



5<sup>th</sup> September 2022 | 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Pentecost

## Counting the Cost of calling Jesus, 'Lord'

### Main verse:

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26-27)

### Main Point:

Even though people may recognise that Jesus was a good teacher, and some that He was the Saviour who gives them the gift of eternal life, not many are prepared to follow Him at any cost.

But Jesus tells those who plan to follow him, that such a decision will demand everything they have. Only when we are prepared to call Jesus our Lord and Master, will He call us His 'disciple'.

### Intro |

So, I'm going to ask you to close your eyes and imagine a scene. It is a scene that many of us can easily place ourselves in – although for some it may require a trip down memory lane.

*It had been a hot night. As soon as day breaks you decide to go for a dip in the ocean, to cool off. You stand on the hot sand, drop your towel and wade into the ocean, the waves crashing over your head.*

*As you keep your eyes on the beach, you realise that there is a strong current beneath the surface that is quickly taking you further and further out to sea.*

*You start paddling against the current, but quickly discover you aren't getting any closer to the shore, instead you're further away and your legs are getting more and more tired.*

*You raise your arm, waving it, in desperate search for someone to help you.*

*After what seems like an excruciatingly long time, you see a lifesaver dive into the waves, with his flotation device.*

*Within no time he appears beside you, and strongly pulls you with him, towards the shore.*

*After lying on the hot sand, catching your breath, your focus returns to your lifesaver, who is still sitting beside you, ensuring you're OK.*

*"Oh my goodness", you say, "How can I ever express how grateful I am. You literally saved my life. Without you I was a goner."*

*While he sits silently beside you, you vow never to forget this moment.*

*You ask him for his number and promise you'll call him. Saying,*

*"I'll never forget what you've done for me. You've given me a second chance. Let's keep in touch."*

*Then, you walk back to your car, looking forward going back home and carrying on with what you had planned for the day.*

This little scenario is designed to be like a parable, reliving what it is like to be rescued by Jesus from the treacherous ocean of our sinful condition.

Certainly, Jesus is our lifesaving hero, our Saviour. He pulls us out of the world of darkness and sin, giving us a new experience of life.

From that moment on, we are a different person – we are now a person who has security and hope about our future.

We are the recipient of the most precious gift - the gift of eternal life. And, if you are anything like me, for the rest of the day, I would have told everyone about having been rescued by that amazing lifesaver, named Jesus.

But it is what we do *after* we arrive back on the safety of the shore, that is what today's message is all about.

**Point 1 | Jesus is indeed our Saviour. But, it is a daily decision whether we treat him just our saviour, or whether we elevate his role in our lives to be Lord and Master.**

Well, a few weeks have past since your dramatic rescue. Your lifesaver's number is still stuck on the fridge. You're feeling quite embarrassed that it has been so long since you called him. But, you finally do and leave this message on his machine.

*"Hey there! Do you remember me? You rescued me a while ago. Thanks so much for that. I'll never forget it. Life is all good. I'm doing really fine. I'll catch up with you soon."*

We can be a bit like that with Jesus. We recognise that He is our Saviour.

But because our rescue took place quite a while ago, the busyness of life takes over, and Jesus becomes a person who, although we feel indebted to thank every now and then, he is not intimately involved in our day-to-day lives.

I wonder if that is what it was like for the crowds that followed after Jesus. I wonder if the reason they were following him was because they hoped to catch sight of him healing someone, or perhaps doing another miracle.

But, suddenly he abruptly stopped walking and turned to say,

*"If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26-27)*

Talk about a crowd stopper!

**Point 2 | The decision to follow Jesus 'at any cost', becomes obvious when we see the difference between following Jesus as our Saviour, and following him as our Lord.**

It is almost as though Jesus was turning around and saying "Are you really sure you want to follow me? Have you considered what's involved? Certainly, it is going to cost you everything, the relationships within your family will be tested, and you must even have a willingness to die an excruciating death."

There is no way we can reduce Jesus' words to just a metaphor – as, for some people, Jesus' words are being lived out in horrific reality.

That's why last week, we remembered refugees and those who are persecuted for their faith.

