could do, and call him next week. He's almost there. He's practically on board.

2. But Listen to what Jesus says, "*Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.*" Whoa! I thought Jesus was supposed to be loving and gracious. This seems like jerk Jesus. Where's the compassion. There's this whole meme on the internet about jerk Jesus. One site which claims to give 50 reasons why Jesus is a jerk. The first 6 all have to do with this point right here– that Jesus wants priority over all your other relationships. Of course, they misconstrue Jesus' words, take them out of context, and miss the larger point entirely, but even we struggle with verses like this.

3. There're a couple of things that could be going on here that would help us understand this. First, it doesn't say the man's father is even dead. Here's what I mean. If he's already died and ready to be buried, then the custom would be that this man should be secluded in a time of ritual mourning, and already starting the traditional burial process. But he hasn't, so this leads a lot of scholars to think that his dad is still alive. If so, then what the man is saying is, "I'll follow you as soon as my dad dies."

4. In Jewish culture under Roman rule, there were no 401ks, IRAs, or social security. There weren't retirement communities where rode around on golf donkeys. Your social security in your old age was your family. When you became too elderly to provide for yourself, then that responsibility fell to the eldest son. This guy may have an elderly father he is responsible for, and he won't be free from that responsibility until he dies. Any of you that have cared for aging parents know that this can take years.

5. The other possibility is this. In the 1st Century, traditional Jewish burial took place in two steps. The first is what we see happen with Jesus upon his death, the body is wrapped in linen layered in a

spice mixture. A year later, after the soft tissue has decomposed, the son would return to the tomb and put the bones in a stone box, called an ossuary. If this is what is going on here, then his dad has already been buried the first time. This guy wants to delay Jesus by up to a year before he follows him.

6. Let me be clear. Jesus' isn't against loving your family and taking care of family responsibilities. This was a biblical responsibility that was taught in the Old Testament. "*Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.*" Later, Paul will write in 1 Tim. 5:8, "*If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*" We just did a whole series on marriage and family from the Bible. Jesus isn't contradicting all of that.

7. Jesus is using a teaching technique here called hyperbole. It's an exaggerated statement to make a point. Jesus often uses this approach. "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." He uses it several times here in Luke during his journey to Jerusalem. I already mentioned Luke 14, "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." In Luke 18, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than it is for a rich person to enter heaven."

8. Some of these things cannot be taken literally. A camel can't go through the eye of a needle, and yet Jesus says that with God it is possible for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Some of these teachings, if taken literally, would lead to some rather absurd and even disastrous results. Bodies would be piling up in the church because no one would bury them. Marriages would be in ruins because we hate our spouses. Our children would suffer neglect and abandonment because we hate them. But we know the scriptures tell us to love our husbands and wives, to love our children. Jesus is trying to tell us how much our relationship with him is really worth.

9. Here's the problem. How often do we let our relationships and our responsibilities to those relationships become an excuse. How often do we put God off? How often do we ignore his invitation, because we have something important to do first? We have family commitments to take care of. And we make promises. Well, as soon as I get done with this? As soon as I get my degree. As soon as I get established in my career. As soon as my family is on solid financial ground and I don't have to work so many hours. As soon as I get our marriage figured out. As soon as the kids are older and are in school. As soon as they kids graduate. And we can keep putting Jesus off. There will always be some important responsibility to get in the way and keep us from following Jesus fully.

10. Jesus confronts this tendency head on. "*Let the dead bury their own dead.*" No, Jesus isn't talking about zombies here. He is using *dead* both literally and figuratively in the same sentence. What

he's saying is "Let the spiritually dead bury the physical dead." His point is this. There is a death worse than physical death. It's what Revelation calls the second death. It's spiritual death. It is to die and go into eternity without Jesus. If you use this life as an excuse not to follow Jesus now, you're going to go into the next life without him.

11. According to our sentiments, it sounds cold. It sounds harsh. But Jesus is trying to topple one of the biggest idols in our heart— and that's family and relationships with loved ones. Family is good. Caring for your family is righteous and holy, but if family keeps you from following Jesus, then it has become an idol. Jesus isn't calling us to love our family any less. We are to love him that much more.

12. The point is that Jesus must come first, even before family. Don't let good things get in the way of the best thing. Don't let important things keep you from the most important thing. Jesus emphasizes this point with the third person who wants to follow Jesus. He says, *"I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home."* But Jesus says, *"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."*

13. Now flip or swipe a few pages to Luke 18. I want to take you to another potential follower.

¹⁸ *And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"* ¹⁹ *And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone."* ²⁰ *You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'"* ²¹ *And he said, "All these I have kept from my youth."* ²² *When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."* ²³ *But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.* ²⁴ *Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"* ²⁵ *For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."* ²⁶ *Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"* ²⁷ *But he said, "What is impossible with man is possible with God."*

For this guy it wasn't his comfort or family that kept him from following Jesus. It was his wealth and possessions.

III. The Treasure Cost – Jesus is worth more than our stuff.

1. There is a treasure cost to following Jesus. Jesus is worth more than your stuff. When you follow Jesus he will ask you to do things with your stuff, he will ask you to make decisions with your money that don't always add up on a calculator.

2. Do you notice how Jesus tells each one of these people something different? He doesn't tell this guy to let the dead bury the dead, and he didn't tell the others to sell everything they have. Because Jesus knows their hearts and minds. Each one of Jesus' responses was tailored to the person he was talking to, because he knows their idols. He confronts them where they are most sensitive.

3. Jesus says this to this man, not because he knows he has great wealth. Jesus says it because he knows his great wealth has him. Jesus knows there can only be one “most important” in your life.

4. The point isn’t that you have sell everything you have to follow Jesus, or that you will turn your back on your family, the point is that you would if you had to. If came down to it, if you had to make a choice between Jesus and whatever else it was, you would give whatever up, so that you could have Jesus.

