

Title: Do you really know the cost? Pt.2  
Text: Matthew 20.17-34  
Theme: The condition and cost of discipleship  
Series: Matthew #98  
Prop Stmt: The cost of following Christ is to bear the reproach of the world but the hope of eternal life.

Read Text:

Reading the Bible can be extremely dangerous IF I bring wrong assumptions with me in my reading. One of the most important classes that we offer in our electives is the class on how to study, or how to interpret the Bible. We are all in danger of bringing our assumptions or our agendas with us when we read the Bible. Our assumptions and agendas are like colored lenses that cause us to see the truths in various shades that can distort and minimize them. That is dangerous!

Some of you may remember Edgar Whisenant's book, "88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be In 1988." It sold a lot of copies in 1988, but not so many in 1989. You can still get a used copy on Amazon for \$42.50 plus shipping. That guy made an assumption and then read the Bible with that assumption and misleads many people. This man was dangerous. He's dead now, but there are plenty who have taken his place.

Beloved, you do not offend me when you question my interpretation of a text. While the Bible is infallible, I am not. I am certainly capable of misinterpreting the text because I am capable of bringing an assumption or agenda to the text as well. That is why the study of the Bible is not merely academic. There is a spiritual dynamic that is in play. When the Bible speaks about hearing the Word of God, it is not referring to a mere auditory sensation. It is speaking of hearing the content, embracing it as truth, placing your life under its authority and ordering your priorities accordingly. Hearing the Word without obeying the Word is not really hearing.

When we studied this text last week, we saw a glaring example of this. We noted then that Jesus gave a clear explanation to his disciples that he was going to go to Jerusalem and die. But, they were still blinded by their view of power. So, even though the disciples knew who Jesus was, they did not yet understand the real significance of his life and ministry. Therefore, they interpreted his life and ministry through the lens of their assumptions and the lens of their agenda. At this point the disciples do not yet understand that Jesus is really going to die. It is like they are all on the bus and the driver is telling them where they are going, but they do not really believe him because they think that they already know where they are going. And here is why I am making a big deal of this. Judas Iscariot is on the bus like the rest of the guys. But, when he realizes that this bus is not going where he wants it to go, he is so disillusioned and angry that he gets off the bus and betrays the driver and the other riders. Listen carefully.

- I. **If you "hear" the words of Jesus through the filter of your culture, then you will never actually hear the words of Jesus. (17-19)**

They still do not understand what Jesus has been saying because their view of the Messiah is filtering out the Messiah's view of the Messiah. Does your view of God and Christianity filter out God's view of God and Christianity?

What are your assumptions about Christianity? What is your view of Christianity? Where do you get your view of Christianity? Does it come from the popular Christian subculture or does it come from the Scriptures? Does it come from your own heart's desire to be significant, successful and comfortable? When you examine the assumptions and beliefs of the disciples you realize that they are not all that different from some of the same assumptions and beliefs that popular Christianity holds today. Christianity in our country has been hijacked by self-centeredness. That self-centeredness is promoted through what is called "prosperity gospel." Instead of God being the center of all things and his glory being the supreme goal, our culture's view of Christianity is one where God makes much of us and does what we want. We like to make God in our image. We think we can create a God who will give us what we want and do what we want and will play by our rules. The toxic problem with that is that what we want is not what is good for us. But, people love to listen to someone who agrees with and endorses their desires. For millions in this country, Christianity is the message and the movement that caters to our desires. God is the means to me getting my mansion now. Forget, waiting for it over the hilltop.

But, the message that Christ preached was not a message that catered to the disciples, but called them lay down their lives and deny themselves and abandon their wills for Him. Christ came to deliver us from our puny, pathetic, self-centered views. Self-centered Christianity does not want too much from God, it wants too little. It is willing to settle for a stuff and what makes much of us instead of what makes much of God.

