

*Valley Bible Church – Parables of Jesus*

**Parable Lesson 19: What is your personal responsibility? Count the cost!**

**The Unfinished Tower**

**Luke 14:28-30**

**The Rash Attack**

**Luke 14:31-33**

***Introduction:***

When I was serving as Director of Graphic Services at The University of Southern California I had the opportunity to take part in a number of classes in management conducted by top military, political, and business leaders.

They certainly didn't agree on everything, but they did agree on the marks of a great leader. Three of those marks stick in my mind today, years later:

**A great leader states clearly the conditions to be met by his followers.**

What must they give up to accomplish the common goal?

What are the risks that are acceptable to meet that goal?

What are the resources available to fulfill the task?

*These are placed under the heading of counting the cost.*

**A great leader studies the task to be accomplished.**

What is the objective and how can we accomplish it effectively?

What steps are necessary to move us from here to there?

What is our battle plan, campaign plan, or game plan?

*These are placed under the heading of planning.*

If you fail to plan, you plan to fail, etc., etc.

Von Moltke, who was a great military strategist, put it this way, "First weigh, then venture." This is why there are war rooms, smoke filled rooms (now largely figurative), and feasibility studies.

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**A great leader asks nothing of his followers he would not do himself.**

Whether it is a military giant like Patton, Eisenhower, MacArthur, or Schwartzcauf, a political leader such as Roosevelt, Churchill, Kennedy, or Reagan, a business leader like Ford, J. C Penny, Iacocca, or Gates, all have, at least in principle, subscribed to this belief.

*This is placed under the heading of leadership.*

According to these accepted criteria Jesus was a great leader:

**Jesus stated clearly the conditions to be met by His followers.**

He instructed his followers to count the cost before following Him:

In Luke 14:26-27 He said, "*If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.*"

Jesus made it clear that one has to be willing to give up friends, family, and fortune, position, pride, and possessions.

EVEN ONE'S VERY LIFE is to be subjected to Christ.

**Jesus laid out the task to be accomplished.**

The task is wide spread and challenging. We are to:

***Be Witnessing***

Matt. 28:19--"*Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*"

***Be in the battle***

Eph. 6:12--"*For our **struggle** is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual {forces} of wickedness in the heavenly {places.}*"

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### ***Be striving to be holy***

Matt. 5:48--"*Therefore you are to **be perfect**, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*"

### ***Be growing and maturing***

James 1:2-4, "*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have {its} perfect result, that you may be **perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.***"

### **Jesus asked nothing of his followers he did not do himself.**

Phil. 2:5-8--"*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **emptied Himself**, taking the form of a **bond-servant**, {and} being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.***"

In these same classes I learned another interesting thing. If you think you're a leader, just turn around. If no one is following you, you're really not a leader. Dah!

People followed Jesus:

### **He drew people to Himself. He was even popular.**

He made news, He made waves, the word spread, the crowds came, the people listened and were impressed.

In fact, He became famous, He could have led a revolution, and He could have been a king.

### **People responded**

They climbed trees, they tore off roofs, they fought crowds, and they came at all hours. They came to gawk, listen, ask questions, test, beg, be healed, be fed, and be comforted.

### **Jesus had to separate the serious**

He got an undisciplined mob; He wanted a devoted army.

So He spoke strong words to drive the curiosity seeking chaff away. He held nothing back, He used no smooth sales pitches, no empty promises to suck in the unsuspecting.

He called every man and woman to commit to a master so completely that they would not fade under pressure but get stronger and stronger.

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**VIEWING THE STORIES** *Read Luke 14:25-33*

### **HOW TO LOSE A CROWD**

Jesus was drawing big crowds with His inspirational teaching, feeding the multitudes, and healing virtually everyone who came to Him. The crowds grew and grew as until Jesus added true commitment to the equation. It's a sure way to lose a crowd.

Trying to build a building with people who are unwilling to count the cost is foolish. Trying to wage a war with an army that is undermanned and ill equipped is disastrous.

#### **Picture 1: A man plans to build a building.**

When I was living in Boulder, Colorado a man planned to build a luxury hotel on Canyon Blvd., a beautiful street running from the Civic Center complex into Boulder Canyon. He commissioned the plans, hired a contractor, and laid the foundation for his dream project. Then he ran out of money.

As far as I know that foundation is still there, a monument among the weeds to poor planning. It was labeled Hudson's folly.

I can attest to the fact that Mr. Hudson was called a fool.

#### **Picture 2: A king plans to go to war.**

In a study of the Book of Esther we were introduced to King Ahasuerus. His Greek name (used in most history books) was Xerxes

If you're an ancient history buff you may know a lot about Xerxes because of a Greek historian named Herodotus. He was born the year Xerxes became king and grew up to write the foremost history of the Greek/Persian wars.

His book introduced us to Esther's husband. He was ambitious: He ruled a kingdom that stretched from India all the way to Ethiopia with over 127 provinces. His dream was to conquer Greece and rule the world and he nearly succeeded. But he got skunked in a sea battle when he underestimated the Greek Navy.

