Prayer for illumination: please join me in prayer….

Sermon intro:

When I was in Junior High I learned about an amazing opportunity!!! The Spokesman review was looking for paperboys. I learned that I could make $150 a month as a 14 year old. This meant I could buy a new mountain bike, pay for private tennis lessons, and do all sorts of other things.

But before I agreed to be a paperboy I had to seriously consider the cost.
The paper’s had to be delivered every weekday by 6am meaning I had to get up at 4:50 am.
The Sunday papers were at least ten times as thick as the weekday papers back then which meant that Sunday mornings took me twice as long.
In addition, the paper’s had to be delivered year round even if there was rain, snow, cold, sleet, or ice! They even had to be delivered on Christmas and Easter. No days off 365 days a year.
Furthermore, I had to collect payment from about half of my 75 customers once a month, which meant I had to walk around in the evenings and knock on doors to collect payment.

Having a paper route was costly… but I counted the cost and believed it was worth it. Although on some cold, dark, and snowy January mornings I was not so sure!!!

This brings us to Matthew 8:18-22 this morning. At this point in Jesus life he is very popular. Many people want to follow him. Instead of encouraging people to jump on the Jesus band wagon Jesus makes it very clear that we must carefully count the cost of following him.

*Have you counted the cost of following Jesus?* Following Jesus may cost you everything.

To help us understand the true nature of counting the cost we are going to look at three things-

The crowd wanted to follow Jesus
The scribe wanted to follow Jesus
The disciple wanted to follow Jesus

First, the crowd wants to follow Jesus

How do we know the crowd wants to follow Jesus? They surround him.

Matthew 8:18 (ESV) — 18 Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side.

It is pretty easy to understand at this point why great crowds surrounded Jesus.
He heals a leper in the first part of chapter 8.
Then he heals the centurion’s servant in the middle of chapter 8.
Then we read-

Matthew 8:16–17 (ESV) — 16 That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.”

Jesus is a walking breathing hospital. This makes him immensely popular. There were no doctors or hospitals, as we know doctors and hospitals today. People lived in constant pain, blindness was very common, life expectancy’s were low, people were used to seeing grotesque physical deformities. There were no
vaccinations for MMR, small pox, or polio. Disease would sweep through an area and kill half of the village. This is just the way it was. Now rumor is spreading that a man named Jesus is supernaturally healing the sick...

This makes Jesus immensely popular with the crowds.

**Illustration:** Jesus is still really popular

“Jesus is, without question, the most popular person who ever lived… If anyone wants to know just how popular Jesus is, all they have to do is net-search the number of movies that have been made about him. The number of movies that have been made about Jesus is over a thousand. And then there are the books, which run into the tens of thousands. And that’s just the biographies.

And then, there’s the religion. Christianity is the largest religion in the world, boasting anywhere from 2.1 to 3 billion members. That’s anywhere from one-third to almost half the world’s population... And we haven’t even talked about the countless musicians who sing about him, the songwriters who write songs about him, and the hundreds of thousands of people who attend Christian concerts and conferences every single year.” (Examiner.com)

Historian Kenneth Scott Latourette said that ‘Jesus, the seeming failure, has had more effect upon the history of mankind than any other of its race who ever existed.’

Jesus was very popular early in his ministry. Jesus is still popular today. People are very drawn to Jesus. But being drawn to Jesus is not the same as following Jesus. You can think Jesus is cool, hip, and relevant and still not be one of his disciples.

If we are going to actually follow Jesus we must count the cost. This brings us to our second character...

*First, the crowds wanted to follow Jesus.*

**Second, the scribe wanted to follow Jesus**

*How do we know the scribe wants to follow Jesus? He tells Jesus!*

**Matthew 8:18–19 (ESV) — 18 Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. 19 And a scribe came up and said to him, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.”**

The crowds swarm to Jesus so he gives orders to go the other side of the lake so that he can have some rest. We can easily forget that Jesus was fully God and fully man. His human nature grew tired and weary just like our human nature grows tired and weary.

Before he crosses the lake the scribe stops him and says, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.”

What is surprising about this story is the fact that a scribe wants to follow Jesus. Scribes are usually opponents of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew (5:20; 7:29; 9:3). Scribes were highly educated authorities on the Jewish laws of the day. They were the PhD’s in theology of their day. The scribes were teachers. They were not followers of teachers. Furthermore, there is no way (humanly speaking) that they would follow someone like Jesus. Jesus had no credentials. This would be like a professor of NT from Harvard Divinity School quitting his job to learn the finer points of the NT from a high school dropout.

