

## TO BE FULLY DEVOTED FOLLOWERS

Luke 14.25-33

Our mission statement here at FUMC is  
to make fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ who serve him willingly and well.

Repeat after me: **To make fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ  
Who serve him willingly and well**

I think all of us want to be fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ or we wouldn't be here today.

The problems is we're not exactly sure how to make a fully devoted follower.

There is a cute story Russian comedian Yakov Smirnoff tells.

When he first came to America,

he was surprise by the number of instant products one could buy.

There is powdered milk. Just add water and you make milk. What a great country.

There is powered orange juice. Just add water, and you make orange juice. What a great country.

Then he saw baby powder. He thought, just add water and you make baby." What a great country.

It's not quite that easy, is it? Just ask any mother.

Well, some people think making a disciple is about that easy.

You just take a believer, add a little baptism water, say a few words, and instant disciple!!! What a great God!!!

Well, there is a little bit more to it than that.

If we're to be followers of Jesus,

it's probably better to ask him what he expects of us than make it up ourselves.

### 1- TO BE A FULLY DEVOTED FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST YOU NEED TO CONSIDER JESUS CHRIST #1.

Let's look at Luke 14.25-26, make sure you hear, "If anyone comes to me", meaning anyone.

***"Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said,***

***If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and his children-  
yes even his own life-he cannot be my disciple."***

Don't you hate hearing that..."hates father, mother, wife, children, and even self.?"

In this scripture don't take the word "hate" literally.

First, know Jesus is exaggerating to make a point.

It's like Char said just last week said, "I've told you a million times not to do that."

Now, do you think she really has told me a million times?

Not a good illustration. Some of you think she has told me a million times.

Anyway, Jesus exaggerates to make a point.

Second, know that the word hate meant something different to them than to us. The word hate is not as much about the emotion or hostility as he is the commitment to another. You see at that time “hating others or oneself,” meant to “prefer someone else above another.”

Here are some familiar words from Matthew,  
“**Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.**”

Translation-consider what God wants first and everything else will fall into place.

We’re given the God-given responsibility to love, to care for,  
and to provide for our families and ourselves,  
but there are times one’s allegiance to Jesus will bring about conflict.

A father called Will Willemon, now a UMC Bishop, once a professor at Duke University. The father was upset. He ranted and raved about the change in his son. He wanted his son to go into his father’s business with him. The son was going to into his Father’s business all right, his heavenly Father’s business. Willemon finally stopped the tirade, “Don’t blame us, you’re the one that had him baptized.”

Remember Heather Mercer and Dana Curry?  
They were two Baylor students who were arrested by the Taliban and held for 128 days in Afghanistan, a third world, drought-stricken, war-ravaged hub for international terrorist.

Her mother was totally opposed to her going to Afghanistan in the first place.

Heather writes in her book Prisoners of Hope, “We had to answer hard questions posed by our families and friends. We were asked, “Aren’t you being foolish.”

1-TO BE A FULLY DEVOTED FOLLOWER OF JESUS CHRIST YOU NEED  
TO **CONSIDER JESUS CHRIST#1.**

2-**TO CARRY YOUR CROSS.**

Verse 27, “*And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple*”

Carrying your cross is a very necessary thing but not a very nice thing to do.

For many of us the cross has lost it’s horror, we’ve cleaned up the cross too much. We even sing about the cross.

Now in some respects maybe that is not so bad,  
if it reminds us of Jesus, and if  
“the emblem of suffering and shame has become a wondrous attraction,  
a wondrous beauty we see.” That’s ok.

But if it is just piece of jewelry around our necks or ornament for the wall-that isn’t so good. Would you buy miniature of an electric chair and hang around your neck today?

When Jesus talked about a cross people understood it to be a horrible, agonizing, tortuous means of execution. Its contemporary counterpart would be the noose, the electric chair, or a lethal injection. In Jesus time, if someone carried a cross, he was a criminal and as good as dead. When he carried his cross he was saying good-bye for good.

To carry our cross means we're saying good-bye to ourselves, we die to self. Paul understood this well,

***"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me..."*** Galatians 2.20  
***"Those who belong to Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires."*** Galatians 5.2

TO BE A FULLY DEVOTED FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST YOU NEED  
TO **CARRY YOUR CROSS**  
TO **CONSIDER JESUS CHRIST #1.**

And 3-TO BE A FULLY DEVOTED FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST YOU NEED TO  
**COUNT THE COST**

Verse 28-30, ***"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has the money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'"***

Mike Neifert, in Light and Life, recorded a list of comments from people who camped in the mountainous Bridger Wilderness area.

