The Parables of Jesus – The Cost of Discipleship (Week 5)

Review:[1]

Guiding principles to keep in mind while studying parables:

1. A parable's details must be treated differently than a narrative's details. (For example in asking *why is* _____ *the case?*)
2. Parables teach a primary, generally singular, lesson or truth.
3. There were two sets of original authors and audiences: Jesus' and the Gospel writer's.

Luke 14:25-35:

1. <u>What prompted the parable:</u> Was this a continuation of the conversation at the Pharisee Ruler's house (14:1)? Was this a separate time and place? Luke does make a special point of emphasizing that Jesus was addressing "great crowds" that accompanied him. Both the size of the crowd and their coming to (pressing in on him) prompted these parables.

   Did anything else prompt the parables?

2. <u>Natural meaning:</u>

   a. If you wanted to build a tower, you would count the cost first to be sure you could complete it and that it was worth doing so. You would do this because you know that if you start but don't finish it, people will see and mock you.
   b. Imagine a king considering war against another king with an army twice the size of his. He would very carefully consider whether he could defeat the other king and if he concluded he could not, he would quickly seek to arrange for peace.

3. <u>The main truth being illustrated:</u> (Discuss) "You're following me. You're excited about my teachings and miracles. You're more than happy to be seen with me and around me. Seriously count the cost, though. You must be willing to put everything—even the closest relationships and your own life—truly on the alter. You must be willing to be utterly rejected, abandoned, and mocked, even by your family, and pursue me even to the point of a pariah's death. And if you start down this road, be faithful to the end. Your pledge of faithfulness and willingness has great promise, but if you don't follow through, I will cast you aside.

4. <u>Is this taught elsewhere in scripture?</u>

   a. Possible examples: Rom 12:1-2; Galatans 2:20, 5:24; Phil 3:7-8; 1 Peter 4:1-2; Revelation 12:11.
   b. Interesting parallel phraseology

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i. Jesus makes this same comment about salt losing its saltiness in Matthew and Mark, as well, in a different context. (Matt 5:13; Mark 9:50)
ii. Matt 10:37
iii. Deut 33:9

5. Actual or intended response of the hearers: None noted

6. For our sanctification: (Discuss)
Some thoughts: It's interesting to consider how the reference to bearing one's cross likely struck his listeners. They didn't have Christ's example yet to work off of like we do when we read this. They likely didn't know of anyone who was undeserving or who had born the burden righteously and sacrificially. This was a burden that brought shame, rejection, degradation. Jesus was making the decision to identify as a disciple clear, stark, and difficult. To renounce all that you have is to take on a posture of total submission and obedience, not making any demands. Consider objectively in your own heart: does this describe my heart toward the Lord and my walk with Him? Or do I have a sort of co-owner, stake-holder perspective, and do I negotiate with the Lord?

I also think of the reward. "Well done, good and faithful servant." His joy and pleasure in us when we bear the cross and face rejection for His sake. Consider: when someone stands up for you, when you've done something embarrassing or failed and your parent or friend comes over and chooses to hold you and identify with you even while others are watching, when you're being mocked and someone says, "Hey, I agree or do that, too!" It's such an encouragement and draws you closer together—it often makes you feel a greater love for them. I really think Jesus is drawn toward us, too, in our willingness to suffer for His name. This is a real relationship, after all, with a real person. How can it not impact the relationship in both directions?

Alternatively, when someone says they are a friend but then seeks to put daylight between themselves and you, what impact does that have?

"Discipleship is serious business to Jesus."[3]



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