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BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH

ELKHORN, NEBRASKA

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KARL SCHAPHORST

1 MR. SCHAPHORST: That scripture reading I read
2 earlier, wow, it's a tough reading.

3 When Pastor Wenda gave me my assignment, I read
4 that little bit of scripture and initially my heart kind of
5 sank, because it doesn't seem to be very encouraging.

6 It seems to be almost riveting and convicting,
7 which is not always a fun thing.

8 But today we're talking about the cost of
9 discipleship and the words are tough.

10 I look at Jesus and He came to earth and He was
11 spreading the good news.

12 The old has passed away, the new is here, the old
13 covenant was done with, the new covenant was entering into
14 our world, and Jesus was the only spokesperson of it.

15 I liken that to maybe a recruiter for a school like
16 Nebraska.

17 They bring in athletes, they bring in students, and
18 what do they want to do?

19 They want to advertise the school. They say we
20 will give you big crowds and great coaches.

21 You'll learn a lot. We'll get you in shape and
22 when you're done you will be able to write your ticket
23 anywhere you want to go.

24 Well, Jesus was kind of that person for salvation,
25 and he went around telling the truths about the way of

1 heaven and inviting people to come to him, right?

2 So, in light of the scripture we read today I
3 thought I would journey through the Gospels and look at some
4 of the recruiting statements that Jesus makes.

5 I start in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 5. "But
6 I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who
7 persecute you."

8 Chapter 7. "Enter through the narrow gate, for
9 wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to
10 destruction and many enter through it. But small is the
11 gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few
12 find it."

13 Chapter 10. "Don't suppose that I have come to
14 bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a
15 sword."

16 Maybe the Gospel of Mark has something there.
17 Chapter 10.

18 "Go sell everything you have and give it to the
19 poor and then you will have treasure in heaven. Then come
20 follow me."

21 The Gospel of Luke also has some teachings.
22 Chapter 9.

23 "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it,
24 but whoever loses his life will save it. For he who is
25 least among you it is he that is the greatest. Whoever is

1 first will be last and last will be first."

2 The Gospel of John maybe has the toughest teachings
3 of all.

4 "I tell you the truth, that no one can see the
5 kingdom of God unless he is born again."

6 In Chapter 6. "I tell you the truth, unless you
7 eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you will
8 have no life in you."

9 Now, come on, if you heard that, you would say,
10 just what the disciples said later in that chapter, this is
11 hard teaching. Who can accept it?

12 You know what is interesting about all of Jesus's
13 teachings?

14 That if you listen to how the world would say these
15 things they are exactly 180 degrees out of sync.

16 The first are first; the greatest are the greatest.
17 Almost 180 degrees out of sync.

18 And Jesus is not a politician. Jesus came to bring
19 us truth.

20 And sometimes truth can be a little tough.
21 Sometimes we can't handle the truth.

22 Sometimes if it comes to us unfiltered, or without
23 beating around the bush, it can come right at us and hit us
24 pretty hard.

25 I think our scripture reading for today is just

1 like that.

2 I go to the Gospel of Luke and I start in Verse 25
3 and it says:

4 "Large crowds were traveling with Jesus and he
5 turned to them and said, "If anyone comes to me and does not
6 hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his
7 brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be
8 my disciple."

9 Oh, man, I mean that grabs your attention. I am
10 married. I have a family.

11 In fact this is a picture of them. This is my
12 wife, Tracy; this is my oldest daughter, Carly, she's ten;
13 this is my son Drake, he's eight; and this is Samuel, he is
14 four.

15 I love my family. I love them tremendously. Does
16 that mean I can't be a disciple?

17 I sure hope not, and I think Jesus is teaching us
18 something here.

19 I think we can love our family and yes be a
20 disciple.

21 Maybe we need to dig a little bit in the word of
22 God and understand what it is he's teaching maybe a little
23 bit.

24 I'm going to try to do that. I'm going to try to
25 understand what Jesus is teaching us.

1 He certainly has our attention, right? He
2 certainly has our attention.

3 You know, it is true, it is very true, there are
4 people in this world today that worship their children.

5 There are people in this world today that worship
6 their spouse.

7 There are people today who are more concerned about
8 what their neighbors think about them than what God might
9 think.

10 And maybe what Jesus is trying to tell us is that,
11 caution, there are things in this world that will distract
12 you from what really, really is important, and that can even
13 include your very own family.

14 They can pull you away from your walk with God and
15 he wants us to be alert to that fact.

16 He wants us to be aware that the world throws up
17 all these distractions in an effort to throw us off and it
18 can happen right in your own house.

