

The last syllable had barely sounded in his ears when he realized its impact. He was being moved. They wouldn't know anyone in the new place. The trip would be long and dangerous. They would have to find somewhere to live. They were leaving behind many close family members. The more he thought the more he had reasons not to go. But you heard in the first lesson what Abram's decision was. God had said move, so he committed himself to moving. It was still going to be hard. The trip was still going to be long and dangerous. They were still going to be leaving family. But God told him to go, so he was committed to going.

The followers Jesus was speaking to weren't being asked to move. They were being asked to commit to discipleship. Jesus wanted to warn them so they weren't surprised. It would be hard. It would be difficult. The same has been spoken to us. Jesus wants you to...

**Commit yourself to discipleship**  
**Consider the high cost**  
**Let nothing stand in your way**

I hate snakes. I hate tornadoes. I hate heights. Not everyone agrees, but everyone can understand. Everyone has something they hate. But hate is a word parents work to teach their kids not to use. Hate is a strong word and can be harmful. It might be surprising to hear it on the lips of our Savior. **"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple."** It's not just that Jesus tells his disciples to hate, but even more surprising is who they should hate.

This isn't business as usual. This isn't just, "don't love them more than me." That we'd understand and could work to accomplish. But this, this wakes the disciples up to the reality of what Jesus is asking. No need to automatically hate family to be a disciple. But if someone from their family, father or mother or otherwise, tries to keep them from being a disciple of Jesus forcefully, then they can do nothing less than hate that person. Separate from them, keep away from them; literally hate them for keeping them from Christ.

That's a pretty high cost. Maybe you never considered that. Maybe you always laughed this statement away as if Jesus couldn't mean what he said. It's unnatural to hate my family, no matter what they do. If there's a close family member who doesn't believe in Jesus at Christmas time when I'm around we just don't talk religion. If a close relative gives me trouble for being a disciple of Jesus, I just ignore that person. Or I tell them we can agree to disagree. At worst I might look the other way if a close relative sins. They're family. Don't want to hurt their feelings. Want them to keep talking with me. Best to just let them do what they want and not say anything. But never hate them.

Jesus asks more of his disciples, and the cost goes even higher. **"Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciples."** Now you know what a cross is talking about right? The word refers to the wooden beam commonly used by the Romans to execute criminals. The criminals even had to carry their own cross, usually after serious beatings. Carrying a cross meant suffering and ultimately death. Jesus doesn't ask them to literally carry a wooden cross beam. But they will carry in their lives suffering: some physical, some emotional, some spiritual. Suffering of all kinds would enter their lives the moment they became a disciple of Jesus. It was necessary. Couldn't be a disciple without a cross.

Now you're starting to get worried. Hate what you'd normally love like family, and love and embrace what you'd normally hate like the cross and suffering. You have no choice either. The moment you were brought to faith in Christ Jesus you started to suffer a cross. Your sinful nature and the sinful world rebel against the cross. Satan plagues you with all kinds of persecutions. You may face poverty or pressure from people. You may carry illnesses as suffering. Inside your heart aches because even though you're a disciple of Jesus you still carry sin and therefore a cross. And you'd like to think bearing these crosses earns you something before God. Maybe God loves you a little more because you suffered and bore your cross in silence. Maybe God might spare you more crosses if you're already carrying one. But it isn't true; the cost of discipleship is high. For our sinful selves it's easier to deny Jesus because it lessens the suffering. It's easier to push Jesus aside because the cross hurts less. Satan wants nothing more.

Considering the high cost of discipleship I hope you realize you can't do what Jesus is asking you to do alone. You don't want to hate your family, you need Jesus. You can't bear the cross alone, you need Jesus. And you have him. Jesus' own father hated him and turned his back on his son while he was carrying the sins of the world on the cross. Jesus turned his own back on riches, fame, and his own life to carry his cross. He chose it. Willingly and completely he died for us, you and me. The crosses we bear could never save us. The cross of suffering he bore alone has the power to save. True love from God carried his cross and that love strengthens us to carry ours.

You're a disciple of Christ experiencing real suffering. Yet God says you can rejoice because suffering is a gift of his grace and brings blessings. **"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you."** Those were words from God in promise to Abram. He would suffer, but God would bless. You suffer, but God blesses. His love keeps you focused on heaven. His blessing is you being a disciple. It takes commitment. It comes at a high cost. But God blesses. Regularly read your Bibles, study his plan of grace in your life, come to the sacraments, talk with other Christians to find out how they cope in Christ, and receive Christ's forgiveness when you fail. Jesus allows you to consider the high cost and commit yourself to discipleship.

The price tag was high, more than she wanted to spend. She started calculating in her mind. Split it between a couple of credit cards, pay some cash, perhaps sign up for another credit card and get a discount. It would be delicate but she really wanted it. She considered the cost, but nothing would stand in her way. She'd work extra jobs, take extra hours, probably lose sleep. But she was committed. After considering the high costs of being a disciple of Jesus, Jesus wants you to arrive at a similar conclusion. Let nothing stand in your way.

If Devon had run out of money fifteen stories from the top and hadn't been able to complete the Devon tower, they would be the laughingstock of Oklahoma City. Everyone would say the project was too big and they planned more floors than they could afford. But fear didn't stop them from doing the project. Jesus doesn't want disciples to count the high cost and give up. A king who thinks about going to war against another with more troops could face certain defeat. Might scare him from doing it. Or it prompts him to find a solution and secure the victory. Jesus doesn't want disciples to get discouraged because there's the possibility of defeat.

At times you've tried building your life into something yourself. You took up the battle yourself. Nothing was going to stand in the way of your happiness or success. But your confidence was in yourself. You sinfully figured you had the resources to accomplish everything alone. This world wouldn't get you down. Your strength would see you through. You didn't need help, so you never asked. You boosted your ego and lightened the requirements for being a disciple to something manageable. Come most Sundays. Try hard to live a good life. Do some good deeds. Give some offerings. Discipleship doesn't seem that hard with these requirements.

Except Jesus is asking for more. Complete surrender is what he wants. **"Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."** Jesus wants you to count the resources needed, examine yourself, and come to the conclusion that nothing should stand in your way. But not by fighting harder or trying harder. Not looking to some earthly help. Give up everything and stand with Christ completely. God is the only one who forgives sins, helps us, and gives eternal life on account of Jesus. The fight against Satan is one we can't win and we don't have to. Christ Jesus fought for us and won. We cling to Christ Jesus and his grace. We despair of our own strength and abilities and look to Jesus. He has finished the work of saving us and now we wait for him to return.

Nothing should stand in your way of a connection with Jesus. If your money does, give it all away if you have to in order to keep your relationship with Jesus. If your family does, hate them and step away from them to keep your relationship with Jesus. If your job does, your house, your car, whatever is keeping you from Jesus get away from it, give it up, and move past it. Jesus demands commitment to being a disciple. He supplies everything, we supply nothing. He loves you. He is gracious to save you. He is strong to keep you committed by his power. Nothing can stand in your way.

There's no question there's a high cost to following Christ. It takes a huge commitment. Consider the high cost faithfully. Seek to let nothing stand in your way. You're saved by Christ and because of that you can commit yourselves to discipleship.