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This passage overturns all of the "excuses" given in the previous passage. To belong to Jesus requires you transfer all property and all relationships and all interests to Him.

I can't come to the feast because I'm more engaged with my own stuff. I'm in the middle of a real estate deal. I'm in the middle of a construction project. I have to give all of my attention to _____ you fill in the blank. My wife. My kids. My divorce. My career. My stuff. My animals. My hobbies.

Property. *You shall not steal.* Ownership. We have all grown up together in a culture that is highly sophisticated concerning private ownership. There are thousands of laws that define our rights to our property. And we all collectively pay taxes in order to hire police and courts to prosecute people who take things from us that belong to us.

The entire idea of individual ownership of property is based in this book. God not only says *You shall not steal*, He also says *You shall not covet*. God says

it's a sin to even want something that doesn't belong to you.

The flip side of the negative is that our book respects private ownership of property. Our nations codes and laws originated in this book.

In recent decades something called civil forfeiture has increased. That's where law enforcement officials seize property that is deemed to be part of illegal drug trafficking. We argue that society is benefited by seizing property connected with drug dealers. We argue that it is a strong deterrent in the war on drugs.

My question is; How long will it be before our culture seizes property from other categories of perceived evildoers for the benefit of the greater society. Like with drug dealers, but now expanded to people who insist on believing the words of this book to the perceived harm of all of the new sexual liberties.

Religious liberty vss sexual liberty. Who do you think will be winning in 20 years. 10 years. 5 years. Will the culture decide to seize property from stubbornly religious believers who continue to believe that some sex, in fact any sex outside of a man and a woman in the bonds of marriage is evil. Wrong. Sin.

Can it happen. We're all for it in the war on drugs. What about the war on religious people who cannot let go of the words clearly delivered in this book? Does that seem far fetched to you?

And anyways, what does that have to do with the passage we read this morning. Are you just making stuff up in order to beat on your favorite drum?

I think it may eventually have everything to do with Jesus words in this passage this morning. Hear me out, please. What Jesus defines in awfully stark terms in this section is the necessary cost in order to have Him.

25 Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, 26 "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and

mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

Before we begin with such a seemingly harsh statement and what it means, we need to define a single term. The one at the end of vs. 26. Disciple.

Is Jesus laying down a framework for those who are desirous of being a deeper higher class of christian here? In other words, this isn't for ordinary saved folks, this is for those who would push on to a higher level. Separate the super christians from the ordinary christians as it were?

It's a common word. μαθητής (mathētēs) In fact it occurs 263 times. And if you get your Strong's Concordance, and I hope you do, as Bereans are supposed to, and you look at every occurrence of the word, you will find that it becomes synonymous with christians.

math at the beginning of this conjunctive word means mental effort. Thinking something through. Thus learners who are doing some mental effort at the learning. People who are exerting some effort to learn the doctrines and live according to what they have learned.

This word just in itself eliminates about 95% of evangelicals in 2020. When is the last time you ran into a christian who was serious about learning? The very meaning of the word suggests a hunger to know more. A learner exerting some mental effort. Where are those folks? How many do you know?

The authors of the new testament use this word to describe other christians. Not superior class extreme christians, just christians. The word in the first century to describe the phenomenon of those who formed the first century church is mathetes. Disciples.

That means we had better pay attention to what Jesus is saying here because if we get this wrong, we aren't christians and we won't be spending eternity IN Christ, in heaven, in glory. If we get this wrong it can be the difference between heaven and hell. Does that get your attention.

You say, not a problem, I hate my husband already. I don't think that's what it means.

25 Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them,

Jesus is the brotherlove traveling salvation show. Multitudes were following Him in order to watch the show. Miracles. Teaching. Never a dull moment in a very dull life. Great multitudes. 20,000 might not be unrealistic judging from the numbers of men that He fed. 5000 men could quickly add up to 20,000 including wives and children.

But following along for the entertainment value, the general excitement of some kind of a happening, like the Stephen Stills Buffalo Springfield song; *There's something happening here But what it is ain't exactly clear* does not make you a disciple. There's no reason to believe this multitude is any different from the multitude that the jews convinced to cry out for His blood. *Crucify Him, Crucify Him.*

Being attracted to Jesus, hanging around Jesus, following Him around to see what will happen, does not make you a christian. And since time is short, Jesus is going to let these folks know that. He gets pretty direct. Heaven and hell hang in the balance. We should pay attention.