19 When we walk with Christ it really is our spiritual
20 side that walks with Christ.

21 Until we leave this place, because we don't belong
22 here, we don't belong here, this is not our home, our home
23 is in heaven with Jesus, and until that time comes we still
24 have the flesh with us.

25 It is still here, and Paul writes something about

1 the flesh in the book of Romans.

2 He goes, "I know that nothing good lives in me that
3 is in the flesh."

4 There is a lot of good that lives in the spirit,
5 but we have the flesh.

6 That is the part we have to be careful about. We
7 still have it. It will be with us until our last breath.

8 The Gospel of John confirms this. Jesus speaks
9 this to his disciples.

10 The spirit gives life, but the flesh counts for
11 nothing.

12 Now, I was saying how could I take this first part
13 of the Gospel of Luke and actually encourage people with it?

14 And the Holy Spirit led me to a writing that Paul
15 wrote in the Book of Galatians and it's really profound.

16 We have this incredible miracle of the
17 resurrection, okay?

18 Jesus is crucified on the cross. Three days later
19 he rises and ascends to heaven and all our hope rests in
20 that.

21 But it means even more than that and Paul wrote
22 about this.

23 He understood it. He said that I was crucified
24 with Christ.

25 When Christ was hung on the cross I was right there

1 with him and I was also crucified on the cross, but yet I
2 live. Not I, but Jesus alive in me.

3 You see what happens? When we are born again, just
4 as the Gospel of John said, tough teaching, but when we are
5 born again the flesh, the world beside of us, dies.

6 It's crucified and then what is left is the
7 spiritual side. That is alive. That is Jesus.

8 Do you see what maybe Jesus is saying here? He's
9 saying hate your wife and your children.

10 You know how I look at that? I say it's not so
11 much my wife and my children that I love, but Jesus that is
12 alive in them.

13 I see Jesus alive in my spouse. I see Jesus alive
14 in my children.

15 I come across this as I prepare for this message, I
16 don't know what the fruits of this revelation will mean, but
17 I have to think that my relationship now in my home might
18 even be that much more blessed, because maybe that is what
19 Jesus is trying to teach with these tough words.

20 It leads us to my number one take-away. Remember,
21 I always like to give you something you can use, and if I
22 could go back to the Gospel of Luke and rewrite those first
23 four verses I probably could say this.

24 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus and he
25 turned around to them and said if anyone comes to me and

1 doesn't love me first, he can't be my disciple.

2 Now, we would probably read that and say, oh, yes,
3 that makes sense.

4 But the way he writes it grabs us, doesn't it? It
5 teaches us. These are the words we need to hear.

6 They can be encouraging. Understand that Jesus is
7 first in our life.

8 I love my children and wife, but I can stand here
9 before you and with all the honesty I can muster I can tell
10 you I love Jesus Christ more.

11 That I think is what Jesus is trying to teach us
12 here.

13 There is more. The scripture goes on. I start in
14 Verse 28.

15 "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will
16 he first not sit down and estimate the cost and see if he
17 has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the
18 foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees
19 it will ridicule him saying this fellow began to build and
20 was not able to finish."

21 Now, why does this go with the first? Because
22 we're talking about discipleship, remember.

23 We are talking about stepping out and being a
24 disciple for God.

25 All he's asking you is to make sure that the will

1 of God is being done. Pray about it. Listen to God.

2 Imagine an individual rushing out to build his
3 castle.

4 He wants a castle and he goes out and builds his
5 castle.

6 When he's done he looks at it, it's beautiful, the
7 view is great because it's sitting on Fort Lauderdale Beach.

8 And then the wind blows, and the storms rage, and
9 the waters rise, and his world comes tumbling down. It
10 would have better had he not even started.

11 Now let's take a look at the individual who is in
12 prayer and who meditates on the word of God and wants to go
13 out and build this castle and seeks the guidance of the Holy
14 Spirit.

15 And he starts building his castle and all of a
16 sudden he finds himself building it on a rock.

17 The winds come, the storm rages, the waters rise,
18 his castle continues to stand, and he continues to shine the
19 light of Jesus.

20 When we step out in discipleship it is a commitment
21 and it is not one that is well received if it's only halfway
22 there.

23 Let's continue on in the reading of Luke. It says,
24 "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another
25 king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is

1 able with ten thousand men to oppose to one coming against
2 him with twenty thousand? And if he is not able, will he
3 send a delegation while the other is still a ways off to
4 broker terms of peace?"

