

Homily – The Cost of Being Jesus’ Disciple

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As I look out at you today I see the faces of Jesus’ disciples. Each of you is a disciple in your own way and none of you is complete in your journey to fully live into to your discipleship of Jesus. None of us has reached the full potential that God has already placed into each and every one of us. We are disciples, and we all have work to do, but sometimes one person’s area of growth is not the same as another person’s area of growth.

Now, when I was a kid we used to play a game called “Simon Says.” I am guessing that most of you have played this game as well. The game has three or more players with one person playing the role of Simon. The person playing Simon tells the other players to do jumping jacks or touch their head, and the instruction should only be followed if it is prefaced with the words “Simon says

“Simon Says” is a silly little game, but a much more serious game of life and death is “Jesus Says.” As followers or disciples of Jesus we are supposed to pay extra attention to those things that Jesus tells us to do or not to do. Jesus doesn’t tell us to touch our heads, but he does tell us how to interact with others. He tells us to pay extra special attention to God. Jesus says to let go of our worries and our resentments. However, many of us are better at playing the “Simon says” game than the “Jesus says” way of living.

In the four Gospels Jesus has a lot to say about how we are supposed to live as individuals and as a community. In our Gospel readings over the last few weeks Jesus has been telling us what to do about money and possessions. He has told us about conflict. He has told us that the rules of a good life are not as black and white as we might hope. He has told us to manage our egos, and lead a humble life. And, this week we hear Jesus say that there are costs to being his disciple. He says that the cost may include the affection and support we get from our families, the security of our physical well-being, and the control we get from our money and possessions. Jesus says these things to us, but we have come up with a lot of reasons to ignore what Jesus says. So let’s dissect this morning’s reading to look at the three costs Jesus says we must embrace to be a disciple.

This morning we heard Jesus say, *“Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple.”* Those of us with an elevated need for affection need to pay extra attention to this cost of being a disciple. To more fully grow into our true self, some of us need to work on letting go of our need for affection. This is not to say that affection is bad.

It is actually necessary for healthy living, but too much of a need becomes a burden and a blockage. To be a better disciple of Jesus some of us need to dampen our need for affection and approval. Is this true of you or of one of your loved ones?

And Jesus says, *"Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."* Those of you with an elevated need for security need to pay extra attention to this cost. To more fully grow into your true self, some of you need to work on letting go of your need for security. To be a better disciple of Jesus some of you need to dampen your fears. Is this you or one of your loved ones?

And Jesus says, *"None of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions."* Those of you with an elevated need for control need to pay extra attention to this cost. To more fully grow into your true self, some of you need to work on letting go of your need for control. To be a better disciple of Jesus some of you need to dampen the anger that can be associated with an excessive need to control. Is this you or your loved one?

Do you see the wisdom that Jesus has in understanding and naming our costs? When you let go of your very personal primary concern and accept your cost of being a disciple, then you can live into the fullness that God has already created in each and every one of us. We must each carry our own cross, and this does not mean that we need to physically suffer as Jesus did. Instead our insides are changed for the better.

My own personal cost of being a disciple is letting go of my excessive need for approval and affection. As a child, I think I got healthy affection from my family of origin, but from the age of twelve I was harboring a deep sense of shame associated with my sexual orientation. I have worked for many years to let go of that shame, and to let go of my excessive need for approval. Those of you that know me well, know that at times I still fail. I still sometimes go to that place where I need approval, but I'm working on it.

My challenge to you and my "Jesus says" to you is to identify and work on your primary cost as well. I know that many of you are already doing this. You know how freeing this work can be. You also know this is not a one-time cost, but it is the work of a lifetime. However, it is worth it. Being a disciple of Jesus has enormous benefits both in this lifetime and in the next.

Now, I should clarify one thing before, I conclude today. Each of us has a primary cost to work on, but we each need to work on all three areas or costs. We all have ego work to do to let go of our false self and be a better disciple of Jesus.

Jesus says, we all need to let go of an excessive need for affection and approval.

Jesus says, we all need to let go of an excessive need for control and manage our related anger.

And, Jesus says, we all need to let go of an disproportionate need for security and manage our fears.

We often talk of the cost of discipleship as if it were a hardship. And at times, this may be the case, but the cost of being a disciple also leads to the freedom to be the person that God created us to be. We can be free of needs, free of anger, and free of fears. Don't you want this for yourself and for your loved ones. We each need to do this work for ourselves, but the world sorely needs us to do this as well.

Come and pay the cost and join in the wonder of being Jesus' disciple.