If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate

OK, we'd better stop right here for a moment and define words again. We used to tell our children, hate is a very strong word. Don't say you hate your sister. In fact we would tell them hating is a sin. Be careful with your words.

What does Jesus mean with this word in this context. We can get an idea of the old near east usage if we look for a moment at Matt. 6:24 "*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.*

He's using this word hate to speak of preference in relationships. Money and God. Can you serve both? Jesus says no. And He says you will love one and hate the other. The two things are mutually exclusive. You can't have both. The word hate here means preference. Choice.

Jacob I loved, Esau I hated. God chose Jacob. God preferred Jacob. That's how the word was used then. It isn't an emotional vitriolic hatred, it's a black and white preference.

So look again at Jesus statement in order to be a christian. Preference.

26 "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters,

If anyone, and that means ANYONE is more important to you than having Jesus, you can't be a christian. If your wife says, if you're going to become a disciple of Jesus, I'm out of here, you have to let her go.

Almost meaningless to us, right. You might get a raised eyebrow, a little guff, we'll see how long this lasts, like the piano lessons or the ball team that you quit in 3 weeks. Nobody cares. You wanna be a christian, fine, be a christian. How's that workin out for ya?

In America it costs exactly nothing to sign up with Jesus. Nobody cares. It's one of Satan's better tricks actually. We've made up a slang about it, it's so meaningless. *A come to Jesus moment.* Means exactly what I just said. Nothing. So and so had a come to Jesus moment. In other words, whatever it was, means nothing and is over just as quickly. Good one Satan. Blasphemy.

So we read these words and they really don't mean much. Jesus must have been having a bad day. He was just having a bad day. He seems a little cranky. None of us has given up his family members to have Christ. At least not that I know about.

What if we had grown up in Syria? Somehow you hear the offer of the gospel. Freedom from sin and death and punishment for eternity. But you're a young woman with a father and 6 brothers and your father has promised you to some scuzzy hairy faced guy in trade for 16 goats.

You know full well that if you choose to belong to Christ you can count on beating after beating and perhaps even death. You literally have to decide whether to trade this life now for that life in the future. And yet something has already happened inside you and you cannot resist the compelling draw to have Christ and all that He is. What do you do.

Actually, that scenario is much closer to the culture that Christ is speaking to than to us. For now in any case. I've said it often. America is the anomaly, not the norm.

We cannot leave this passage until you ask yourselves some hard questions. What if some scenario like what I described in my opening dialogue happens here in the next half dozen years? What if christians become the enemies of this culture that must be punished. What if keeping Christ begins to incrementally cost you.

What if civil forfeiture, such nice words, it sounds so much more positive than government takings, What if *civil forfeiture* to the enemies of the culture becomes the law of the land and having Christ costs you your job. Your home. Your stuff. Your savings. And after that's all gone, perhaps prison.

No one knows what our future holds. It's not looking too bright at the moment, but no one knows. Someone may read what I've written and call me an alarmist. Someone who incite's alarm for no reason.

That isn't my purpose. My purpose is to bring you face to face with what Jesus just said in these verses and at least ask yourself, what will I pay to have Christ. If the hatred of God and christians begins to actually physically cost us something.

It could get messy. What if you're willing to give it all up for Christ's sake but your wife says, are you nuts? What about me? This is half mine? What if your children and your parents and your inlaws take your wife's side. What then? What will you pay in order to have Christ? Not only lose every material possession, lose every single loved one, in order to have Christ?

Because that's what He's asking. Well, let me re-phrase that. He isn't asking, He's demanding. If you want to have me, I have to be first, above all things, no matter what the cost. In order to have Christ you must hate all else that would usurp first place.

How is this any different from what God has already said? This is not a new requirement. Listen to the words of God to His people Israel;

1 *Then God spoke all these words, saying,*

2 *“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*

That's His premise. I purchased you. I delivered you from your captors. I brought you out of the house of slavery. I brought you through the red sea and drowned your previous owners, the armies of Egypt. Therefore;

3 *“You shall have no other gods before Me.*

How is Jesus saying anything any different at all. 26 *“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.*

He's re-stating the first commandment. I purchased you. I own you. You shall have no preference of anything created that is higher than your preference, your love for me.