If I were to summarize what a disciple of Jesus does in one word it would be the word follow. This is the main word for discipleship in the gospels. A disciple is someone who first and foremost follows Jesus. The word follow implies personal commitment and cost.

This scribe says he wants to follow Jesus.
This scribe probably genuinely believed that Jesus was a great teacher and he probably witnessed some of Christ’s miracles. He probably really did want to follow Christ. But he did not understand what this meant.

*How do we know the scribe wants to follow Jesus? He tells Jesus!*

**How does Jesus respond? He tells the scribe it will be costly!**

Matthew 8:20 (ESV) — 20 And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

Jesus cuts right to the chase. He knows this man’s heart and realizes that he has not counted the cost. So he speaks proverbially about foxes and birds and homes. Unlike foxes and birds Jesus has nowhere to lay his head. An itinerant teacher in the ANE could not stay at the Comfort Inn with a hot breakfast. He was dependent on the hospitality of others. This meant that sometimes they may have to sleep under the stars without breakfast.

Jesus point is that following him means that we must be willing to give up creature comforts if necessary. This is hard for us to grasp since we live in the wealthiest country in the history of the world. But many Christians in church history have lived uncomfortably because of their association with Christ.

Currently there are at least 60 countries known for persecuting Christians. Countries like N. Korea, Syria, Egypt, and Pakistan have been in the news in the last two years for atrocities done to Christians (rape, murder, burning down houses, destroying shops, etc…)

“In August 2013, Egypt faced what has been called the worst anti-Christian violence in seven centuries: 38 churches were destroyed, 23 vandalized; 58 homes were burned and looted and 85 shops, 16 pharmacies and 3 hotels were demolished; 6 Christians were killed in the violence and 7 were kidnapped.” (The Gospel coalition website - 9 things you should know about persecuted Christians in 2013)

When the scribes says I will go wherever you go… Jesus says ok. Will you go this far??? In other words have you really counted the cost?

Matthew 16:24–25 (ESV) — 24 Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

*Illustration:*

“The one million dollar mistake” (CBS news.com)

“If you are brilliant, ambitious and gifted in science, you may consider becoming a doctor. If so, think twice. According to a new survey by personal finance site NerdWallet, most doctors are dissatisfied with the job, and less than half would choose a career in medicine if they were able to do it all over again.

There are many reasons for the dissatisfaction, said Christina Lamontagne, vice president of health at NerdWallet. Most doctors enter the field thinking they’ll be able to spend most of their time healing the sick. Yet the paperwork burden on doctors has become crushing, and could become even more complicated under the Affordable Care Act. "Administrative tasks account for nearly one-quarter of a doctor's day," Lamontagne said. "With additional liability concerns and more layers in health care, we can understand the drain this takes."

Worse, the cost of becoming a doctor has soared, with higher education expenses leaving the average newly minted physician with $166,750 in medical school debt, while average salaries are declining. Nearly one-third of doctors -- 28 percent - saw a cut in pay last year, according to NerdWallet's research.
To be sure, pay is still high, with doctors accounting for the preponderance of six-figure positions in the country, according to government data. But it also takes between 11 and 14 years of higher education to become a physician. That means the typical doctor doesn't earn a full-time salary until 10 years after the typical college graduate starts making money."

In summary this article states that it now costs one million dollars to be a doctor (11-14 years of lost wages while in school plus 166K in debt from med school tuition at 7.5% over 30 years equals one million dollars). This is a ton of money in light of the fact that Doctors salaries are dropping, medical mal practice is rising, paperwork is rising, and doctors are spending less and less time with patients.

The moral to this story is that you need to count the cost of going to medical school very carefully. In a similar sense you need to count the cost of following Jesus very carefully.

*First, the crowds wanted to follow Jesus*

*Second, the scribe wanted to follow Jesus*

**Third, the disciple wants to follow Jesus**

**How do we know the disciple wants to follow Jesus? He tells Jesus!**

**Matthew 8:21 (ESV) — 21** Another of the disciples said to him, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”

This person is a disciple only in the sense that he is unofficially following Jesus around. He may have followed Jesus around for a few weeks.

At least two commentators point out that this man’s father was most assuredly still alive. If he were truly dead the son would be preparing his father’s dead body for the grave. In this climate bodies needed to be prepared for the grave within hours not days. This man wants to delay following Christ not for days but possibly for years.

Furthermore, there is some evidence that the expression “bury my father” was a colloquialism for let me wait until my father dies so that I can get my inheritance. (MacArthur)

Earlier the scribe promise way too much…. I will follow you wherever you go.

