



July 15, 2012
Pastor Mark Toone
Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church

It's Your Call: It'll Cost Ya! Luke 14:25-33

How many have heard the term, "Bait and switch?" You know what it means, right? "Bait and switch" is defined as "a deceptive way of selling that involves advertising a product at a very low price in order to attract customers who are then persuaded to switch to a more expensive product." The lowball price is the "bait"... and once you have them in the store, you hook them on something more costly!

Jesus never employed the "bait and switch" technique. To anyone who was considering following the call to be a disciple of Jesus, he had the same consistent message: "It'll cost ya! If you want to follow me...if you want to be my disciple...if you are really willing to make me the Lord of your life, it will be costly. It will be worth it, but it will be costly. And before you make such a commitment, you had better figure out what the cost will be, and decide whether or not you are willing to pay it.

[Read Luke 14:25-33]

It is clear from this passage that Jesus never attended a single church-planting seminar. If he had, he would know that the way to draw people in is to be seeker-sensitive... user-friendly. You emphasize the good things that Jesus can do for you... the blessings that will come your way if you will follow him. If you play up the positive, it won't be long before your church is bursting at the seams.

But Jesus had it all backwards. The very first verse tells us He already had large crowds following Him. Between His teaching and His miracles and His charisma, He had them eating out of His hand! They were ready to sign on the dotted line. So, what does Jesus do? Does He close the deal? No! He tries to scare them away. He tells these would-be followers of his that if they are going to follow Him, nothing less than complete commitment will do. It will be very costly! And they had better think it through carefully before they jump on the bandwagon.

How costly is to follow Jesus? Well, it might cost you your family and friends. Did you see the terrible word Jesus used when he talks about the decision we must make? What is it? Hate! That's an awful word, isn't it? And an awful thought. Is Jesus actually telling me that, if I want to follow his call, I must hate my wife,

Cyndi? I must hate my daughter Rachel and hate my son, Cooper? That I must hate my parents and my friends? Is that really what he is saying? Yes or no?

No, actually! Thankfully! To “hate your father or brother or daughter” was a Jewish expression that meant, “To love someone less than.” Obviously, if God has joined Cyndi and me together, as scriptures teaches—if I am to love and care for my children, as scripture teaches—it is illogical that the price of following Jesus is to hate my wife or children. But what Jesus is saying is, “You must love them less than me!” I must love Jesus more than Cyndi, more than Rachel and Cooper, more than any other human relationship. Now, is that hard for anyone else to hear? That is hard for me to comprehend because I love my family so much. But Jesus is saying, “That is what is required of those who follow my call. You must love me more than you love any other.” It is costly to follow Jesus.

He goes on to say the same thing in a different way: “...anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me is not my disciple.” Remember, this was Peter’s problem. Peter didn’t want Jesus to go the way of the cross, the way of suffering and sacrifice; because it meant that He would have to do the same thing. Who would choose suffering? We want the way of victory and glory. But Jesus says, “If you want to follow me, it means denying yourself, saying “No” to yourself, and saying “Yes” to Me. Wherever I go, even if it is into a place of suffering or rejection or death... you must follow me there. If you do not follow, you are not my disciple.” It is costly to follow Jesus.

He says the same thing in one more, different way: “...anyone who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.” Whatever it is that matters most to you—whatever you find most precious... whether it is your relationships or your wealth or your home or your fame or your station in life or your comforts—I may call you to give them up. And if you are not willing to do so, then you cannot follow me. It is costly to follow Jesus.

And so, Jesus says to the crowds, before you jump on my bandwagon—before you say that you want to follow my call—you had better decide whether you are willing to pay the price. You had better count the cost. You would be foolish not to... supremely foolish. Like the contractor who is going to build a huge tower. He would be crazy not to sit down, draw up complete plans, bid it out, figure out the contingencies—do all that he can to develop a careful budget—before he decides to break ground on the project. Otherwise, he’ll end up like so many developers have ended up in the past few years... half-finished projects, unable to complete the job, in many cases handing it back to the bank.

