

Sunday 07 March 2010. 10.30am
Building Outreach Belonging x10.

Luke 14: 25 – 33. READ.

TODAY we are going to be thinking about **Estimating/ evaluating the cost of building – a lead into Easter & Discipleship.**

Before we build something we need to know what it is going to cost us to build:

Jesus used 3 parables at this time to make those who were following him consider what that would cost them. The parable that we focus in on is Jesus saying that no one starts to build a tower without estimating the cost. If someone starts, runs out of money before it is completed then they will be the subject of ridicule in every pub, café and street corner. The sort of “tower” he is talking about is probably a watch tower that would have been built so that a watchman could watch over a vineyard to see that no one came in the dark to steal the harvest. Before you start building see that you have the resources and are willing to use these to build a tower from foundations to finish.

Building something is generally costly.

The cost of the Olympic build for 2012 was estimated in 2006 as £2.4bn and rose during 2008 to £9.3bn and I wouldn't like to say what it is now. But of course we would need to do a “cost benefit analysis” to see what it will really cost the public. Some say that's just in the region of a £1bn – and since every year we spend in the region of £80bn on health care that's nothing.

Those sorts of numbers mean nothing to me (even if I'm told it's only .1% of our GDP). But I do know in more manageable numbers that the cost of insulating to high standards and relaying our leaking church roof would cost a mere £46.5K

Jesus is challenging the crowds that are following him to understand and estimate what are the real costs of being true Disciples to him.

This is something that we need to be aware of individually but also as churches – Christian communities because we are called together to follow Jesus and not just as individuals.

V1. Large crowds going along with Jesus. There were crowds of Galileans followed Jesus – at this stage the popular messianic figure. As they travelled with him he began to get them to think about and evaluate what it meant to really follow him.

Luke tells us that he'd once told a man who wanted to follow him that he couldn't guarantee him a fixed home to return to every night – not even a burrow in the earth or a nest in the tree – *Luke 9: 58*. To us human beings who so value our homes this was a wake up call as to the possible cost of following Jesus.

Now Luke tells us that Jesus told this crowd again that they should estimate, cost-up what it will mean to follow him in terms of valued relationships. There will be a price to pay says Jesus. It would just be crazy not to think about what the cost is to following Jesus before we accept the call to follow. Just as crazy as it would be to

start building something. Jesus is not calling us to live in some already built beautiful house – he is calling us to “buy off plan” and then be involved in building the new heaven and earth! Jesus is not just calling us to come on a holiday with him – but he has redeemed the earth and is now *preparing the place for us* and wants us to get stuck in building with him.

The cost of Discipleship – following him he measures not here in pounds and pence but in terms of relationships. As the prophet Isaiah said when he spoke about life and refreshment with God, *Come buy without out money – Isaiah 55;1 fol.*

There is a price to pay to follow Jesus. Someone once said to me when I was a teenager/ early 20’s – *The entry fee is nothing to the Kingdom of God but the life membership is everything.*
God will ask of us everything – but the cost benefit analysis is always that we will benefit and God will owe us nothing!

V27 Daily take up your cross – be prepared to die – to let our own preferences/wants go in favour of loving and therefore obeying Jesus. **The one relationship that must come before any other is the one with Jesus.** That’s what following Jesus means: he alone is to be valued and trusted even before intimate family and friends. (His new family and therefore ours – those we are closest to are those who obey our Father God. *Matthew 12: 46 – 50*). God will call upon us to sacrifice the dearest things. We do not literally hate (hyperbole) our biological families – we just seek to love Jesus more.

Who do we take our lead from?

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem – he was about to literally take up his cross.

This was the time when he laid it on the line for them – you need to take your cross up daily – not just be prepared to.

They thought he was on his way to becoming an earthly ruler – Messiah. Some of them were probably “camp followers” – hangers on and not true soldiers. In and around the church there are no doubt at anyone time many who are possible disciples but not yet true Disciples who have counted the cost and every day prepared to put Jesus first. (In your own life there are no doubt days when Jesus gets unceremoniously pushed off the throne of your life to make room for some idol or another!?)

