

COST AND COMMITMENT

Matthew 10:34-39

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WATCH/LISTEN: <https://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/cost-and-commitment/>

Have you noticed that we avoid the tough teachings of Jesus? We love the promise of comfort and eternal life but avoid the teachings which make demands on us. Our church pews have cushions; maybe our sermons do too. Someone called Bible passages like this one “the jagged words of Jesus”? [*Texts for Preaching, Year A*, p. 378]. We try to sand them down, smooth them over, so no one gets splinters.

Here is a tough question, if you feel courageous enough to tackle it: Do you ever wonder at the coincidence that Jesus’ teachings always line up so perfectly with your lifestyle, choices and behavior? Could it be that you are ignoring the tough teachings? I know I do. Mother Teresa once said, “I sometimes find it very difficult to smile at Jesus because he can be very demanding” [*Moral Leadership for a Divided Age*, by Gushee and Holtz, p. 188].

Let’s be honest. The contradictions in Jesus’ teachings are real...and they are maddening! Jesus promises peace in John 14, but here he says he brings war. The fifth of the Ten Commandments is about honoring parents, but here Jesus says that families may turn against one another for the gospel’s sake. Jagged edges, sticking out everywhere!

When I read these words of Jesus, I think of clashing weather fronts, when a warm front and cold front collide. Violent weather erupts. Storms. Hail. Tornadoes. The reason Jesus gave this dire warning is because his incoming Kingdom has radically different values and goals, clashing with old systems and entrenched evil.

When love meets hate, there will be a cross (vv. 38-39). When justice meets evil, there will be a cross. When inclusion meets bigotry, there will be a cross. Haven’t we seen this in our nation? When the Jesus way is tossed aside, suffering follows.

The context of Matthew 10 is Jesus prepping the disciples for their first mission trip. Jesus was giving them a reality check. We forget sometimes how dangerous it was in that day to confess Jesus as Lord. And here in the West, we forget that in some parts of the world, it is still dangerous. As I take part in Baptist World Alliance, I am reminded that being disowned by family members for Jesus’ sake is a reality.

This might explain why many describe American evangelicalism as being a mile wide and an inch deep. We want the comfort without commitment. We want assurance without repentance. This scripture is about counting the cost, dying to self and following Jesus.

Now I want us to be careful at this point. It’s easy to slip into a works salvation mode. Try hard. But it’s really the opposite. When we try to save ourselves by our own efforts, we lose. When we give up on me-first, we win (v. 39). When we give up on self-trust, we win. When we give up on self-promotion, we win. I want to challenge you to walk the way of Jesus by way of a trusting commitment. His way is not easy but it is safe.