In short, we suffer from what Tom Schreiner calls an "over-realized eschatology." What does that mean? Eschatology is a technical term for the study of the end-times and future events. Eschaton means last and ology means "study of". The book of Revelation is an eschatological book. When we look at the future, we look at what we will have and experience with Christ in glory. We will have a glorified body. We do not have that yet. We have a decaying body now. However, according to health and wealth preachers (some of whom have glasses and toupees), we can have perfect health now if we have enough faith. No we can't! What are they doing? They are taking a promise for the future and trying to force it into today. Now, that promise for the future impacts how we view today and how we live today, but the promise of a perfect body is mine – then, it is not mine – yet. I am guaranteed a new body. Already, that promise is mine, but not yet do I experience it.

Let me give you another example. When we are with Christ in glory, we will never experience pain, sorrow, cancer, heart disease, hunger, thirst, insecurity, brokenness, poverty or weakness. There are prosperity gospel preachers who try to promise you that if you have enough faith then you will not have pain, sorrow, cancer, heart disease, hunger, thirst, insecurity, brokenness, poverty or weakness now. However, Jesus suffered pain, sorrow, hunger, thirst, poverty and weakness. The apostle Paul experienced pain, sorrow,

hunger, thirst, insecurity, poverty, weakness and major disappointments. And the Holy Spirit directed Paul to write, "...follow me as I follow Christ."

We want glory without suffering. And people like Joel Osteen, TD Jakes, and Joyce Meyer are selling that message and calling it Christianity. And what is so dangerous about what they are doing is that they are taking truths from the Bible and reading them and proclaiming them through the deformed lens of self-centeredness. It sounds appealing. It sounds attractive. It sounds soothing. But sugar-coated theology will damn your soul. The OT is full of stories of false prophets who were paid good money to say things that people wanted to hear. What do you think false prophets looked like? They did not look like evil people. They looked nice and appealing. But the OT is also full of stories of true prophets who were rejected and hated because they said things that people needed to hear. Which line of prophets did Jesus identify with? Beloved, we have a Christianity that does not look like Christ. John Piper wisely said, that "*prosperity cannot be a proof of God's favor since it is what the devil promises to those who worship him.*"

Now, prosperity and health is not evil. Prosperity and health are gifts from God, but they are not the ultimate gift. If you are prosperous and healthy, thank God for it! Bless God for it. Use your resources and strength for the glory of God. But, what so much of Christianity has done and made prosperity and health as the ultimate goal and that Jesus is a means to getting what you want. Over and over Jesus is attempting to dispel his disciples of the notion that they are going to have glory and power and prosperity and health now. What Christ promises to his followers now is the rejection of the world. The only way that you can miss out on the reproach of Christ is if you are unfaithful to Christ.

It is true that this train is bound for glory. But, before we get to the mountain-peak of glory, we most likely go through the valley of suffering. There is no crown without a cross. There is no resurrection without death. There is no exaltation without humility. We love the glory part. We fear and recoil at the suffering part. But suffering and glory are related together.

In 2 Timothy 2, Paul is writing to Timothy and giving him instructions for his life, for the elders of his church and for his church. In v.8 he appeals to Timothy to "*remember Jesus Christ*" because he not only accomplished our salvation, but the manner in which Jesus accomplished our salvation established the pattern for our lives. Jesus suffered and died and was raised from the dead. So, Paul tells Timothy to remember Jesus Christ and then Paul connects the dots for Timothy and explains that he (Paul) is suffering right now because of the gospel. Paul is not suffering in order to pay for his sins. No! Paul is suffering because of the opposition to the message of the gospel. Paul is in prison. He says (v.9) that he is "*bound with chains as a criminal*" but he is willing to do this because even though what he preaches (the gospel) brings suffering, the gospel brings salvation to the people of God and that salvation is the only means to eternal glory. Then Paul makes it abundantly clear that if we die with Christ, then we get to live with him. If we endure, then we get to reign with him. However, if we deny him, he will also deny us. In other words, if you jump off the train because you want the glory and are not willing to face the

suffering, then you are not a genuine follower of Christ. Beloved, we have more to fear from a self-centered Christianity than an atheistic culture.

