

“What has it Cost you?”

Written December of 2012

Scripture Reading: Mark 8:34

Introduction

The Lord gave me the down load for this Message in a very interesting way. My Wife and I have hosted a Discipleship Training class in our home for the past three years now; and over the course of those years we have seen God work in mighty ways through this Class. We have witnessed the Holy Spirit pour over people and truly Manifest the Power of God in their lives. However, we have also seen the hand satan derail many as well.

I sat on a Friday night listening to an old Billy Graham sermon contemplating why one of the members of the class had not been able to make it again. This person was visibly growing and being blessed by the Holy Spirit, yet when the trials and tribulations came upon him, the first thing on the chopping block was his attendance to the class.

The Holy Spirit spoke to me in that moment that:

“True Faith is only seen in midst of adversity, not when everything is going good, but is best seen when everything is going BAD”.

It's easy to follow Christ when everything is perfect, when the bank accounts are with large balances, when you have your bills paid ahead of time, when you are working in the best job of your life. When you have the perfect family and marriage...

OF COURSE, following Christ will be easy during those time periods; but what about when you're in the middle of the storm, in the midst of the tempest and when your bruised, beaten and battered by the trials and tribulations of life.

Today's Message hit a nerve for me, it helped me to see a glimpse of the true depth of our professed Christianity. Everyone is so quick to say that they Believe in Christ and that they are a Christian, but what does the life that you live say. What does the life that you live tell others of who or what is your **#1 Priority**? Today through this Message we will answer a very important question for all of our lives:

“What has Following Christ cost you?”

Let's invite the Holy Spirit to Help us, Guide us, Teach us and Instruct us today, bow your Heads for prayer!!

Sermon

When we are talking about the word cost we immediately associate it with something of value, and vice versa. Let's quickly define what the words **“Cost”** and **“Value”** mean.

- **Cost** = entail the payment of or sacrifice of; something of value in which a price or expenditure is associated to it.
- **Value** = worth, price or equivalent of something; to care for.

Most times when we see something that we perceive to be valuable the very first question we ask ourselves or maybe even that person that owns it is, how much does that cost or how much did that cost. Think about this for a second; without us realizing it society has programmed us to do this.

Ladies when you're in a store and you see a purse or a pair of shoes that would great with an outfit or dress you have, what's the first thing you ask a Sales Associate/Sales person: **"HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?"**

Guys you don't fall behind on this scenario as well. When we walk into a Sporting goods store, or a Hardware store and we see something we like and would like to have, we do the same thing as well, we ask: **"HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?"**

These are all things that we have all done at one time or another. However, we didn't come here today to talk about our shopping habits or capitalism. I am giving these examples so that you can grasp the definitions of **"Cost"** and **"Value"**. I will give you a final illustration so that you can understand the depth of these words in a practical and tangible way, because it is vital you understand these words so that we can honestly and truly begin to answer the question today's Message brings you. **"What has Following Christ Cost you?"**

Illustration:

For this illustration I am going to need a volunteer to help me, however I would like this volunteer to be the owner of an I-Phone, preferably the newest and latest version that just came out.

Now Volunteer I am going to ask you to take this cell phone that I have in my hands, that I brought with me today and throw it into this garbage can, simple enough right? Now Volunteer and Congregation I want you to notice how fast he/she threw this phone in the trash, because we are going to get back to this in a few seconds.

Now Volunteer I want you to take your relatively new I-Phone and throw it in the trash. Notice the hesitation, and how my Volunteer is looking at me like I am crazy and insane.

Now let's analyze this illustration, but more importantly I want you to ask yourselves **"WHY?"** was it so easy for him/her to throw this old phone I had in the trash. Contemplate for a second WHY he/she threw it in trash without giving it a second thought.

Volunteer can you tell me WHY? (*Wait for answer*) Could it be because since you didn't buy it, **it had no value to you?** Could it be because it wasn't yours it wasn't of any value or consequence to you? What if I told you that I had to work a whole month just to save enough money to buy this phone. What if I told you that I had to walk to work in the snow bare foot for a whole month in order to buy this phone, would that change your opinion on its value? What if I told you that I traded this phone for the life of a loved one, would it then have more value to you? What if I told you it was the dying wish of a relative for me to have this phone?

