

# DISCIPLES KNOW WHERE TO LOOK

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ September 13, 2015

<sup>25</sup> Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: <sup>26</sup> “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup> And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup> “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? <sup>29</sup> For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, <sup>30</sup> saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’ <sup>31</sup> “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup> In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

A popular internet news media company goes by the name BuzzFeed. Basically, it’s your online newspaper - but instead of just being able to publish stories once per day, it can publish news as it’s happening. Some of these articles take the form of videos, and one of these videos was gaining a lot of attention - both for and against it. The title of the video is “I’m Christian, but I’m not.”

As the title suggests, the video interviews six millennials about their Christian faith and splices it all together into a professional production. The assumed purpose of the video is to show how not all Christians are the same, and that people shouldn’t judge Christians based on what other Christians do, or who other Christians don’t like. You are more than welcome to find the video and watch it for yourself, but the content isn’t all that edifying. The part that would be funny, if it weren’t so sad, is the video spends its entire length (all of 2 minutes) comparing these “Christians” to who they’re not like, instead of comparing themselves to who they are like - the namesake of their religion - Christ.

The name Jesus is not mentioned once in the video - instead, general truths that Christianity is all about love and acceptance are littered throughout. Even though the views expressed in this video do not convey what I think the vast majority of Christians believe, it does give us the reminder of the importance of being a disciple and where a disciple will look for strength and guidance. DISCIPLES KNOW WHERE TO LOOK:

1. When personal problems threaten
2. When the effort seems too great
3. When the enemy seems too powerful

(1)

It seems so obvious that disciples follow their master and their master’s teachings. This morning in our gospel, we hear about one of the many things Jesus spoke while we walked this earth. He taught here about the cost of being his disciple. By this time, many people were following Jesus, Luke writes, “**large crowds.**” But were all who were in these large crowds considered disciples? Jesus gave the basic 411 of

what it took to be his disciple. But don't take Jesus' words the wrong way - he was not saying this to scare off some would-be disciples, he was saying this to be upfront about what it meant to be his disciple.

The first words he spoke have caused much consternation among people, and we might have to do a double take on what Jesus is saying. **"If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters - yes, even their own life - such a person cannot be my disciple."** Did Jesus really say we need to hate our family if we want to be his disciples? I thought Jesus was all about love. How does this make sense? Using the words of Scripture to explain Scripture, we find an explanation in Matthew's gospel, **"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;"**

When Jesus says in Luke, "hate your father and mother," he is making the point of loving your father and mother less than you love Jesus. This applies to all other family relations, and yes, even to yourself. If you don't love yourself less than Jesus, you cannot be his disciple. In theory, this sounds simple, even easy to do. But in real life, often the opposite is the case.



Anything that gets in the way of my relationship with Jesus cannot just be just disliked or disapproved, it must be hated. And yet how easy it can be for the bond established between family to supersede the relationship I have with my Savior. I can let my love for family supersede my relationship for Jesus when I care more about what toys my kids have than about what faith my kids have. I can let my love for self supersede my love for Jesus when I have made excuses for the sins I have committed, when I've lectured God on his outdated ways or when I've ignored his command to **"take up my cross and follow me."**

But how often have we treated sin like a nagging cold, instead of believing the good physician's diagnosis - that if left untreated, we will die? As disciples, WE KNOW WHERE TO LOOK when we have failed to "hate" our family and self, when we have failed to take up our cross. We look to the one who loved himself less, and loved his God more. We look to the one who took up his cross when we failed to take up ours. We look to our Savior.

(2)

Jesus went on to describe counting the cost of being a disciple. This is a cost that we must be aware of - whether we have been disciples for a long time, or a much shorter time. He tells the parable of someone who builds a tower. One does not just get the idea in his head and then start building. Somewhere along the line, that person must look at the cost that it will take to build this building. Because if you don't have the materials, if you don't have the money, if you don't have the manpower to complete the tower, you will just look like a fool for starting it in the first place.

