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Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

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Counting the Cost of Following Christ

Matthew 8:18-22

I. The Status of Cheap Grace

A. Dietrich Bonhoeffer *The Cost of Discipleship*

"Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting today for costly grace. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

"Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it the man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price, to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble, it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him."

"Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because justifies the sinner. Above all it is costly because it cost God the life of His Son: '...you were bought at a price,' and what cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all it is grace because God did not reckon His Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered Him up for us."

1. Published in 1937
2. Surrounded by rise of Nazi authority in Germany
3. Central message: meditation on what it means to be a TRUE disciple of Christ
 - Focus on Sermon on the Mount... Christ's teaching on the nature of a Disciple
 - Kingdom life is life of the HEART, not the life of cold external obedience to Law
 - Living for the joys of heaven; not earthly pleasures

- A Life of Discipleship that costs everything and gives everything

B. Today's American Gospel

1. Very little preaching of the Law or Wrath of God
2. Christ proposed as someone to make your life better... "Things Go Better with Christ"

Key verse: "I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly."

3. Abundant life defined in worldly ways
 - a. freedom from inner turmoil
 - b. resources to solve all your problems
 - c. friends, popularity
 - d. financial success possible... maybe even guaranteed
4. Conviction of sin is minimal... constant assurance of salvation emphasized

C. Now More than Ever: Counting the Cost

1. "Counting the cost" when we first come to Christ
2. Counting the cost every day
3. This passage banishes "cheap grace"... delves into true motivations for following Christ

II. "Seeker-Sensitivity" According to Jesus

A. Modern Church-growth Movement: Sensitive to Seekers

1. Constant study of the "science" of what makes a church grow
2. Appealing to unregenerate sensibilities
 - a. physical arrangement of building paramount
 - b. physical comfort the constant goal
 - c. pleasure the organizing theme
 - i) visual pleasure... an attractive sanctuary—the more striking the better
 - ii) auditory pleasure... music that attracts and appeals to the ear

- iii) relational pleasure... friendly, happy people make everyone feel at home
- iv) heart pleasure... messages that affirm, encourage, and soothe the hearer

3. “Sensitive” to “Seekers”

- a. what is a “seeker”? Someone expressing interest in spiritual things

BUT... no one naturally “Seeks God”

Romans 3:10-12 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away

So, if someone is genuinely seeking Christ, they are seeking only because God has been drawing them to His Son

John 6:44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

The true seeker is seeking because God is drawing the person powerfully to Christ... and no obstacle will stop them; even the obstacle of having no where to spend the night

- b. what is “sensitive”? Careful not to offend or do anything in any way that will turn the seeker away

In other words, “seeker sensitivity” means doing nothing that might hinder the person in anyway

Especially it means keeping a call to deep commitment hidden until they are ready for it

- c. anything offensive or troubling must be filtered out
- d. especially must filter out any mention of sin, wrath, judgment, hell, condemnation
- e. equally seek to filter out offensive aspects of the gospel message: cross, blood, thorns, repentance, obedience

B. “Seeker-sensitivity” According to Christ

- 1. Constantly going for the heart
- 2. Understands true needs of each person
- 3. Parallel account: Rich young ruler
 - a. Matthew 19

- b. had everything going for him: wealth, youth, power, etc.
- c. addressed Jesus courteously... ready to follow him
- d. the paradigm of a “seeker”
- e. BUT: at heart he was an idolater... sensitivity to His true needs means Jesus must strip away his idolatry

4. So also the Samaritan woman at the well

5. Here: faces two “seekers” and sets out Christian life plainly

C. The Teacher of the Law: Blanket Declaration of Loyalty

vs. 19 Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."

1. Teachers of the Law: used to a comfortable standard
 - a. well-respected in Jewish culture
 - b. scholars: constantly studying the Word of God
 - c. called “scribes”: copied Scripture for others to have copies
 - d. among the upper echelon of society
2. Teacher of the Law: usually Jesus’ foes
 - a. constantly challenged Christ’s claims
 - b. plotted to have Jesus killed (Mark 14:1)
 - c. Matthew 23: Jesus pronounced “Seven woes” on them

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites...”

3. However: this one was different!! BLANKET DECLARATION OF LOYALTY

vs. 19 Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."

- a. this kind of loyalty is exactly what Christ demands

b. handing Jesus a blank check... or was he??

4. Jesus challenged him deeply

vs. 20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

a. not driving him away... merely telling him the truth

b. physical earthly comfort not in his future!!

D. The "Dutiful Son"(?): "First, Let Me..."

vs. 21 Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

1. Called him "Lord"... in Matthew's gospel, always done by followers

2. Willingness to go... he's already called a "disciple"

3. But a problem... the word "First"... Loyalty to Christ should come above all things

Matthew 10:37-38 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me."

Luke 9:61-62 And another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

4. Problem: open-ended commitment

a. "First let me go and bury my father..." Father not necessarily dead

b. could be years away

c. ultimately concerned for inheritance

John MacArthur: "Since a man's inheritance was customarily lost or reduced if he did not fulfill his expected duties to the family, the phrase 'I must bury my father' was frequently equivalent to 'I want to wait until I receive my inheritance.'"