It's obvious these folks in the wilderness didn't count the cost and didn't finish well. Listen to these comments:

Trials need to be reconstructed. Please avoid building trails going uphill.

Please pave the trails. Escalators would help, too. I've always thought that too.

Put chair lifts in places so we can see the wonderful views without having to hike to them.

There are too many bugs, leeches, spiders, and spider webs. Please spray the area.

There are too many rocks in the mountains.

The coyotes made too much noise and I couldn't sleep. Please eradicate them.

A McDonald's at the trailhead would be nice.

And my most favorite, a small deer came into camp and stole my pickles. Can I be reimbursed?

In a way these comments are funny, aren't they?

In another way the comments were very sad.

It seemed the campers were more concerned about convenience and comfort, they were more concerned about being pampered and paid back than about the experience of camping.

And what do we think about our real wilderness experience of life?

Do we grumble and groan in the deserts of doubt and despair?

Do we mumble and stumble up the mountains of misery and down to valleys of vulnerability?

Do we want the bugs worked out and the rocky roads smoothed out?  
Do we want the coyotes taken care of, and a McDonalds at every corner to take care of us?  
Jesus doesn't want us to drop out.  
He wants us to finish well.  
But it's tough to finish well

Do we have enough to finish as fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ?  
The answer should be "no", not really.  
It should always be no because we don't have the resources.  
We need to rely on God's resources.

Paul begins Philippians with God's promise of finishing (Philippians 1.6)  
***"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion."***

He tells us he has God's provisions to finish;  
***"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,"*** (Philippians 4.13)

At the end of the book he tells us that God provides for us to finish, too.  
***"And my God will meet all your needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus."*** (Philippians 4.19)

God promises and provides. God wants us to finish well. God wants the church to finish well.

Leadership magazine once had a cartoon that showed a church billboard that said:  
THE LITE CHURCH: 77% few commitments, home of the 7% tithe, the 7 minute sermon, and 7 commandments, your choice, of course.  
We do have only 3 spiritual laws, a thirty-five minute worship, and an 800-year millenium.

That's the LITE CHURCH...LESS FILLING and LESS FINISH too.

In contrast we ask people to be faithful in worship, to tithe,  
to give of their time and effort to the church, and to get in a group,  
so that they may be devoted followers of Jesus Christ who serve him willingly and well.

Now consider the addition to our building.  
God laid out this wonderful vision to us at First United Methodist Church.  
Before accepting that invitation to partner in that project, you counted the cost.

I heard about meeting after meeting where we've counted the cost.  
At Administrative Board the other night we heard that we're still counting the costs,  
even as the building goes up, so that we get it right.

We'll finish, because we've counted the cost and we know what we need to do.  
We'll finish because God has given faithfully  
and we'll finish because you've given sacrificially.

TO BE A FULLY DEVOTED FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST

**YOU MUST COUNT THE COST**

**YOU MUST CARRY YOUR CROSS.**

**YOU MUST CONSIDER CHRIST#1.**

And 4-TO BE A FULLY DEVOTED FOLLWER OF JESUS CHRIST YOU NEED TO

**CONCEDE TO KING**

*“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with 10,000 men to oppose the one coming against him with 20,000. 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. In the same way any of you who does not give up everything he has can not be my disciple.” Luke 14.31-33.*

In this image Jesus describes two kings.

One is outnumbered and thus overwhelmed.

That king wisely approaches the stronger king and makes peace.

He humbly surrenders and becomes a slave to the stronger king.

Jesus is saying one of those kings represent you and I, the other is God.

Jesus is saying to be a disciple we must be humble and we must concede,

We must surrender to him. We must surrender all to him. That makes sense.

Think about it how would the song I Surrender All sound if we sang it another way.

I surrender 90%, I surrender 90%, 90% to thee my blessed Savior, I surrender 90%

Or how does this sound? I surrender 5%, I surrender 5% to thee my blessed Savior, I surrender 5%.

Try any % you want, it won't sound true because it won't ring true.

You have to ask yourself who is going to be the king that controls your life?

We must surrender personal interests and our self-images,

We must surrender personal desires, dreams, and decisions,

We must surrender calendars, credit cards, and check books.

In a few minutes those of us going in the water will take out our billfolds,

our cell phones, note books, and whatever and leave them here.

Why? Practically speaking so they don't get wet.

But spiritually speaking, we must be surrendered these things to the Baptismal waters of death,

Surrender them Jesus, put them under the reign and rule of the King of King and the Lord of Lords,

If we are to be;

fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ who want to serve him willingly and well.

Let's stand and sing the prayer, "Take My Life"