Think about a big purchase or decision you had to make. Maybe it was buying a car, a house, whether to have a kid or not. Chances are, you probably put a little bit of thought into that decision or purchase. Being a Christian is no different, know what you're getting into, before you get into it. Again, Jesus isn't saying this to scare potential disciples away, he uses this to encourage them. How does this encourage them? I'm glad you asked.

A believer's whole life is a monument dedicated to God. What is the cost it takes to build this monument? It is living a life in accordance with God's will as it is revealed in the Bible. It is looking at all times towards the good of my neighbor, it is looking at all times to the good of my family, it is looking at all times most importantly to the good of my God. This means at times giving up what we want, the stuff that

makes us happy. It means forsaking the easy road and plowing the path God wants. The easy road is being content to hear God's Word once a week in church and never open your Bible again, the easy road is keeping your mouth shut about God when you talk to your family or friends. The easy road is to keep a tight fist when it comes to giving our offerings to God.

If it were up to us our tower would be a disaster, but once again, **DISCIPLES KNOW WHERE TO LOOK when the effort seems too great.** We would never have enough to build this tower, and so we turn to the one we follow - Jesus Christ. His perfect sacrifice not only won us our salvation, but it gives us the strength to build this tower. It gives us the strength and encouragement to go back to God's Word again and again - in personal devotions, and Bible studies. It gives us the motivation to open our mouth up about what God says in his Word. It opens our hand to trust in him to provide for all our needs as we generously give him our very best offerings.

### (3)

Jesus goes one further with his next parable. In the first parable, one could get the impression that building your tower to God is an optional thing - you can choose to build it, or you can choose not to. But with this parable, Jesus shows how we do not have the choice. We do not have the choice, because the enemy is fast approaching.

**“Suppose a king is about to go to war against another king.”** In this parable, there is no choice, another king is marching against you with an army much greater than yours, what do you do? In the parable, the king realizes he does not have the strength to beat this superior army, and so he sends a delegation asking for peace. Unfortunately, this is not an option that is at our disposal. The army marching against us is the devil who wants our very souls in hell with him, the world that sees only foolishness in God's Word, and our own sinful nature that every day awakens us seeking to drive us away from God.

So what are we to do? Once again, **DISCIPLES KNOW WHERE TO LOOK when the enemy seems to powerful.** We cannot hope to defeat this enemy by ourselves - we cannot even face one and win. And so not only should we, but we must turn toward our Savior who defeated this enemy for us. And in fact as we look back over the gospel as a whole, we see what it truly takes to be a disciple. Yes, disciples follow their master, but the way we follow our master is by letting go of our own strength, our own comfort, and trust in a God who enables us to endure and persevere.

We see that in both of our other readings from the Bible. In the first lesson, Abram was called to leave his family, leave everything he knew, and trust that God knew what he was doing. And God, through Abraham's descendants did know what he was doing. Not only did he bless Abraham beyond his wildest dreams, but he provided a Savior from his line. In our other lesson, the Apostle Paul reminded his listeners of what he gave up to be a Christian. He gave up the obedience to the law he had prized so highly, for the grace that was freely available in Christ. **THESE DISCIPLES KNEW WHERE TO LOOK.** And so do you.

If a person knows the cost of the building, if he realizes the strength of the foe, and if he recognizes his own poverty and weakness as a sinner, there are just two things for him to do—to despair of his own strength and to look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his faith. Jesus can supply wealth and strength to the follower who has emptied himself of all trust in his own merit or ability. The emphasis is on renouncing “everything” for Jesus' sake.

**DISCIPLES KNOW WHERE TO LOOK.** They do not look around them at how other disciples are acting and compare themselves. They do not look to how good they are or how faithful they have been. They look

only to Jesus, who is both the beginner and finisher of his faith. Looking anywhere else is pointless, looking anywhere else leads to death. But thanks be to God who gives us life through his Son. Amen.