5 You know, this parable again is along the same
6 lines.

7 It's counting the cost, it's running the numbers,
8 it's making sure that our gifts are in the right place and
9 then we step out.

10 And what is great about this parable is that it's
11 lived out, this is real, and this kind of stuff happens.

12 I go to the Old Testament. The Book of Joshua.
13 "Then Joshua, son of Nun, secretly sent two spies to
14 Shittim. Go look over the land, he said, especially
15 Jericho. So they went and entered the house of a sinner
16 named Rahab and stayed there."

17 Joshua was given the command to cross the Jordan
18 and take over the land which God had promised.

19 And what did Joshua do before rushing into it? He
20 counted the cost.

21 He was patient. He was in prayer and he got some
22 intelligence.

23 What did that intelligence bring back to him? The
24 spies returned and they said to Joshua, "The Lord has surely
25 given the whole land into our hands. All the people are

1 melting in fear because of us."

2 Now Joshua is feeling pretty good right now and
3 he's going to give it everything.

4 He's not going to go and give it only fifty
5 percent; he's not going to go and give it only 25 percent;
6 he's going to give it everything he has.

7 He knows that it's the will of God. He knows it's
8 the will of God and if you read in the Book of Joshua how
9 many kings he conquered with the help of the Lord, it is
10 truly a miracle.

11 Another one of my favorite Old Testament people was
12 Gideon.

13 He had an army of 32,000 men, and he was ready to
14 go up against the Midianites and he was all excited, but the
15 Lord said, hang on, you have too many guys.

16 Now if he would have rushed off with his 32,000
17 men, I'm not sure what would have happened.

18 But he listened to the Lord, and the Lord said you
19 have too many men, so he sent ten thousand of them home.

20 The Lord said you still have too many. I tell you
21 what, have them go to the water hole, I'll sort them out for
22 you.

23 And when he was done he had three hundred soldiers
24 going up against the Midianite army of thousands and
25 thousands and thousands.

1 Now you weigh the cost. You are thinking this is
2 crazy.

3 There is just no way that this is going to work.
4 This is what the Lord said to Gideon.

5 "During that night the Lord said to Gideon, get up,
6 go down against the camp because I am going to give it into
7 your hands. If you are afraid to attack, go down to the
8 camp with your servant and listen to what they are saying.
9 Afterwards you will be encouraged to attack the camp."

10 So they go down there and this is what they
11 encounter.

12 Gideon arrives just as a man was telling a friend
13 of a dream.

14 "I had a dream," he said, "a round loaf of barley
15 bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the
16 tent with such a force that the tent overturned and
17 collapsed."

18 And his friend responded, "This can be nothing
19 other than the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, the
20 Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp
21 into his hands."

22 Gideon heard this. He was encouraged. He knew it
23 didn't matter how many soldiers he had.

24 That was not the issue. The issue was he was now
25 ready to do the will of God, because he was patient, he

1 listened, and believe me, when he attacked the Midianites he
2 gave it everything he had.

3 You should see how far he chased them all over the
4 landscape.

5 That's the power of God; that we listen, we act in
6 response to his will.

7 There's so many examples of this in scripture, so
8 many places you can find examples of patience and deliberate
9 action based on thought.

10 Proverbs, "Commit to the Lord whatever you do."
11 Commit to the Lord. It doesn't say give me fifty percent of
12 whatever you do.

13 It says, "Commit to the Lord whatever you do."

14 And I like that word whatever, because it's not
15 just in worship.

16 This is career, this is family, this is friends.
17 Commit whatever you do to the Lord and your plans will
18 succeed.

19 In Chapter 19 it says, "It is not good to have zeal
20 without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way."

21 This is about maybe the tenth time I've done this.
22 It has been such a blessing for me in my spiritual walk. I
23 cannot tell you. Words would not explain it.

24 And I get these notes, I get things that come back
25 and they say, "You missed your calling in life. You should

1 have been a pastor."

2 They say things like, "Wow, that was great. Have
3 you ever thought about going into the seminary," stuff like
4 that.

5 In fact I had one individual after one service come
6 up to me and say, "I don't know how you can live with
7 yourself if you have this gift and you don't give it to
8 God's people every day."

9 I hear all that, and I'm not trying to edify
10 myself, I'm telling you about a challenge I'm going through,
11 because I weigh the cost, I'm counting the cost.

12 I can't do something like that unless I'm ready to
13 give it all, to give everything.

14 You just don't do something like that and give it
15 halfway. It has to be everything you have.

16 But the cost may be too much for me right now. So
17 I'm patient. I pray. I listen.

18 And this is great that I'm able to do this and
19 still have my day job.

20 But it's kind of the same thing, you know, just not
21 to rush out and stand up for the Lord, but to do it
22 according to his will.

