

Title: “Everyone Fled”

Chris Ryan

Luke 14:25-35

09/08/2019

Overview:

Following Jesus requires the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The early followers rejected the promptings of Him and therefore fled at the first sign of trouble.

Lesson:

We are unable to even consider the question of cost without the Holy Spirit, and with Him we find the strength and courage to answer it.

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

At first glance this passage is easy to understand: consider the cost of becoming a disciple. The decision you make must be binary, no different than building a house; you can't decide to only build ½ of it just like you can't decide to become only ½ of a disciple. Then there is something about salt losing its saltiness. That's a bit harder but it really comes down to the cost of **not** becoming a disciple. What good are you, then?

If that's all there is to this message then I can stop, now. I'm confident that you can apply this passage to your lives and that there is very little new wisdom or advice that I could offer.

However, there is more - much more. And, to really unlock the meaning of this passage, to really appreciate the depth and theology of what Jesus was stating, you need a key, and this morning I want to show you where it is and then unlock this passage so that we can explore it together.

You would think that the key would be found somewhere in Luke, but it's not. Well, technically it is found there but it is much more obvious in Mark. In the 14th chapter of his Gospel Mark records the arrest of Jesus and, picking up at verse 49 Jesus says “Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.” Then, in the next verse, we find the key: Then everyone deserted him and fled.

That is the key to today's Gospel reading: Everyone fled.

To understand how this unlocks the passage, we need to step back into history - into the day that Jesus asked his followers to consider the cost of discipleship.

Try to imagine that scene. It's a warm, sunny day and Jesus is walking down the road. Behind him is a large crowd. Some translations replace “large” with “multitudes” and when I looked up the words

in Greek I found “many throngs.” Whatever word you prefer they paint the same picture: there were many, many people that were following Him on that day and they were all waiting to hear what he would say or do next.

Let me stay here for a moment longer and reflect on what this must have meant. There were hundreds or thousands of people that had dropped everything and left their homes to follow this man for at least this one day. Now, granted, they didn’t have cable or internet or any other easy form of entertainment, but they also didn’t have drive-throughs, washing machines, and electricity to ease the stress on their lives so most of their day would have been spent surviving and preparing for the next day. So, clearly, to follow Jesus would have cost them something.

What could he have been offering that was so compelling to them? What had drawn them out of their homes, their daily rituals, and their daily chores to hear and see this person everyone called Jesus?

In addition to these “daytime followers”, were the disciples. These were the twelve that had given not just what the crowd gave but even more. They had left their families, their friends, their businesses and jobs, everything and they lived with Jesus day after day, month after month for three years. They paid a price as well.

With that picture in your mind, we move back to the verse in Mark where they all fled.

Where did they go? As far away from Jesus, that’s where. It was suddenly too expensive to follow Him. The new cost to follow was no longer just a day away from home but their lives! In their minds the price was just too high and the value just too low and so they ran.

Of course they ran! Can you blame them? I would run too if confronted with an angry mob armed and looking for blood. I don’t blame them because they reacted as any self-preserving person would. The problem was that they were not supposed to be self-preserving. They were with God! He was right there! In the words of Psalms 41, “The Lord will protect them and preserve their lives; he will make them happy in the land; he will not abandon them to the power of the enemies.”

Jesus was their protector, their shield. How could they even begin to think that anywhere away from God would be safer than standing with Him?

On that night they ran, but Jesus stood still.

On that night they hid from the pain of the cross, but Jesus sought it out.

On that night they protected their lives, but Jesus gave His up.

You see, these people had to run because they could **never** pay the price, could never even **consider** the cost because they were relying on their own understanding of who this man was, what his benefit was to them, and what the personal cost might be.

If you don’t believe me, compare the “before Holy Spirit” and after “Holy Spirit” actions of the disciples. They were part of the everybody who fled that night. They were no different than the

casual onlookers who were waiting to see the next trick and maybe participate in the next miraculous meal. They fled, too.

But then they came back stronger than humanly possible - especially for them! The Sadducees were astonished by the teachings of John and Peter who were unschooled, ordinary men.

How could this be possible if not for the Holy Spirit taking residence in their souls? All of the sudden, what used to be an unpayable cost was nothing compared to the costs they were now willing to pay. Indeed, they no longer cared what it cost because they were willing to pay **any** price for the Lord.

They were beaten, tortured, humiliated, stoned, crucified, and deserted and yet they still confidently and joyfully proclaimed the Gospel! There was no cost too large to shut them up.

It was the Holy Spirit that was pointing them to and enabling them to see: not just a willingness to follow but a willingness to follow Jesus because of what He had done. Their eyes were opened to the death that Jesus had conquered on the cross and their fear was diminished.

And so, they drove with the boldness that only the Holy Spirit could provide. They didn't sit down to first consider the cost! They didn't take an inventory of their life and decide if they had enough to go all in. No! They started building with the full confidence that the costs would be fully covered. They had the confidence through the Holy Spirit that every time a bill came due, they would be provided whatever was necessary to pay it: their humility, their time, their money, even their life to cover the cost of following Jesus.

So, although Jesus was asking his followers to consider the cost, he was not asking them to identify the maximum "amount" they would be willing to pay. His real message was much simpler: do you want to follow me? If you have to stop and consider the cost, you have already answered the question. If, instead you answer "not of my own will but through the work and strength of the Holy Spirit I know that I can pay any cost, and so I don't even have to consider it beforehand," then you are ready to follow our Lord.

We can look to Bill Maiden as a powerful example of a person who, filled with the Holy Spirit, placed his trust in Jesus and committed to following him regardless of the cost.

We are the crowd that the Gospel speaks about today; we follow Jesus just like everyone did. Today we are asked to consider the cost

And, just like Jesus asked these followers 2000 years ago, he is asking us the same question today. Do you want to follow Him? And do you want to first consider the cost or leave that to the work of the Holy Spirit?

Let's pray.

Lord, we are a frightened people. We stand in the garden courageous and confident until the world approaches and demands a proclamation from us. We are courageous and confident until we find that the cost to follow you seems out of reach and unobtainable. When we can't even begin to contemplate how we might pay, we turn from you and flee. But, Lord, we ask that you open our hearts to the work of the Holy Spirit. Help us cooperate with him so that we no longer consider the costs for we have the confidence that you will provide the strength and courage that we need to cover them - whatever they may be. We ask this in your name. Amen.