We should not enter upon Discipleship lightly – we have entered into a relationship with Jesus and his followers to build something that will cost us everything. Quite literally our lives and relationships are the building blocks We don’t merely buy a picture, or a candle, or a piece of furniture and put it in the house of God – not we put our lives on the line and are built into the very living fabric of God’s community building.

The cost is not (initially or solely at least) measured or estimated in terms of pounds and pence but in terms of valued relationships. It costs us to put Jesus and his Kingdom before our families and friendships. But Jesus says 3 times (in this short

section in Luke's Gospel) that we cannot be his Disciples if we are not prepared to put him first and take our lead from him.

The punch line is v27 *None of you can be my Disciple unless you give up everything you have.* Jesus is of course talking about true Discipleship. (*When Jesus bids me come – he bids me come and die. Bonhoeffer*). I have to tell you that the longer you and I continue in true Discipleship the harder it gets to stay true.

Allegiance to Jesus will cost us more than family relationships – it will cost our lives. Jesus doesn't want people to start the build without facing the reality: he is so honest. (We must be honest in our evangelism too). Jesus is not looking for spectators but builders.

Why did Jesus say, *The workers are few. Matthew 9: 37?*

There are obviously millions of Christians in the UK, Nigeria, Jamaica, Philippines, Italy, South African and so on BUT so many of us are busy building our own little kingdoms, and futures, so many have put family before Jesus... all Jesus asks is that we follow him and take part in his Kingdom building – the Kingdom of God on earth!

In the parable of the Great Kingdom Banquet (*Luke 14: 15 – 24*) Jesus describes the excuses people have for not obeying his summons to celebrate with him at his table:

Some say they are too busy with their family relationships – they've as it were just got married.

Some are too busy with business and building enterprises of their own – they've speculated and expanded with a new field or team of oxen.

Everyone has an excuse, particularly among the wealthy and privileged for not accepting God's summons to come to him and celebrate with him. But praise God those wise but poor people are more likely to accept the summons.

Let's be clear that if we are ordering our Social Calendar i.e. which of our friends or colleagues we will go to dinner with that some of these excuses are legitimate BUT when it comes to the fact that JESUS IS TALKING ABOUT ALMIGHTY GOD SUMMONING US TO HIS SIDE TO ENJOY HIS PRESENCE AND CELEBRATE HIS KINGDOM – family and business excuses are not acceptable.

Jesus approaches Jerusalem followed by the Galileans looking for a quick win – they want the *Kingdom restored to Israel*.

Jesus though is fighting a bigger battle – and he has counted the cost. Jesus is building something far bigger and has counted the cost to build the Kingdom of God on earth.

Jesus calls the would be disciples to listen and realise that THEY NEED TO PUT HIM FIRST EVEN BEFORE FAMILY. He is being honest with them – and he is honest with us. Be realistic. Now let us know that millions have made this decision and continued to build under the direction of Jesus. They have made him the LORD

over family and workplace, person wants and pleasures – and so the Kingdom of God has been slowly built brick on brick.

Others though they call themselves “Christians” have decided that God is asking too much – family, friendships, work must come before Jesus.

I need not tell you how much God has given for us.

I need not tell you that on a cost-benefit analysis you will always come out better in the long run if you put Jesus first.

I simply encourage you to put Jesus first and to encourage me to do the same.

In this particular building crew at VPBC we are seeking to hear Jesus and build together to God’s glory.

Some questions to think about: Luke 14: 25 – 33. ESTIMATING THE COST OF BUILDING.

1) Find out where Jesus was headed when he spoke to the crowd who followed him about “carrying our cross every day”.

2) Why did Jesus speak about Discipleship in terms of the cost to relationships?

3) From foundation to finish – what did Jesus mean in terms of building a tower?