Now the would be “disciple” promises way too little… I will follow you when it is convenient for me.

Or we could say it like this, “the scribe is to quick to follow Jesus but this man is not quick enough.” This man does not sense the urgency of discipleship.

Neither man has fully counted the cost…

**How does Jesus respond? He tells the “would be” disciple it will cost him!**

**Matthew 8:22 (ESV) — 22** And Jesus said to him, “Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.”

When Jesus says, “let the dead bury their own dead” he is speaking proverbially. Obviously the dead can’t bury the dead because their dead too. He means the spiritually dead can bury the physically dead. And you need to follow me right now… there is an urgency in following Christ.

Jesus shocks his audience with the urgency of the demand and by implying that following him takes precedence over family.
Matthew 10:37 (ESV) — 37 Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

There is urgency and a priority in Christ’s call to discipleship.

Illustration:
Sometimes when I call my children to come to the table for dinner they don’t really respond right away. For instance, they may be building a Lego warship while my voice rings out. They say “ok” or “yes dad” but they remain seated on the floor. They figure they have ten more seconds to put a few more pieces on the Lego warship. They don’t understand the urgency of the call. I want to eat now!!!

Or maybe your husband is watching the big game and you call him to join you in the kitchen for dinner. He says sure thing honey yet remains glued to the television because it is the big game.

This is how some respond to Christ. Yes I will follow you Christ when I finish grad school, when I get my career off the ground, when I get my kids raised, when I get married, or when I leave the house.

Some say to Christ, “I will follow you when I’m done having fun…”

St. Augustine prayed as a youth, “Lord, give me chastity, but not yet”

When the maker of the universe calls you to discipleship there is no lollygagging…. (to lollygag is to spend time doing things that are frivolous or not useful – Meriam Websters)

Following Christ is costly.

*We have looked at three things*

*The crowd wanted to follow Jesus*
*The scribe wanted to follow Jesus*
*The disciple wanted to follow Jesus*

But none of them had counted the cost!

Have you counted the cost of being a disciple of Jesus?

*What will it cost you to follow Jesus?*
It will cost you time (church, fellowship, Bible, prayer, being a good husband and father)
It may cost your friendship
It will cost you money- Jesus may not ask us to give all of our money away but he may!!!
It may cost you your job, your house, or your life!!!
It will cost your comfort- serving
It will cost you your pride- coming to Christ and living for Christ
Jesus is only satisfied with our total commitment.

It cost me a relationship in high school!!!

*We can’t be disciples of Jesus on our own terms!*

I will follow you as long as you meet my psychological needs!!!
I will give king Jesus ¼ of my life but the other ¾ belong to me.
I will go to church and small group but the rest of the week is mine!
Counting the cost is more than believing in Jesus!
Both of these men believed in Jesus but that was not enough.
It is not enough to sign a card, pray a prayer, or make a commitment to Christ.
If you have not truly counted the cost first these things are practically useless.
Both of these men were sincere, but sincerity is not enough.

Someone who counts the cost to follow Jesus follows Jesus.
Where is Jesus going? To the cross…

Parents, are we teaching our children what it means to count the cost?
Don’t look for a profession of faith only. You also need to make sure that they are counting the cost of being a follower of Christ.

We count the cost not really knowing all that it will cost so we pray!
I constantly pray for courage and grace to follow Jesus when it may get harder.

Luke 22:31–34 (ESV) — 31 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” 33 Peter said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.” 34 Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.”

Conclusion! Why in the world would I be willing to follow Jesus if it involves so much pain and suffering?

The benefits of following Jesus

The promise of the forgiveness of sins
The promise of heaven
The promise that God will never leave us or forsake us
The promise of the power of sin being broken
The promise of a relationship with God through Jesus Christ

1. Jesus, I my cross have taken, All to leave and follow Thee. Destitute, despised, forsaken, Thou from hence my all shall be. Perish every fond ambition, All I’ve sought or hoped or known. Yet how rich is my condition! God and heaven are still my own.

4. Go, then, earthly fame and treasure, Come disaster, scorn and pain In Thy service, pain is pleasure, With Thy favor, loss is gain I have called Thee Abba Father, I have stayed my heart on Thee Storms may howl, and clouds may gather; All must work for good to me.

6. Haste thee on from grace to glory, Armed by faith, and winged by prayer. Heavens eternal days before thee, Gods own hand shall guide us there. Soon shall close thy earthly mission, Soon shall pass thy pilgrim days, Hope shall change to glad fruition, Faith to sight, and prayer to praise.

Let’s pray!!!