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Luke 14:25-35

The Certain Gospel: Bait & Switch Christianity

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When I was in college I was walking to my car when I found a **poster** slipped under my wiper blades. It advertised **free pizza**. All I had to do was go by the local Dominos and I would receive my own pizza. I looked at this poster for a long time. It didn't say I had to do anything to get that pizza. It simply said that I had to show up and I would get **my pizza**. But it didn't say **why** I would get that pizza or **who** was giving it to me. The **poster** told me one thing. Free pizza! But my **heart** told me something else. This pizza can't possibly be free. There's a catch. There's always a catch! Tonight I make sure that each one of us understands the message of Christianity and that it's **not** a bait and switch. But it starts with a similar message.

Salvation is free. (Romans Road to Salvation)

I'm giving you a **metaphorical flyer** tonight and on this poster is the offer of **free salvation**. You can go home this evening with **eternal life**. I don't know if I've ever really explained the message of salvation **step by step** at Cornerstone so I want to do so tonight. I'm using the Romans Road to Salvation which is a nice way to explain salvation using one book of the Bible, Romans. So you've just picked up the Romans Road to Salvation flyer, and the first line says this.

1) Everyone is broken by sin.

This is a startling headline! It's intriguing. You want to know more. Our first verse from Romans explains it.

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (NIV®)

Sin is anytime we **disobey** God in in **thought** or **action**. We sin anytime we do anything that does not reflect God's perfect and holy nature. So I am sinful and broken and he is not. And if God is going to remain good and holy, he is not going to welcome **sinful** beings into heaven. The next line of the poster tells us the consequence of our sin.

2) The wages of sin is death.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV®)

The first half of this verse tells us that if we do not deal with our sin problem, our sin problem will eventually result in our **destruction**. At the end of time God is going to judge every sin and everyone who sins. If you are still in your sin when that happens, you will be condemned to **everlasting death in hell**. The wages of sin is death! But there's good news because the verse doesn't stop here.

3) God offers us eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV®)

As we look at the second half of Romans 6:23, we find a great deal of hope. Yes the wages of sin is death, but God offers us eternal life through Jesus. We don't have to be consumed by sin and death but can live forever at peace with God. But this is **only** possible through Jesus Christ. **How** can this be?

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (NIV®)

While you were yet a sinner, Jesus went to the **cross** because he loved us. At the cross he took on God's **anger** and **wrath** for sin and he died. But he didn't die for his own sin. No. He was perfect, completely **innocent**, a spotless lamb (**1 Peter 1:18**). Because he had never sinned and was always obedient to God, he could die for **someone else's sins** besides his own, and he choose to die for us.

Three days later Jesus **rose** from the grave defeating sin and death (**1 Corinthians 15:3-6**). Paul wrote Romans, and one of his other letters, 1st Corinthians, tells us "he appeared to more than **five hundred**" at one time. Now Jesus offers us the same eternal life he now has.

4) Jesus grants salvation to all who believe in him.

A little later in Romans we hear what it takes to **receive** this free salvation.

Romans 10:9-10 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. (NIV®)

We need to both **say** we **believe** and **actually believe** in our hearts that Jesus is Lord and God raised him from the dead. This isn't just **intellectual assent**, this is true faith coming from the inside. What is true on the **inside** should be **evident** on the **outside** through our **words**. We're **not** saved by a **verbal confession** or by any other **works** but by **faith** (Eph 2:8-9). And then we receive this great news...

5) Our salvation is assured.

Once we receive the gift of salvation, nobody can take it away (see also **Rom 5:1, 8:1**).

Romans 8:38-39 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV®)

Jesus came to pay the penalty for our sin, all we have to do is go to him **through** our **repentance** and **belief**. GotQuestions.org, who mapped out the Romans Road for me, invites anyone who recognizes their sin to pray the **sinner's prayer**, but not just say the words, but to truly believe.