For many, following Jesus means joining Him on the way to martyrdom.

Now, if we were one of Jesus' disciples during his earthly ministry, this would mean being prepared to follow Jesus as he travelled from town to town, listening to him teach along the way, discussing what he was saying with the other disciples as they camped around the fire.

Jesus told each of them plainly, that following him meant being prepared to die for him (Matthew 24:9).

But what does being a follower of Christ mean in our lives, especially when we may not be called upon to die for the name of Jesus?

Well ask yourself: Do you live your life, taking for granted the gift of eternal life you have been granted?

Or does Jesus have such a place in your life, that every word that proceeds from His lips is the guiding force in your life?

There is a difference between calling on Jesus every now and then, to say, 'thanks Jesus for your gift of eternal life. All is OK! Life is going great!'

AND saying, 'Jesus, life is not worth living without you. I will not take another step until I know that you are in me, for I have decided to live by what you say'.

If we were to put this in our beach illustration, it would be like saying to the one who saved your life. 'No, I don't want to go back to my car and drive back to my old life. Where are you going Jesus? Because I'm determined to follow you to your car, and head off with you – so I can listen and learn from you, joining you in what YOU are doing.'

That's the difference between recognising Jesus as your Saviour, and determining that Jesus is your Lord and Master.

When the Apostle Paul explained the Gospel to the Roman Christians he said, *"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."* (Romans 10:9)

To be a disciple of Jesus, each one of us must have made a decision to appoint Jesus as Lord, King and Master or boss of every aspect of our lives. And that decision is not only made once, it is a daily decision.

And if Jesus is your Lord, He is not only Lord of a portion of your life (like the part that comes along on Sunday, or the part that is on its best behaviour at dinner parties). No, if Jesus is Lord

He must have control of your entire life, every room, every darkened corner, every tightly locked wardrobe - your whole life.

And to keep Jesus' presence in every aspect of our life, we need to allow God's Word to shine inside all the dark places that we would otherwise like to keep hidden.

Because just as sunlight is a great steriliser, that kills the spurs of mould and mildew, the light of God's Word always brings healing, and kills the sin which grows in hidden places.

That's why the Apostle Paul urged us to live as "children of light" who expose the works of darkness. For, *"everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light."* (Ephesians 5: 9-13)

### **Point 3 | The cost of calling Jesus 'Lord' is to walk as children of the light in a world where darkness dominates**

So, what is the cost to live as a disciple of the Lord? Well, in fact, we just got an enormous clue from Paul's instruction for us to live as children of light. If we are determined to live lives that are full of goodness, righteousness and truth, so that what we do pleases the Lord, it will mean we are not free to behave like those who live in darkness.

We are not free to retaliate in anger, bitterness and anger when someone does something we don't like. We are not free to laugh along at crude jokes which demean people. We are not free to hold onto unforgiveness when someone wrongs us. For to do so would be to walk the same as the darkness of the world, rather than contrary to it.

We see this played out vividly in how the Apostle Paul urge Philemon to manage his thieving runaway slave, named Onesimus. Philemon could have ordered Onesimus be killed – after all that is what he deserved. Or he could have rightly thrown him to the bottom of the slave pool for him to prove his worth. But, instead, Paul urged Philemon to receive him back as a "beloved brother" (Philemon 16). In fact, Paul even encouraged Philemon to welcome Onesimus as he would welcome Paul if he was to visit – remarkable. (v 17)

That meant letting go of all the retribution, letting go of all the anger, and receiving the one who wronged him with graciousness and forgiveness.

Not an easy ask, is it?

### **Application | How do we 'carry our cross' as we follow Jesus Christ?**

If we want to be disciples and followers of Jesus Christ, it will require every part of our spiritual strength to do it.

There will be days when we feel like throwing our hands up and saying, 'I cannot go on', and days when we cry, "if I have to forgive them one more time, I'll die."

There will be days when our eyes tear over because of the evil that is pervading the world, as we utter, "Lord, following you is hard."

But, that is the high price of following Jesus. So, are you prepared to be a disciple? If so, then you're ready to sing, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back'.