

“Counting the Cost”

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Luke 14:25-33

What’s it going to cost? Ever asked that question? Of course you have. We are continually counting the cost. We know there are no free rides and anything worth doing well will cost something. We count the cost before buying a new car.....we count the cost before embarking on a diet.....we count the cost before we agree to chemotherapy.....we count the cost before we speak our mind.....we count the cost before we say yes to a task. We are continually running an internal audit on what it will cost in terms of time, talent, reputation and money.

Last Sunday I interviewed Samantha and Mary Murdock about what it costs them to play on Fairmont High School’s Field Hockey team. Sam is a senior and Mary a sophomore and they had some interesting things to say about what it costs to play field hockey at Fairmont.

--less time to do homework and I sometimes don’t get my homework done until 11:30 or midnight.....less time to hang out with friends....Sam said less time to work at Cheryl and Company Cookies

--I learned that field hockey begins in late May with open field practice and lasts through October.....six days a week....with many games on Saturday....they even practice on Friday evenings when many of their friends are in fun mode

--Mary mentioned that she had to think long and hard about going out for the team when she reached High School because not everyone makes the team....what if I get cut.....no one likes to be cut from the team....Mary not only made the JV Team but she is captain

--this past year new rules were instigated which added to the learning curve of playing field hockey....it costs just keeping up with the rules, As Mary said, “I didn’t see that one coming.”

--they summed up counting the cost by saying, “It’s all or nothing!” It’s a total commitment thing!

I followed up my interview by attending a game, this past Tuesday evening, between Fairmont and Oakwood which Fairmont won by one point! During that game Sam experienced another cost to playing field hockey. She was hit in the head by an opponent's stick and had to spend some time on the sideline holding an ice pack on her bruised forehead.....and to add insult to injury, the ref didn't even call a penalty on the girl who hit Sam. I witnessed first hand that it costs a lot to play field hockey.

Most of us don't play field hockey but all of us count the cost in something. *Where do you find yourself counting the cost?* As Jesus journeyed toward Jerusalem, and to his death, he urgently taught those who were following that being his disciple would cost them a lot. Being a disciple is not for the faint hearted....it has nothing to do with comfort or convenience. Some of his followers didn't want to count the cost and they abandoned him. But some embraced Jesus' challenge of discipleship. *What about you? What does it cost you to be a disciple of Jesus?*

Read [Luke 14:25-33](#)

²⁵Now large crowds were traveling with him; and he turned and said to them, ²⁶"Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' ³¹Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. ³³So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

The Word of the Lord.....Thanks be to God!

Wow! *What do you make of Jesus' challenge?*

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No matter how we slice it, Jesus' words are hard. *Hate family and your own life....carry the cross.....give up, not just some but all your possessions!* That's hard....no one would dare ask for that kind of commitment. But Jesus did and we have given thanks that this is “*the Word of the Lord!*” So *what do you make of it? What does it cost you to follow Jesus?*

Jesus knew the masses were following him because he amazed them by delivering bread that filled their stomachs, healed their diseases and hung out with outcasts and second class citizens. But Jesus turned to the people and essentially said, “*Following me is not about meeting your needs. In fact, if you are really going to be my disciple it will **cost you dearly.***”

Jesus even said that to be his disciple meant that we would have to **hate** our father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters and even ourselves and if you don't **hate** you cannot be my disciples. Wow! *What do you make of that? Does Jesus really want us to hate those we love the most? Have you ever said something shocking to get another's attention?* Jesus was using shock talk to get the attention of those who were following him for the wrong reasons. He often got people's attention by overstating a point like when he said, “***If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.***” (Matthew 5:29) Just as Jesus did not literally mean for us to tear out our eye when we sin, neither did Jesus literally mean for us to hate our family or ourselves. But his hyperbole does have a point beyond getting our attention. Jesus comes first. Discipleship costs! Discipleship is not about our comfort or convenience! Commitment to Jesus comes before family, before life, and before our material possessions.

I read radical discipleship passages like this one and I wonder, “*How did we get from there to here.*” I might be totally off base, which certainly wouldn’t be the first time, but my hunch is that one arena of life in which we seldom expect to count the cost is in our Christian commitment. Let me use a little hyperbole myself. Here at Fairmont, I have heard more talk about pew cushions than counting the cost of following Jesus. Now I don’t have anything against pew cushions, the older I get the more I appreciate them, and I have participated in those pew cushion conversations. But my concern is that we are too quick and short-sighted to jump to the conclusion that Jesus is all about our comfort and well being both inside and outside the church. Therefore, we miss his serious call to discipleship. We think of Jesus as *my Shepherd, my Peace, my Comforter, my Companion, my Hope, my Savior, my Joy... my, my, my* and, after awhile, we shut our ears to Jesus’ demands on our lives. In fact, we don’t often think of Jesus demanding anything from us! We think it’s all about Jesus blessing and cushioning our lives!

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German Lutheran pastor whom Hitler had hanged toward the end of WWII, coined the term “*Cheap grace.*” I can’t help but think Bonhoeffer’s term fits much of the America church scene today. *Does our faith cost anything? When was the last time you shared, with a friend, what it costs you to be a follower of Jesus Christ? When was the last time we discussed, in a group setting, the obstacles we face in our desire to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?* I know it is easier to discuss pew cushions but what if we consciously elevated the subject of discipleship throughout our congregational life? *What if we would all commit to pray, “**here I am Lord....I am yours....my highest honor is to bring glory to you and be a part of what you are accomplishing right where I live?**”* I get goose bumps to think of what might happen if we were all praying that prayer of discipleship and if we were praying for one another to count the cost of discipleship.

Samantha and Mary Murdock counted the cost of playing field hockey for Fairmont High School and each day they commit to going out to the field to become more talented field hockey players no matter what it might cost. As I visited with them they told me that they knew it would take a lot of time and they would be challenged physically, mentally and emotionally. They knew that they would have to give up a lot in order to be on the team. But they both agreed it was a great decision and that playing field hockey is worth whatever it costs. They have made new friends, they have become physically stronger and more athletic, they have experienced the joy of teamwork, have learned the power of common purpose and they have discovered that good things come to those willing to sacrifice.

Today we gather around the Table of our Lord. In this feast we are reminded that Jesus sacrificed all that we might live. As we gather at the Lord's Table let us remember and give thanks for Jesus' uncommon love and let us be nurtured by his grace that he freely gives to us. For when we know that we are loved, what can we do but love in return no matter what it might cost. May we be strengthened through Jesus to give of our best to the One who gave his all for us!

(Prayer)

Amen