"God, I know that I have sinned against you and am deserving of punishment. But Jesus Christ took the punishment that I deserve so that through faith in Him I could be forgiven. With your help, I place my trust in You for salvation. Thank You for Your wonderful grace and forgiveness - the gift of eternal life! Amen!"

So it's with these words, if they are driven by genuine faith in Jesus, that we receive the **free gift** of salvation. Salvation, is free, right? Or is it? We're saved by **faith alone** through God's **grace alone**, but those things are **never alone**. They're always accompanied by a **commitment** to Jesus.

So I took the flyer, I got in my car, and I drove to **Dominos**. I got out of my car, I walked into Dominos, and a **gentleman** was standing there with a whole **stack of pizza boxes** full of pizza. But if I remember right (this happened about 10 years ago) there wasn't anyone else in there getting pizzas and the man standing

next to the pizzas looked both **worried** and **guilty**. See, next to the pizzas, he had a signup sheet. He said that if I would just fill out this application for a **credit card**, I would receive my free pizza. He even told me that I could simply **cancel** the credit card as soon as I received it. So I turned around and walked out of the door... is what **I wish** I did. What I **actually** did was fill out the application and eat my pizza.

That was a bait and switch. He lured me in with the promise of free pizza with seemingly no strings attached, but of course there were strings. I had to sign up for a credit card. I don't want this to be true for any who are considering **Christianity**. I don't want to lure you in with the promise of free salvation with no strings attached, because although salvation is free it's also costly.

Salvation is free but it will cost you everything. (Luke 14:25-35)

Now we come to today's text in Luke 14:25-35. If you look down at the first verse we see it says "Large crowds were traveling with Jesus." Luke 9 tells us Jesus once fed at least **5,000 followers**. That's a big crowd! Jesus is a **hugely successful mega-church pastor** by today's standards. I'm sure if Jesus were on **Instagram**, he would have **millions** of followers and people today would call him an **influencer**. But Jesus isn't interested in big crowds. He's interested in real **disciples**. Jesus turns to them and says....

Luke 14:26-27 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. 27 And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. (NIV®)

Jesus is explaining the cost of salvation. He uses a **metaphor** to describe its steep cost. A metaphor is a **figure of speech** meant to make a point. Elsewhere Jesus says to love your neighbor, so he doesn't mean you literally have to hate your parents, wife, and children to be his disciple. Instead, he means that **he** has to be **100% more important** in your life than each of them. In fact, you have to love Jesus more than your **own life** to be a true disciple.

If you love your father, or mother, or siblings, or spouse, or children more than Jesus, those good people have actually become **idols** to you. **You** can even become your own idol if you love yourself more than Jesus. How can you tell if a member of your family is more important to you than Jesus? If you **obey** them at the cost of obeying Jesus, then they're an idol. For example, if your **parents** tell you to **believe** something that you know is **unscriptural**, don't do it, because that would give them more importance than Jesus in your life. Or if your **sibling** wants to take you on a **trip** you know you **can't afford** or to a **show** you know will cause you to **stumble**, don't do it. Or if you ignore the responsibility God has given you to raise your **children** in the fear and knowledge of Jesus, and you don't, then that is disobedience.

Notice that loving Jesus more than your family does **not** mean **abandoning** your family. Often times, it means exactly the **opposite**. God, these people are really hard to love, but instead of **running away** I'm going to keep **loving them** and **sharing Jesus** with them because that's what it means to love Jesus most.

In my own life, I can tell you I'm trying to figure out what it means *to love Jesus first but love my family well*. Monica and I sense that Jesus might be leading me back to **Gordon-Conwell** to get a **Doctorate of Ministry**. A really unique opportunity has come up that would allow me to study a topic I'm really interested in and get the Doctorate as I do the **Ockenga Program**. But there's costs to this: **time** with **family** as I study; time not spent working on the **house** or doing **fun things** I'd rather be doing; time with books instead of time with **friends**. The Doctoral Ministry projects are always meant to benefit the **local church**, so this would be something I would be working on in the context of Cornerstone, and is it something we need? That will come at the cost of other things I could be doing. **Please pray** for our family and the Elders as we continue to discuss this possibility, what it would look like, and how it could benefit the church. Ultimately, I just want to be **obedient to Jesus** and I know that's Monica's and the Elder's desire too.