For both of these individuals, Jesus confronted them with the cost of following him... it would not be personally comfortable, nor would it lead to earthly wealth

E. "By Faith Alone": Appearances Can Be Deceiving

1. Modern American evangelists would have welcomed both of these men with no questions asked
2. Bonhoeffer's "Cheap grace" abundant!!
3. BUT Jesus was looking deeper... at the heart

John 2:23-25 Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. 24 But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. 25 He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.

John 8:31-32 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Simple faith is not so simple... the faith that saves is a faith that perseveres through every imaginable trial, including wandering with Jesus through many dangers, toils and snares!!

III. Christ's Definition of the "Abundant Life"

A. Common Misconception: Christ as "Life-Enhancer"

Illus. Parachutes

1. Both "seekers" assumed Christ would "make their life better"
2. Christ pointed both to the COST of following Him
3. Common trap

Illus. Caribbean mission... pastor gave children sweet cakes who prayed to receive Christ... tons came forward

Church History: white robe and silver piece for all converts...

B. Christ's Lifestyle: Lower than the Beasts

vs. 20 "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head."

Amazing!! Right after Sermon on the Mount:

1. Teacher of the Law used to comfortable lifestyle

2. Jesus destroys that notion... “Tonight we may be sleeping out under the sky!!”

John 7:53-8:2 Then each went to his own home. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2 At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them.

3. No financial means at all

Luke 8:2-3 some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; 3 Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

4. Even had to take advantage of “Jewish welfare”

C. True “Abundant Life”: Knowing the Father, Doing His Will

1. Peace with the Father is Life

- a. truest threat: wrath and curse from God for our sins
- b. Law stands ready to accuse us, condemn us to hell
- c. Christ offers eternal life, free from wrath of God

2. Knowing God is Abundant Life

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

3. Serving God is Abundant Life

John 4:34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

IV. Counting the Cost of Following Christ

VI. Applications

A. Retooling Evangelism

1. Telling the truth like Jesus
2. The narrow gate and hard road
3. True and false obstacles
4. Jesus as Savior, not “Life-enhancer”
5. Counting the cost right from the start

B. Counting the Cost Daily

1. Ongoing need to count the cost
2. All earthly blessings stewardship matters
3. Look how God treated His only Begotten Son

C. Luxury and Necessity

1. Jesus’ earthly will

***John 19:23-24* When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. 24 "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." So this is what the soldiers did.**

When Jesus died, He literally left nothing behind! His earthly will was exactly zero!

2. Paul’s inventory of true necessity

***1 Timothy 6:5-8* ...men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.**

3. American expectations of earthly comfort

4. Wealth not evil... just not to be sought as end goal

1 Timothy 6:9-10 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

1 Timothy 6:17-18 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

5. How then shall we live?

Philippians 4:11-13 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Goal: Godliness WITH CONTENTMENT!!!

D. A Complaining Heart: Sure Sign of Faulty Expectations

1. Complaining usually results from adverse circumstances AND faulty expectations
2. Adverse circumstances are sure to come
3. When next you complain, remember

“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.”

Ask: Is your life harder or easier than Jesus' life?

Or, look at the Apostle Paul's life:

2 Corinthians 11:24-27 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. 27 I have labored and toiled and

have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

Could it be that we have yet to learn what the true Christian life is all about, when it comes to discomfort and adverse circumstances?

There is a yearning for physical comfort that is the enemy of the truly fruitful Christian life.

Suppose Christ called you to forsake everything, follow Him, and go to a Third World Country as a witness for Christ? No refrigeration, no 911 emergency service for fire or ambulance, no modern hospitals, no paved roads, no air conditioning, no running water, no indoor plumbing, no English speakers, no schools for your children. Hostile neighbors, large insects, diseases, hard work, sleepless nights, perhaps even hunger.

Would you do it?

E. Care for Parents: Set in its Proper Place

1. Balance in Christ's teaching
2. Ten Commandments: Honor Your Father and Mother

Matthew 15:3-6 Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? 4 For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' 5 But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' 6 he is not to 'honor his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.

Jesus clearly taught that the tradition of dedicating money to God rather than caring for your parents with it was a violation of the Ten Commandments. Thus He upheld the ongoing need for a son or daughter to honor their parents, even to their dying day.

3. Loving Christ above parents

Matthew 10:34-38 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- 36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' 37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

vs.21- 22 Another said, “First let me go and bury my father.” Jesus answered, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

The command to honor parents is straight from God, and Jesus’ teaching on the “Corban” tradition clearly showed He expected that requirement to extend to the end of the parent’s life. But love for Christ and His service must come above all things. If Christ calls you to serve Him and parents forbid it, the command from Christ is higher.

F. “Follow Me”

1. The highest call is to serve Christ wherever He goes, however He commands
 - a. follow me and be witnesses

Matthew 4:19 “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”

- b. follow me and be my servant

John 12:26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

- c. follow me and be willing to suffer disgrace

Hebrews 13:12-13 Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. 13 Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.

- d. follow me and be willing to die

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

- e. follow me all the way to heaven

John 14:6 “I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me.”

2. Daily life of walking with Jesus is hard, not easy
3. Christ’s life of humble, simple, poverty-stricken obedience to the Father is our model
4. True disciples will follow Jesus anywhere He goes

vs. 23 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him.

Yet... it is a thrilling life to follow Jesus, a life of fruitfulness and endless variety!!

Next week, the stilling of the storm!