4 *“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 “You*

shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

All of the excuses we looked at last week, the reasons why the folks who were invited to the rich mans banquet would not come, real estate deals, stuff, other loves, all of those things, if preferred above God, who is the rich man giving the banquet in the parable. All of those excuses are idolatry. Anything you prefer more than the one who bought you, is idolatry.

Jesus is making the same claim on the lives of His listeners as God made through Moses at the beginning. It doesn't take much of a reach of logic to say, either this Jesus IS God, or He is in direct conflict with God, claiming the same level of devotion and preference and ownership of those who would be His disciples, as God.

He must own you. He must be higher than any choice, any created thing, any relationship, or you cannot be a christian.

You say, It can't mean that!! That's absurd. I'll just vote with my feet and go find a different church and a different preacher that finds out some way to make this mean something else.

Actually, it gets worse. We haven't gotten to the hardest thing to give up yet in the passage.

yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

Read Fox's book of martyr's. Why have untold thousands of christians taken death as opposed to re-canting Christ for 2000 years? I remember one missionary tale from some jungle somewhere. To Nevadan's any jungle will do, they're all the same;

The missionaries had come upon a woman who had deep flesh wounds from

head to toe. She had asked Christ to come in and under brutal torture was willing to have Him leave. They kept cutting her open to let Christ out. But He wouldn't leave.

yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple

Martyrdom might be the easiest way out of this command. Because what this is really about is; who owns you? Jesus demands that you put Him first before your stuff, your money, your nearest dearest family, but there's still more that He demands. In order to have Jesus, He insists on having YOU.

Paul reminds us, *you were bought with a price.* 1Cor. 6:20 The most common reference to christians isn't disciple, mathetes, that we looked at first. Far more common to reference christians and how they referred to each other is; doulos. Slave. Our modern bibles have pretty'd that up. They all say servant. Yeah, right. A first century doulos would make quick work of that. A doulos is a person who is owned and who answers to a kurios, a Lord, a Master.

What will you lose in order to have Christ? There are no big interpretive hurdles in this passage. His demands are crystal clear.

If you are as old as me, you will recall the old Campus Crusade for Christ tract, the 4 spiritual laws. It opens with *God has a wonderful plan for your life!* Whose life? Who's the master and who's the slave?

27 *“Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.*

You want to be my disciple? First, sign over everything to me and indenture yourself as my slave. Second, get in line, we're on our way to Jerusalem to be nailed to a cross.

He isn't asking you to do any more than His Father asked Him to do. Are you better than Him in this chain of command? OK, then, sign everything over, indenture yourself to Him and follow Him to Jerusalem.

He's in this world to do His Father's will. You're indentured to Him. Guess what you'll be doing. If you want to be a disciple that is.

We're actually on more dangerous turf than the folks He was speaking to. They could picture everything He was talking about. Common stuff. But our turf is actually far more frightening. Fat, lazy, comfortable christians enjoying a life of comfort and ease. This stuff will catch us off guard. Like a wave knocking your feet out from under you.

We've never even had to consider any of this. It's so easy to be a christian in America. The user-friendly land for christians. For 250 years we could've taken a pair of scissors and cut these words out of our Bibles and no one would miss them. Almost meaningless. Until that tidal wave knocks your feet out from under you and you're like, what did that preacher say this meant?

28 "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it?"

None of these demands of Jesus are likely to hit us between the eyes after lunch today. Not physically anyway. I don't think any of us will be in jail this afternoon for being a christian. But inside? Spiritually? In your heart of hearts, who you are with Jesus in secret, as you consider His demands on you.

But would we be wise to at least do what Jesus tells us to do here. Calculate the cost. Ask yourselves some of these "what if's" and see if you've got money in the spiritual bank to meet the cost.

Jesus gives His hearers two parables. Two metaphors that both have the same object lesson. Think before you jump. Calculate before you begin the project. Do the math up front.

He has stated the desired end, a relationship with God in glory for eternity, and He has stated the cost, all that you are and all that you own must be second in preference to Him. You will be indentured to Him, first, above all

things.

Heaven and hell hang in the balance. The cost is clearly stated. It's time to get out your yellow pad and do the calculations. What will you pay in order to have Him. His price is clear. Everything. You. Your life. All of it.

He says get out your yellow pad and do the calculations up front. If you can't pay or won't pay, walk away now.

