

Sermon Series: “Sharing Good News—A Way of Life” – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN – 2/15/09
Title: “Counting the Cost”
Text: Luke 14: 25-35
Intro.: *Illus.: Why would anyone want to be a US Marine? (video clip)*
Theme: When leading someone to Jesus, we clearly state the cost of a relationship to him by framing it in terms of the cost, which he bore, for each of us, so that we might forever gain eternal life and its full benefits.

I came that they might have life and have it to the full. John 10: 10

To be believable you have to be a believer (Luke 14: 25-27)

- Being a part of the crowd or the committed? (vs. 25)
 1. Beware of “**groupie Christianity**”
 - a. Coming along because of the excitement, new, spectacular – some day that will wear thin and will wear out
 2. Committed Christianity
 - a. Jesus asks that commitment be to love God, first, with all your life and then do whatever else you want
- Love/hate basis of faith (vs. 26)
 1. Love the sinner/hate the sin
 2. Love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength but also unconditionally love neighbor as you love yourself
 3. *If you had anything in common with the world, the world would love you as one of its own. But you don't have anything in common with the world. I chose you from the world, and that's why the world hates you. John 15:19*
 4. Careful not to set precondition on your walk with Jesus (family/job/health first—Satan will take you up to that line)
 - a. **Illus.: Setting your upper limit**
- No surprise Christianity (vs. 27)
 1. *Don't be surprised by the fiery troubles that are coming in order to test you. Don't feel as though something strange is happening to you, but be happy as you share Christ's sufferings. Then you will also be full of joy when he appears again in his glory. 1 Peter 4: 12-13*
 2. Bearing crosses is not something our culture is used to accepting/acknowledging
 - a. **Illus.: Converts Count the Cost in Communist Romania**

Two stories for disciples and disciple-makers (Luke 14: 28-35)

- A cost analysis of your relationship with Jesus (vs. 28-30)
 1. The story of building a tower – what will it take to build and do you have enough to build it?
 - a. *As a skilled and experienced builder, I used the gift that God gave me to lay the foundation for that building. However, someone else is building on it. Each person must be careful how he builds on it. 1 Corinthians 3:10*
 - b. Can you describe to your new friend in Jesus how you have built your faith on Christ and what that means?
 2. Helping your friend, coworker, family member through the scary part of temporal loss framed by the eternal gain
 - a. *Jesus said, "I can guarantee this truth: Anyone who gave up his home, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, or fields because of me and the Good News will certainly receive a hundred times as much here in this life. They will certainly receive homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields, along with persecutions. But in the world to come they will receive eternal life. Mark 10:29-30*
 - b. Can you identify and describe your treasure in heaven and what it means to you today framed in your life?
- A risk assessment of your need for Jesus (vs. 31-33)
 1. The story of fighting a war with too few troops
 - a. This is more about realizing that you cannot do it and your need God to do it
 - b. *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9*
 2. When we give up all hope of winning the spiritual battle within is when we are ready for Jesus
 - a. *"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:32*
 3. Can you demonstrate to your friend what it means to lose yourself so that you gain Christ?
 - a. **Illus.: Succeeding at failing**
 - b. *But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ. Philippians 3:7-8*

Why would anyone want to be a US Marine?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFeHoMhuz7A>

Setting Our Upper Limit

I have vivid memories as a kid of my father taking me to an auction sale. He told me, "Don't scratch your nose at the wrong time, son." He also said, "Always remember this: Whenever you go to an auction sale, make sure you know your upper limit price." That's ingrained in me. The great danger for us is that we walk into the Christian life knowing clearly our upper limit price. Jesus does not allow us to set that. "If you save your life, you will lose it; but if you lose your life for my sake and the gospel's, you will keep it," said Jesus.

Converts Counting the Cost

In February 2001, John Oros spoke to an audience at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary about his experience as a church leader in Romania during the Communist era: During communism, many of us preached and people came at the end of a service, and they said, "I have decided to become a Christian." We told them, "It is good that you want to become a Christian, but we would like to tell you that there is a price to be paid. Why don't you reconsider what you want to do, because many things can happen to you. You can lose, and you can lose big." A high percentage of these people chose to take part in a three-month catechism class. At the end of this period, many participants declared their desire to be baptized. Typically, I would respond, "It is really nice that you want to become a Christian, but when you give your testimony there will be informers here who will jot down your name. Tomorrow the problems will start. Count the cost. Christianity is not easy. It's not cheap. You can be demoted. You can lose your job. You can lose your friends. You can lose your neighbors. You can lose your kids who are climbing the social ladder. You can lose even your life." Let me tell you my joy when we looked into their eyes, and their eyes were in tears, and they told us, "If I lose everything but my personal relationship with my Lord Jesus Christ, it is still worth it." **Brent Kipfer, Brussels, Ontario**

Succeeding at Failure

In his book, *The Church You've Always Wanted*, pastor Glenn Wagner recounts a story. Two moose hunters in northern Canada shot an unusually huge moose. The two hunters had a problem, however. They couldn't pack this trophy animal out of the woods; it was just too big for their packhorses. But not to worry! Using their cellular phone, they called in a tiny seaplane. When they tried to talk the pilot into ferrying out this huge bull moose, the pilot responded dubiously, "I don't know if I can take off with that much weight." "We've done this before," they reassured him. "Don't worry." So they strapped the moose in, draping it across both pontoons. But again the pilot begged off. "Look how far we are sinking below the waterline," he objected. "I'm the pilot. I know how much it takes to lift off." "Relax," the hunters persisted. "We've done this before. Trust us." Finally the pilot agreed. He gunned the engine, took off down his runway of water and crashed into the treetops at the end of the lake. Debris flew everywhere, and the moose carcass lodged in the branches of a tall pine tree. Down on the shoreline, one dazed hunter called out to the other, "Hey, George! How did we do?" "Well," George replied, "we're about 50 feet farther than last year." **E. Glenn Wagner, *The Church You've Always Wanted* (Zondervan, 2002); submitted by Van Morris, Mount Washington, Kentucky**

Luke 14:25-35

[25] Large crowds were traveling with Jesus. He turned to them and said, [26] "If people come to me and are not ready to abandon their fathers, mothers, wives, children, brothers, and sisters, as well as their own lives, they cannot be my disciples. [27] So those who do not carry their crosses and follow me cannot be my disciples.

[28] "Suppose you want to build a tower. You would first sit down and figure out what it costs. Then you would see if you have enough money to finish it. [29] Otherwise, if you lay a foundation and can't finish the building, everyone who watches will make fun of you. [30] They'll say, 'This person started to build but couldn't finish the job.'

[31] "Or suppose a king is going to war against another king. He would first sit down and think things through. Can he and his 10,000 soldiers fight against a king with 20,000 soldiers? [32] If he can't, he'll send ambassadors to ask for terms of peace while the other king is still far away. [33] In the same way, none of you can be my disciples unless you give up everything.

[34] "Salt is good. But if salt loses its taste, how will you restore its flavor? [35] It's not any good for the ground or for the manure pile. People throw it away. "Let the person who has ears listen!"[GW]