It Costs Something to Follow Jesus

5. Our problem with these verses is that it hasn’t really cost us anything to follow Jesus. Let me ask you the question. What has it cost you to follow Jesus? What have you given up to pursue his mission? What have you turned your back on to journey with him?

6. Most of us honestly have to answer, “Not much.”

7. But what about the Muslim in Pakistan who decides to follow Jesus. That decision will likely cost her family. She will be thrown out. She will be disowned. It will cost her friends. It might even cost her life. How about the party apparatchik in China who decides that Jesus really is the Son of God. That one decision will cost him his job, his career, his livelihood. Would we say that it is worth all that for them to follow Jesus? Most Christians will say, “Yes, it worth it, because what they give up here, they will more than gain in eternity.”

8. In North Korea, there is no cool worship band, and there are no trendy preachers or cushy chairs in air-conditioned buildings where you can listen to him. For most Christians throughout most of history, following Jesus has cost them something. It cost them something dear.

9. So let me turn the lens on you. Is he worth it for you? Would you be willing to pay that kind of cost if you had to? Those days are coming. There will be a cost. Following Jesus cost Aaron and Melissa Klein \$135,000. It cost Kelvin Cochran his job as Atlanta’s Fire Chief because he wrote a Bible Study book for his church. Following Jesus cost John Freshwater his job as a teacher because he refused to hide the fact that he was a Christian. Following Jesus cost Andrea Meyer her best friends.

10. For so long in this country it didn’t cost you to follow Jesus. Let me rephrase that. It didn’t cost you to look like you were following Jesus. In fact, it could be a great benefit to wear the label. You went to church where you networked with potential clients and extended your business contacts. You couldn’t be elected to office unless you professed your faith. Church was where you found friends and could do stuff. But that’s changing now.

11. There's going to be a cost. Kyle Idleman writes in *Not A Fan*, "Following Jesus will cost you something. Following Jesus always costs something." The problem each of these potential followers of Jesus had was they want to follow Jesus, but... I want to follow you, Lord, but first let me... I will follow you wherever you go, but there's just one little thing. Is that what you're saying? I want to follow you, Jesus, but... There's just one thing I need to do. There's just one condition. There just this one little thing. I want to follow him, but I can't follow him completely. I can't go all the way. I can't be all in, because there is this one thing.

12. Jesus invites us to follow. He bids you, "Come, follow me." But our Lord is not an insurance salesman. He doesn't sell us on the benefits. He doesn't list for us all of the blessings we will receive if we follow him. He doesn't show us all the ways our life will be better because of him. Jesus doesn't share his own good news like we do. We share the gospel by saying, "If your life is a mess, ask Jesus into your heart. He has a wonderful plan for your life."

13. No, Jesus says, "follow me, but make sure you really want to follow, because you may not like where I'm going. We want people to count the blessings of following Jesus, but he asks us to count the cost. Again Kyle Idleman writes, "The biggest threat to the church today is fans who call themselves Christians but aren't actually interested in following Christ. They want to be close enough to Jesus to get all the benefits, but not so close that it requires anything from them."

14. Jesus doesn't just want to come into your heart like a polite houseguest who takes off his shoes at the door and doesn't mess up the throw pillows on the couch. He makes it clear he wants into your heart and mind and habits and relationships, and wallet, and schedule. He wants into every nook and cranny of your life, and he's going to make a mess of everything, before he makes it better. Because what we need in our lives isn't just a quick dusting and a once over with the vacuum. We need a complete renovation from the ground up. The plumbing needs redone. The wiring needs reworked. The floors are rotted out and have to be replaced. And if you follow him, one by one, piece by piece, it's all coming out. It's all getting replaced. Too many of us come to Jesus asking for a facial and mani-pedi, and Jesus is saying, "Are you kidding? You need major surgery."

15. If you join Jesus on his journey, It's going to cost you. Following Jesus could cost you friends. It could cost you some family relationships. It could cost you stuff. It could cost you money. It could cost you a job. It could cost you everything. Still, Jesus says, "Come, follow me."

16. The point of all this isn't how much following Jesus costs. If we end this sermon only having focused on the cost of following Jesus, we have missed the point. The bottom line is this: Jesus is worth anything and Anyone. He is the treasure that surpasses all others.

17. In Matthew 13:44-45, Jesus tells a couple of parables that stress the incredible worth of the kingdom, and kingdom is simply Jesus' rule in your life.

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

18. Couple found \$11 million in Gold coins walking their dog in the Sierra foothills in 2013.

19. Let me illustrate the incomparable worth of Jesus this way. If I could offer you the choice to become any of these four people which would you choose?

- a. The richest, most successful business person in the world
- b. The most popular, attractive movie star in the world.
- c. The president of the United States.
- d. A poor orphan with AIDS in Africa.

Most of us would spend a little time trying to choose between A. B. and C. But what if there was one added condition. If you choose a, b, or c, you do not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. If you're the AIDS orphan, you do. Now which choice do you make? How hard was the choice? Now let me ask you again. How much is Jesus worth?

20. Perhaps these Scriptures from Paul will help put it into perspective.

- For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison (2 Cor 4:17).
- I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Rom 8:18).
- No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Cor 2:9).
- But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:13-14).
- What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ. (Phil 3:8)

What is Jesus Worth to You

21. Jesus is more precious than anything we could gain in life. More valuable than anything we could lose in death. Imagine two buckets. In this bucket is anything you might gain in this life? The greatest job, the greatest accomplishment. Worldwide fame. Political power. Winning the Power ball and having millions to your name. In this bucket over here is everything you will lose when you die, everything you can't take with you. Paul says, Jesus is worth everything in those two buckets.