This is so different than our modern American Evangelicalism that preaches about a God who is pacing the floor waiting for you to ask him for anything, anything at all, he'll be like a genie in a bottle and make all your dreams come true if you'll just believe and ask him. As if we're the lord and He's the slave.

28 "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? 29 "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

Look around America people. Evangelicalism vanished. The churches are empty. Boarded up. We got blown down like a feather. Nobody put up a fight. If they're still empty in a year, will not the onlooking world be correct to ridicule us?

The real numbers are beginning to come out. 1 person in 10,000 dead from the virus. Our government lied to us and continues to lie to us. This is not a pandemic. Yes, the virus is deadly and real, but the numbers don't add up. You were actually in more danger driving to church. The statistics are higher that you'll die driving the 2 miles to get here than from some virus.

People who get blown down like a feather are open to ridicule. Jesus says so in this parable. American evangelicalism didn't even make it to the fight. Blown over by a virus. Vanished.

31 “Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and take counsel whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 “Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks terms of peace.

In this parable, Jesus is trying to help you with your calculations on your yellow pad. He's the king with twenty thousand. You're outnumbered. Take the deal. Give everything to Him. Give it all to Him. Take the deal.

33 “So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

You say, how's that working out for **you** pastor? I own 2 houses. 6 antique automobiles. 2 modern cars. Maybe 50 cameras. Maybe 200 antique camera lenses. You've been in my house. Pam has nice things. We have retirement accounts. A pension plan. You folks graciously pay me too much.

Beyond those physical things I have my wife as my dearest possession, and my darlings, all of my babies and grandbabies. Pam is with them this morning. I have a pretty decent reputation around town. A good name. People trust me.

Jesus says to me, Jim, you need to do the math up front. If the good governor comes and demands all of that unless you give up Me, which will you choose. Actually the way it works is a transfer. In order to have Jesus, I've already transferred ownership of all of those things to Him. I'm just the steward.

Actually it would be the easiest if they just came and took it all and threw me in prison in one fell swoop. I'm sure when the day comes it will be incremental with each increment being painful.

In Southern California, my pastor and my church down there, the county has threatened them with fines. \$1000 a day if you meet as a church. The government has threatened prison time for that pastor. I'm not making this up,

this was as of last week.

He's 81 years old. The government in California has told him he can go to prison. His answer; I've had lots of ministries in the last 70 years, but I've never had a prison ministry. Bring it.

33 "So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. Jesus is Lord, you are slaves. Those are His terms. He's pretty clear. This isn't hard to understand. If you are His disciple, everything you thought you owned, belongs to Him.

34 "Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned?"

What are you going to salt the salt with. If the salt has no flavor, it's just dirt.

American evangelicalism was supposed to be the salt in our culture. But in the last 20 years it's getting harder and harder to tell who the christians are, and who the culture is. You can't tell them apart. There's no distinctions between the christians and the culture.

Do you think it strange that we sing hymns that Isaac Watts wrote in the 1720's? Or Philip Bliss in the 1850's? Or Fanny Crosby in the 1890's. Is it strange to you that we're the only church in Tonopah that's expositing this book verse by verse and approaching it as if this book has authority over what we must actually DO?

What if Covid is just Satan's first wave. Empty the buildings. Board up the windows. Mass confusion. And the second wave is making certain speech a hate crime. I'm just saying. How far will we carry our distinctiveness?

Jesus says do the calculations up front. Decide on paper what you can and can't pay. There's nothing worse than a third of the population associating their names with Christ according to Pew research and when the first little wind blows, they can't be found. We won't fault the world for it's ridicule if

that happens. Jesus told us straight and up front.

If you're boasting about the big building you're building and you run out of steam before it's completed, people will laugh at you. And if the distinctiveness of the christians, their saltiness becomes un-salty . . .

35 *“It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

I'll close our thoughts this morning with a letter that Jesus wrote to a church in 96AD. They had lost *their* saltiness.

14 *“And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write:*

The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 15 ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. 16 ‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 ‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. 19 ‘Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent. 20 ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”

Salvation is free in the sense that you are bankrupt and have nothing of any value to offer in payment for your debt of sin to God. Jesus paid your debt at Calvary. But on the other hand, He is Lord and demands ownership of you and all of your possessions.

Those are His terms of peace. And what a sweet slavery it is to be owned by a Master who gives me back much more than I need, and above all else, He gives me peace in this troubled world, and the downpayment on the next one, His Holy Spirit to dwell with me and in me. Take the deal.