I bet you're feeling a little guilty in throwing out my phone now huh? Of course, I am just kidding. Now Volunteer and Congregation ask yourself this. Why was it that you (*Volunteer*) hesitated to throw out your I-Phone? Why didn't you want to just throw it out and not even worry about it? It's probably because you worked really hard to save for it, or maybe it was a gift and it has sentimental value or you paid a bunch of money for it, **or IT COST YOU SOMETHING so it has VALUE to you!**

Thank you to my Volunteer for helping me with this Illustration today, because I feel that it drives home a very important point. **We as human beings and in our society DO NOT place or assess a Value to something unless it has cost us something.** Please everyone in the congregation raise your hands if you agree with this statement. **So, we all agree that unless something cost us something it has NO REAL value to us.**

How does all this tie into FAITH? Because this is the heart of today's Message. It's easy to say that we Believe and Trust God when everything is going great, white picket fence, pantry full of food, wallet so thick with hundred dollar bills that you just give them away so that it's not so bulky in your pocket; if this is how we live then having Faith and Trusting God is easy right?

But you see God doesn't want us to have conditional Faith. Now you're probably asking yourself what in the world am I talking about. The vast majority of professed Christians have succumbed to **CONDITIONAL FAITH** without even realizing it. You see Conditional Faith in God is based on your physical circumstances.

For example, most people if they come down with some kind of terminal illness say why is God punishing me. Another example is when we lose our jobs, or are having problems in the family, or we are about to lose our home to foreclosure **we tend to magnify those problems and situations instead of MAGNIFYING OUR GOD.**

We focus on what we have to do get ourselves out of those situations instead of Praising God and Trusting Him in the middle of those situations.

God allows those circumstances, not because He wants to see us struggle or hurt, but because He is testing what our Faith is truly based on. God in essence is refining our Faith. My dear Brothers and Sisters God wants us to have **UNCONDITIONAL FAITH!** What that means is that we hold nothing back from God. What that means is that He is our only priority in our lives. What that means is that there is nothing in this miserable World that can keep you or prevent you from praising God 24/7.

Brothers and Sisters when we have UNCONDITIONAL FAITH that is when we truly see the Hand of God move mightily in our lives. That is when we come to the TRUE realization that God is REAL in our lives and that God is actively working every second of the day to Bless and Increase us. One of the Greatest stories of UNCONDITIONAL FAITH in my opinion is found in **Genesis.**

It's a very familiar story that begins in **Chapter 12** and continues for the rest of the book of Genesis because of his son and grandsons. If you haven't figured it out yet it's the story of Abraham. We are going to focus in on a particular example amongst many tests of Faith given to Abraham. Turn in your Bibles to: **Genesis 15:5, 6**.

Here God gives Abraham a mighty promise, or as it's called in the Old Testament God made a Covenant with Abraham. Now let's jump forward to **Chapter 21 Verses 2 & 3**, and we see the fulfillment of that Promise/Covenant. Now just to remind you of the circumstances, Abraham was over 100 years old and Sarah was over 90 years old, definitely a miracle of God. Imagine how happy Abraham and Sarah were that in their Golden years they conceived a Son who they called Isaac.

Now ask yourselves this: do you think that Abraham and Sarah valued their son Isaac? Do you think that Abraham and Sarah loved Isaac more than anything in this world? I believe they did, simply because he (*Isaac*) was a gift from God, a miracle that was bestowed to them that was a literal impossibility because they were senior citizens. Now let's jump forward to **Chapter 22 of Genesis Verses 1 & 2**.

Here God is asking Abraham to take Isaac, the thing that has the most **VALUE** to him and sacrifice him to God as a burnt offering. In layman's terms, God wanted Abraham to bind or tie Isaac up, put him on an alter he had to build with his own hands, then kill Isaac using his knife. That is one scary thing God is asking.

Three days Abraham walked with Isaac in order to get to mount Moriah as God had commanded. Three days passed with this heavy burden on his heart. I can imagine satan whispering in his ear: "*Abraham maybe you misunderstood what God said, because in his commandments it says thou shalt not kill*". I imagine satan trying to appeal to Abraham's human rational, trying to derail him in every single way possible.

We all know the story so let's jump forward to: **Verses 9-18**. In **Verse 10** we find Abraham with the knife in the air ready to KILL Isaac; but the interesting thing is that in Abraham's heart he had already done so. Abraham made the decision in his heart in that moment to just trust in the Promise that God had given him. Brothers and Sisters, I want you to get this and truly see the lesson in this story.