Salvation is free, but it will cost you everything. If **Jesus** handed out a **flyer** offering salvation, he might have the Romans Road on the front but he'd have the **cost of being a disciple** from Luke on the **back**. Besides the family and the cross he uses **three illustrations** to explain the cost: a **tower**, a **war**, and **salt**.

Tower: Count the cost of what it will take to be faithful to the end. (v28-30)

Luke 14:28-30 “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? 29 For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, 30 saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.’ (NIV®)

I'm **finishing** my **basement** and when you go to the town to pull a **permit** they make you record how much you think the project will cost, so you actually have to come up with an **estimate** before they'll approve you. Jesus is telling us to estimate the cost of following him and whether or not we'll be able to follow him till the end (our whole lives or until Christ returns). You wouldn't start building a tower if you didn't have the money to finish it. Only say the **prayer of salvation** if you're willing to give **every part of your life for your whole life** to Jesus. *Count the cost of what it will take to be faithful to the end.*

War: Count the cost of surrendering all to king Jesus. (v31-33)

Luke 14:31-33 “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. 33 In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples. (NIV®)

What if a king brings his army **against us** and when we look at ourselves, it's obvious we'll **lose**? Then we send a **delegation** to negotiate **peace**. I believe Jesus is the king in this passage. Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God and is the final king in David's line (2 Sam 7). King Jesus is willing to offer us complete peace, eternal life, but he expects our **unconditional** and **complete surrender**. If you give him your **whole life**, every aspect, your **marriage**, your **parenting**, how you use your **finances** and **time**, your **education**, your **gender** and **sexual identity**, your **politics**, your **popularity**, your **frontline**, your **past**, your **present**, your **future**, your all, you won't be disappointed. **Is Jesus the Lord** of every part of your life? That's what it means to be his disciple. *Count the cost of surrendering all to king Jesus.*

Salt: A noncommittal disciple is a waste of a disciple. (v34-35)

Luke 14:34-35 “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? 35 It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out.

“Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

In the ancient world you could use salt to **flavor** or **preserve** your food like we do, to **fertilize** the soil, or even to **kill weeds** in manure piles.¹ But if it becomes **diluted**, it becomes **useless**. Someone who calls themselves a Christian but is really a **nominal** believer (there's no real clear evidence of Christ in their lives, they don't serve Jesus in any way, the church and the teachings of the Bible are secondary to having a get-out-of-hell ticket, etc.), is really no Christian at all. They're useless in God's kingdom. Do you **hear** the message Jesus is trying to communicate to you? *Salvation is free but it will cost you everything.*

¹ Wilkins, Michael J. *Matthew, Mark, Luke: Volume One* (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary Book 1) (Kindle Locations 14145-14148). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Salvation is free **for us** because it **wasn't free** for Jesus. He **asks** us for our everything **only after** he **laid down** his everything for us. Jesus **paid the ultimate cost** on the **cross**, and if you're willing to pick up your cross and follow him he will **help you** carry it. His **yoke** is **easy** and his **burden** is **light** (Matt 11:30). Jesus **freely offers** salvation to us, but this salvation will change everything in us.

Salvation is free but it will cost you everything.

I applied for the **credit card** and received it in the mail. Since I'd always heard people **cut up** their **credit cards** when they have too many of them, that's what I did. I cut it up and I cancelled it. At the end of the day, it really didn't do me much good to sign up for something I didn't really want. You may not have understood what you were signing up for when you first said the **sinner's prayer**. That doesn't mean Christ hasn't saved you, but **today** can be the day for you to realize a simple prayer is not all there is to following Jesus. Jesus bids us **come and die**. Come and follow him. Come and give him everything because he gave everything for us. There's **no bait and switch here**. *Salvation is free but it will cost you everything.*

Pastor Jonathan Romig preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church.

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