So, let me go back to some of my original questions: What are some of your assumptions about Christianity? If I follow Jesus I can expect \_\_\_\_\_. How do you fill in the blank? Does Jesus fill in the blank the same way that you do?

**II. When you really hear the words of Jesus, it will change everything about you. (20-28)**

**A. It will change (and keep changing) your view of God.**

We are like the kid who told his dad, “*I’m tired of you telling me what to do all the time, I’m joining the Marines.*” God’s authority is not something to be distrusted. In heaven, everything is perfect – right? That is attractive – right? Did you realize that everything and everyone in heaven does exactly what God wants every single time? Why is heaven perfect? It’s perfect because everybody obeys God, perfectly. If heaven is so perfect and wonderful because everyone obeys God there, then why do you think that you can make your life a little better by not trusting and obeying him here? We tend to water down, ignore, distrust, or reword the teachings of Jesus because they make us uncomfortable, or because we think that we actually know what is better for us than he does. That idea is fundamentally preposterous. Our built-in bias to trust ourselves and to distrust God comes from the idea that we think that we know better and that we will look out for our best interests better than God will. But, when you really hear the words of Jesus, with your heart. When you really grasp what he is saying, it will change everything about you, including your view of God.

Have you read the end of the Bible? Do you know what happens for the rest of eternity? God dwells with his people! God is jacked-up with uncontrollable excitement to dwell with his people! That means you! God loves you that much that he not only longs for you to be with him, he sent his Son to secure the way for you to be with him and then sent the Spirit to blow up your life and bring you to faith in Christ and seal you because God is that committed to you. Jesus drank the cup of wrath for you because if he did not take the punishment for your sin, you would not be able to handle it. When you hear that with your heart you begin to realize how deeply you are loved by God. Jesus drank the cup of wrath for you because you are so deeply loved by the Father, that Jesus was willing to do anything that the Father sent him to do in order to secure your pardon.

**B. It will change (and keep changing) your view of authority.**

Authority is designed by God to be a gift of grace. Happy are the people who have leaders who care for them. If you have been placed into a position of authority, you have the opportunity to advance the joy of the people who are under you. Authority is not the means to get your way. Authority is the God-given means to advance the joy of those who are under your care.

### **C. It will change your view of servants.**

Look at v.26. What is Jesus doing? He is changing the price tags of the world, isn't he? A price tag is supposed to reflect the value of the item to which it is attached. Jesus takes the tag of "great" and he attaches it to the servant. Imagine that you are driving on the freeway and you come across a motorcade with 18 police cars, 6 blacked-out Escalades and a stretch limousine. Do you say, "Whoa, I wonder who the chauffeur is?" We wonder who the important person is? But Jesus is not impressed with the labels, positions and titles we are impressed with. Christ values the lowly and the despised because he was lowly and despised. His entire ministry is characterized by caring for the lowly and despised. And ironically it is the lowly and the despised who most often hear what he is really saying and recognize who he really is. Matthew neatly illustrates this with the story of two blind men who sitting by the roadside when they heard that Jesus was passing by.

### **III. Only the Needy really hear the message of Jesus. (29-34)**

Look at the contrasts here. A great crowd vs. two men; People walking vs. sitting; People seeing vs. being blind. These men are here on purpose. The Passover is approaching and tens of thousands of people are going to Jerusalem. These blind men have found a strategic place along a well-traveled road where they hope to receive a lot of alms. It's scary to be blind because you are so vulnerable. You are needy and to some people, you are an embarrassment. The crowd certainly reacts that way, don't they?

But, these guys seem to understand something that the others do not. They are calling Christ, the Son of David. They apparently recognize his right to take the throne.