In that moment with that blade raised and about to move downward, the only thing Abraham had to hold on to was the Covenant (or Promise) God had made with him. What was that covenant, remember it was the first text we read **Genesis 15:5, 6**. The Promise that: "**Abraham's seed or his descendants would be as the stars in number**". I imagine that Abraham was probably thinking, I don't know what God is going to do after I kill Isaac but I know that He will keep His Word, His Promise, He is going to do something. **That is truly "walking by FAITH and not by sight"!**

Brothers and Sisters in that moment of extreme trial, Abraham held tightly to Gods' Word. That is all Abraham had to hold on to. The Physical circumstances and human logic were telling him Isaac will die, yet in his spirit he trusted that God would be faithful in His Promise. We also can hold tightly to Gods' Word and all His Promises which are found in the Bible when we are faced with trials and tribulations...Amen!

Now am going to read relatively quickly through the rest of these texts **Verses 11-18**. Let's pause for a second on **Verse 16 & 17**.

"Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: I will bless thee"...

Abraham is called in **Hebrews 11**, a hero of Faith; and the reason for this is because he kept nothing from God, not even his only begotten son. **Abraham put action behind his Faith, and his Faith had extreme value to him because the cost was sacrificing his son Isaac**. Remember in Abraham's heart he had already killed Isaac, and God looks at the heart my dear Brothers and Sisters. Our hearts determine who we serve. "Where our Treasure is, there also is our Heart".

You want to know why most professed "Christians" are cold in their Faith. It's because following Christ hasn't cost them something, so there is no VALUE in it. We come full circle now with the same question I asked when we began this Message:

"WHAT HAS FOLLOWING CHRIST COST YOU?"

My dear Brothers and Sisters if it hasn't COST you something, then there is no value to it, just like in our illustration with the cell phones earlier.

Have you seriously contemplated the VALUE each and every one of us has in the Eyes of Almighty God? Brethren IT DOES NOT MATTER WHAT YOU'VE DONE NOW OR IN THE PAST, God not only values you, but He was willing to pay the ultimate COST for you, make the ultimate SACRIFICE and HE sent His only begotten Son to pay our debt of sin, which was death.

Christ paid the COST with His life; He gave His life so that we could be pardoned from the death sentence we deserved because of sin (see **Romans 6:23**). **BRETHREN DO YOU GET THIS!!!!** We are so valuable to God. The only thing God ask, is that we put him first in our lives, that we make Him our only Priority.

Closing

In closing let's turn back to our **Scripture Reading** found in: **Mark 8:34** ***"Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."*** If you truly want to Follow Christ take up your Cross and follow Him. The Cross that Christ carried for us was not easy, but it had an Eternal Weight. If that means when carrying your cross, you may have to turn down a high paying job just to keep God's Commandments then do so. That might mean you may not be popular at school, or even with your non-believing family members and not popular at church for standing up to do the right thing; **but that's what taking up that Cross is all about!**

- You may have to sacrifice a friendship that conflicts with what God wants you to do.
- You may have to walk away from marrying someone that causes you to be unequally yoked in Gods' Eyes.
- You may have to decline to date someone that God through His Holy Spirit has already told you is NOT the right person for you. Yeah these things take Faith, no doubt about that.
- You may have to be by yourself for a season.
- You may have to go through a few **trials and tribulations** in order to be truly refined in your Faith.
- You may have to walk through a valley for a season.
- You may have to temporarily give up some comforts or luxuries for a season because you have decided to serve God first.

But my dear Brothers and Sisters if the end result is you having Communion, Fellowship and a Relationship with God...THEN TAKE IT ALL AWAY IN MY OPINION!!!! The things of this World only get in between you and God...

My Friends I implore you to truly ask yourselves today right now in this moment:
“WHOM YOU WILL SERVE”

As Joshua said: “As for me and my house we will serve the Lord” NO MATTER WHAT!!!

Altar Call

We will close today with an Altar Call, and frankly please don't come up here because you see your friend or neighbor next to you coming up. Come up here if you want to renew your commitment to the Lord and your BOLDNESS to follow Him no matter what.

In coming forward today, your actions will declare: All I want is Jesus for the rest of my life, I want is for Jesus to continue to mold me day by day in His Image through the Holy Spirit. If you feel the same way I invite you to come forward so that today we can all make a declaration that God is first in our lives and our only Priority. Closing song play **“Praise you in the Storm”** by **Casting Crowns**.