

---

## *The Cost of Discipleship*

---

Sermon Text: Prov. 9:8-12, Phil. 3: 4b-11, Luke 14:25-35  
Mariner Sands Chapel

Dr. Gary Carr  
Sept 29, 2019

It comes as a surprise to many people to discover that the followers of Jesus Christ are called 'Christian' only three times in the New Testament.

The most significant occurrence is Luke's comment that it was in Syrian Antioch that Jesus' disciples were first called 'Christians' (Acts 11:26). Antioch was known to be an international community. Consequently, its church was an international community too, and it was appropriate that its members were called 'Christians' in order to indicate that their ethnic differences were overcome by their common allegiance to Christ.

The other two occurrences of the word 'Christian' supply evidence that it was beginning to come into common currency. So, when Paul was on trial before King Agrippa and challenged him directly, Agrippa cried out to Paul, 'Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?' (Acts 26:28).

Then the apostle Peter, whose first letter was written against the background of growing persecution, found it necessary to distinguish between those who suffered 'as a criminal' and those who suffered 'as a Christian' (1 Peter 4:16); that is, because they belonged to Christ. Both words (Christian and disciple) imply a relationship with Jesus, although perhaps 'disciple' is the stronger of the two because it inevitably implies the relationship of pupil to teacher. During his three years of public ministry the Twelve were disciples before they were apostles, and as disciples they were under the instruction of their teacher and lord.

John Stott writes, "One wishes in some ways that the word 'disciple' had continued into the following centuries, so that Christians were self-consciously disciples of Jesus, and took seriously their responsibility to be 'under discipline.' On the one hand we are to live, serve and witness in the world. On the other hand, we are to avoid becoming contaminated by the world. So we are neither to seek to preserve our holiness by escaping from the world nor to sacrifice our holiness by conforming to the world."<sup>1</sup>

The lesson is plain. Jesus does not want followers who rush into discipleship without thinking of what is involved. And he is clear about the price. Anyone who comes to him must *renounce all that he has*. For the third time we have the solemn refrain, he *cannot be my disciple* (26-27). These words condemn all half-heartedness. Jesus is not, of course, discouraging discipleship. He is warning against an ill-considered, fainthearted attachment in order that those who follow him may know the real thing.

While we worship together, let's remember what Hebrews (Heb.10:24) tells us: "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds."

---

<sup>1</sup> John Stott, [\*The Radical Disciple: Some Neglected Aspects of Our Calling\*](#) (Westmont, IL: IVP Books, 2012).