#### **A. The Needy do not appear to fit in.**

When these two men heard that Jesus was passing by, they began shouting, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David." The crowd tries to get them to shut-up, but they won't. They keep yelling. If you give a beggar something, they don't stop begging. They never stop begging because they are beggars. You only keep them quiet for a bit. Perhaps some of the crowd threw money at them in order to get them to be quiet? We don't know. They said, in essence, there is no hope for you guys. Jesus does not want to be bothered with you. Jesus is important. Jesus is busy. Jesus does not have time for losers. You don't fit with us. You don't belong to us. Be quiet. Stay low. Get out of sight. Nobody wants to hear from you anyway. But these guys won't shut up will they? The more they try to tell them to be quiet, the louder they get. It only illustrates what we think about needy people. They do not understand what is socially acceptable and they bother important people or people who like to think that they are important.

Do you honestly think that Jesus has time for needy people? And at this moment, Matthew summarizes the last three years of the ministry of Christ before he enters Jerusalem with this scene. It is powerful and personal.

If Jesus is the leader that the people think he is and the kind of leader that the people want, then, no, he would not have time for needy people. But, since Jesus was not the leader that the people thought he was, but was the leader that they needed, he did something that they did not anticipate. He stopped. He stopped in order to pay attention to these needy men. He stopped and called to them. He stopped and asked them what it was that they needed from him.

### **B. The Needy are the only ones that Jesus came for.**

When you cry out for Jesus, he will stop for you. What do these men say that gets the attention of Christ? They not only call him Son of David, but they ask him to have mercy upon them. Over and over in the Old Testament and New Testament, this one cry, it seems more than any other is what captures the attention of God. The publican in the temple who would not even lift his head to the sky, said, "...have mercy upon me." Cries for mercy grab the ear and heart of God. But proud people do not think they need mercy. Proud people, and truly blind people do not realize how deep of a hole they are in. When is the last time you cried for mercy? Have you ever, just laid out your life before God and begged him for mercy? Have you ever realized how blind you are because of your sin and what the consequences are apart from the grace of God? Have you ever been so desperate and longing for deliverance that you cried out for mercy? These men did. And then what does Jesus do? He had pity on them and he touched their eyes. Isn't that beautiful? He touched them. Needy people are not a bother to Christ. Do you realize that? You are not a bother to Christ?

The last phrase is really telling. They not only recovered their sight, but they followed Christ. Where is Christ leading? He is leading to the cross. But there is a little more to this story. At the beginning these guys are sitting and begging and at the end they are seeing, walking and following Jesus to Jerusalem. These beggars are now able to go to Jerusalem and experience the Passover and they will not only experience the Passover with sight, but they will be there for the fulfillment of the Passover in Christ.

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. The city had been the stronghold of the Jebusites who taunted David by saying that their city was so strong that even the blind and the lame could defend it from David. Here, Christ comes marching to Jerusalem in order to take back that which belongs to him. He has in his army, those who were blind and lame and whom the world gave up on as needy losers. Over and over, Christ turns things that are upside down, right side up. The last will be first and the first will be last. The blind see and those who think they can see are actually blind. Those who think they are well are sick and those who admit they are sick are made well. Those who lead, serve. He goes after the heart so that we can understand our need. Only the weak need a Redeemer. Only the sinful need a Savior. Only the desperate will cry out for mercy. And only those who were losers will become part of his heavenly force to come with him to conquer Jerusalem (Rev. 19) and take back all that it his. You in?

## Conclusion:

My (our) daughter is getting married to Stephen Magee this Saturday. Stephen's father is Don Magee, the pastor at Lakes Baptist Church in Walled Lake for almost 20 years. When Don and I realized that this relationship was heading toward engagement we talked about this wedding and we both said that we have to invite our entire churches to the wedding because we are both aware of how many feelings we could hurt if we didn't. No one said anything to us for a while about that, but reality began to settle in and a few people pulled me aside and basically said, that was well, impossible. Sadly, I consented. It continues to bother me and I feel badly and yet I know that most of you understand. Now, I love my daughter and I love my son-in-law and while I think that their wedding will be a joy, what I know is that their wedding is only a preview of the real wedding to come. And in the name of the groom and his Father, I can invite you to that wedding and I do. The invitation goes out to every loser and needy person who is willing to turn from their sin and trust Christ. The invitation is signed in red and gains you admittance to the wedding, where you discover that you are the bride and the party never ends.