Or take the example of the general who is considering whether or not to send his troops into harm’s way. Is he really ready to spill the blood of his men for this cause? Has he done everything he can to solve the dispute peacefully? War is costly...and before he enters that war, he better be assured that he has done all he can to avoid unnecessary loss of life.

The bottom line of Jesus' teaching here is very, very simple. Before you decide to follow my call, you better decide that you are willing to pay whatever price I require of you... because my call is costly. It is precious. It is worth it. And the rewards are boundless. But it will cost you to follow my call. Like a call to... Fresno... right Jeremy?

The call of God is costly to those who answer it and go. Do you know who else pays a price? The senders. Every time we send someone to follow the call of God...someone we love, someone we rooted for, someone we helped prepare....that costs us, too. This is not our first hard goodbye. Do you know how many times we have said hard goodbyes? Well, here are a few:

Erik Hansen, former HS director at Chapel, Sr. Pastor, First Pres., Boulder, Colorado; Stuart Bond, Sr Pastor, Immanuel Pres., Thousand Oaks, CA; Pat McElroy, son of this church, Sr. Pastor, Saddlerock Pres., Wenatchee, WA; Jeff Chandler, former CH intern, Sr. Pastor, First Pres., Bakersfield, CA; Mike Conan, son of the church, Sr. Pastor, Christ Pres., Lakewood, CA; Travis Fletcher, Intern at CH, Associate Pastor, First Pres., Grand Junction, CO; Rhyan Smith, HS Outreach Director at CH, Sr. Pastor, Cornerstone Pres., Olympia, WA and Area Director Young Life; Brad Scandrett, HS Director, Area Director Young Life, Gig Harbor; Dave Avramovich, son of the church, ordained, Young Life Area Director, San Marino, CA; Stacy Johnson, daughter of the church, mission and ordained pastoral ministry; Sara Malmin, daughter of the church, ordained, PhD professor of Old Testament, SPU; the Derr family, mission field, Africa; the Taylor family, mission field, Africa; the Veitenhans family, mission field, Africa; Carol Erickson, daughter of the church, mission field Africa; Sheila Mischke, mission field, Cambodia; Shari Monson, Executive for Strategy and Mission at CH, awaiting her first ordained call...

If God calls to go somewhere, he must call from somewhere. Somewhere there must be the senders—the church that raises up, inspires, encourages, loves, trains, mentors, permits, endures, gives second, third, fourth, fifth chances—until God says, “Okay, you are ready to go. I send you... there.” And the call always costs the senders. Because we are always the ones who are saying, “Goodbye” to Erik and Stuart and Pat and Jeff and Mike and Travis and Rhyan and Brad and David and Stacy and Sara and Sheila and the Derrs and the Taylors and the Veitenhans and Carol and Shari... and Jeremy and Diane and Katelyn and Andrew and Rebecca Joy. We are always the ones that say goodbye... that costs. But we are also the ones who have the joy of helping God prepare one more person to send into the world that he loves so much.

So, senders, well done! You should be proud. And guess what. God is already at work preparing the next wave of those He will use CH to prepare to send into His world. Some are already within our church. Others we are interviewing, who will come to serve us and be mentored by us. They will rise up. They will grow. They

will lead. They will leave. And it will cost us, again. It will be hard, and it will be good. Aren't you glad that we are that kind of church?

Sermon Questions

- **REFLECT & APPLY TOGETHER:** Share your thoughts. Don't teach! Listen and reflect on God's word together; grapple with what God is calling us to do and be through this passage.

- **PRAY TOGETHER:** Tell the Lord one thing you are thankful for, and lay one concern before the Lord.

- **DIG DEEPER**

1. Read Luke 14:25-33 and take some time to consider it. What do you think is the main point Jesus is trying to make in this section?
2. Why do you think He makes this point so emphatically? What was at stake here?
3. When was a time in your life that following Christ really cost you something? What happened? What did you learn? How did you grow? How was Christ honored?
4. How does God's call in Christ cost us as a church family? How does this passage apply to us?