In the Chronicles of his day he was called a fool.

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### **BUILDING TOWERS**

#### **A common picture**

In Jesus' day there were many towers built, from the towers to guard a vineyard (Remember that parable.) to towers that were built as a monument to a person's pride.

Herod alone built many buildings and towers just to show his greatness and leave a legacy. Many others tried to emulate him and didn't have the resources to finish so there were many unfinished towers for Jesus to refer to.

#### **Example: A famous folly of Jesus' day**

Pilate had a fairly good relationship with the Jewish leaders until he began to build an aqueduct for the city of Jerusalem and ran out of money. He stole money from the Temple treasury in order to finish and that project became known as Pilate's folly and earned him the hatred of the Jewish leaders and population.

### **FIGHTING BATTLES**

#### **Counting the odds**

Just because an army is outnumbered doesn't mean they shouldn't fight. The enemy is coming with 20,000 men and he has only 10,000. The odds are outrageous but what if his men are twice as good as his opposition.

What if they are better trained, better equipped. If they are, then it is worth the risk, if not it will mean slaughter, defeat, surrender, and disgrace.

#### **Example: The Six-Day War**

In that case the Israeli Army was outnumbered 100 to 1 and yet they not only won, they annihilated their opponents and captured hundreds of acres of land.

### **VIEWING THE STORIES FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE**

Before becoming a Christian or committing to the Lordship of Jesus we are called to count the cost lest we become useless, make a fool of ourselves, and make a laughing stock of the body of Christ as well.

In fact, it seems to me to be of great value to continually count the cost and evaluate our commitment. Perhaps we can ask ourselves these questions:

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### ASK AM I WILLING TO DENY MYSELF?

#### **Will I die daily?**

Matt. 16:24-26, "Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.** For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

#### **Quote from C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity***

"The Christian way is different . . . Christ says, 'Give me all. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work; I want you. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there. I want the whole tree down. I don't want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all desires which you think innocent as well as the one you think wicked--the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself; My own will shall become yours.'"

### ASK: AM I WILLING TO OBEY HIS WORD?

John 8:31--"Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, {then} you are truly disciples of Mine;"

#### **Obedying Scripture is the key to pleasing God.**

1 Sam. 15:22--"And Samuel said, Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, **to obey is better than sacrifice,** {And} to heed than the fat of rams.

#### **Obedying Scripture is the key to a powerful life.**

John 15:7--"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."

#### **Obedience is a part of total commitment.**

What an exciting experience it would be when we link up with a church if it could be to minister our gifts rather than for what we will receive from it.

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Lord Tennyson wrote that King Arthur bound his knights

*By so straight vows to his own self  
That when they rose, knighted from  
Kneeling, some were pale as at the  
Passing of a ghost, some flushed,  
And others dazed as one who wakes  
Half blinded at the coming of a light.*

**How wonderful it would be if we could experience just a fraction of that awe when we bow to serve the king of the universe.**

### **ASK AM I WILLING TO FOLLOW HIM TO THE END?**

#### **TRUE COMMITMENT IS FOR LIFE**

Matt. 10:22--" *And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.*

But isn't that too much to ask. Not really since . . .

#### **THE BATTLES ARE GUARANTEED**

As soldiers of the King we need not worry about the seemingly overwhelming odds, since one plus God is a majority.

Remember when Sennacherib surrounded Jerusalem and threatened to annihilate the city but Hezekiah called out to God? Isaiah picks up the story in chapter 37:

*Isaiah 33-36, "Therefore, thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, 'He shall not come to this city, or shoot an arrow there; neither shall he come before it with a shield, nor throw up a mound against it. 'By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come to this city,' declares the LORD. 'For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.'" Then the angel of the LORD went out, and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, all of these were dead.*

***It is so nice to know that there is no such thing as a fair fight when we are in the service of the King of the Universe.***

#### ***Conclusion:***

**I had a student who asked a good question when presented the challenge to live an active Christian life, to build, to fight. He asked, "Why not just sit it out? Why not just not build or just not fight."**

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My answer was to ask him, "What is the alternative?"

**The alternative to planning and building is to be a fool and bring shame to the kingdom.**

**You've already laid the foundation**

I Cor. 3:11--"For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

When we become a believer we have already begun to build our character house on the foundation of Jesus (Verse 29). We are builders whether we like it or not. To stop is to be proved a fool.

**The alternative to fighting is to accept peace at any cost and that, too, is to be a fool and bring shame to the kingdom.**

It is not an option to make peace with the enemy, because peace comes at a cost. It takes giving up something to make peace and the terms are always dictated by the enemy.

Jesus could have bought peace with Satan in the wilderness but he would have given up His allegiance to God and bowed to Satan.

We are enlisted and must put on "the whole armor" and fight.

Let me close with Charles Spurgeon's outline for this passage:

True religion is a costly thing.

Wisdom suggests that before we enter upon it we should estimate the cost.

Cost what it may, it is well worth the cost.