23 Then you will be blessed beyond belief. Then it
24 will be a wonderful thing.

25 So I think the next take-away from this is that

1 once we make that step we should really give it everything
2 we have.

3 Give it all we have and then we'll be doing the
4 will of God and truly, truly will be blessed.

5 Now, there is this last part of this scripture.
6 This last part of the scripture talks about the saltiness
7 and I like this because we understand salt.

8 We know what salt does. You sprinkle a little bit
9 of salt on your food and the food just comes alive, it's
10 better than it was without salt, right?

11 So it makes perfect sense when Jesus says you are
12 the salt of the earth.

13 We are here to make the earth better than it really
14 is.

15 The scripture goes salt is good. Salt is good.
16 Not too much. Too much makes bitterness, but just the right
17 amount makes it good.

18 But if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made
19 salty again? It is neither fit for the soil or for the
20 manure pile. It's just thrown out.

21 Imagine if I had a salt shaker. I'm sprinkling
22 some salt and I'm eating, yes, needs a little bit more salt,
23 put a little bit more on there, still not there, a little
24 bit more, and eventually I'm going to say this salt is
25 nothing. This is not salt and you throw it away and it's

1 gone.

2 And I think Jesus, when he wants us to be
3 disciples, a lot of times when you get new things they are
4 exciting at first but then as time goes by it kind of wears
5 off.

6 The luster kind of fades maybe a little bit and
7 it's less exciting.

8 Our faith walk should not be like that, because,
9 trust me, it renews daily.

10 I'm always excited about something in my faith walk
11 and I think Jesus is saying to us, he doesn't want disciples
12 that are like the seed that maybe falls on the path.

13 Because the seed that falls on the path, what
14 happens to that?

15 It can't really grow and the birds of the air come
16 down and eat it up, right? He doesn't want disciples like
17 that.

18 He doesn't want disciples that are like the seed
19 that falls amongst the rocks, because what happens to those?

20 A little bit of soil there, they root down, can't
21 go very deep, right?

22 And then they blossom a little bit, maybe looks
23 pretty for a while, but then as soon as the sun and the
24 drought comes it withers away and dies.

25 Jesus doesn't want disciples like that. Jesus

1 doesn't want disciples like the seed that is thrown amongst
2 the thorns and the weeds, because it also grows up but then
3 the weeds and the thorns of the world choke it out and then
4 that beautiful growth dies.

5 No, what Jesus wants is a seed that is cast upon
6 fertile soil, that is nourished by the word of God, that is
7 filled with the Holy Spirit, that can weather the droughts
8 and the rains and the storms.

9 That's the kind of disciple that he wants. He
10 doesn't want you to lose your excitement midway through. It
11 is better if you do not even start at all.

12 I think there's a lot of Christians out there that
13 waive the banner of Christianity.

14 And there may have been a time when they really
15 were giving glory to God in all they did.

16 And then things get a little rough, they lose their
17 job, everything kind of starts running, and it kind of loses
18 its luster and what happens is they find themselves sitting
19 on the fence of Christianity.

20 They are sitting on the fence and they are neither
21 hot nor cold towards Jesus.

22 And there is probably nothing more that bugs him
23 more than that.

24 I think he has more respect for those who walk in
25 darkness and say yes, I walk in darkness, than the one who

1 sits on the fence not knowing where he is.

2 The Book of Revelation talks about how you are
3 neither hot nor cold, you're lukewarm, and because of that I
4 want to spit you out.

5 He wants Christians that are hot, that are on the
6 side of righteousness, not on the neutral ground.

7 And if we lose our saltiness, that's where we find
8 ourselves. That is where we find ourselves. So you can't
9 give up.

10 Every day that has been given to us was ordained to
11 us before it even came to be.

12 It says that in Psalm 139. I believe that. I
13 believe that our days are numbered.

14 Which tells me that every day that I have truly is
15 a gift from God.

16 And the reason why he's giving me more days is
17 because I'm not done yet. I have more work to do.

18 So stay salty and with every breath you have try to
19 give honor and glory to God. That is what being a disciple
20 is.

21 What is the cost? I don't think there is a cost.
22 There are tremendous blessings and treasures in heaven if we
23 fix our eyes on eternity rather than what is here, which
24 Jesus I know teaches us.

25 Love Jesus first. Love him first. Love him among

1 all things.

2 That's what Jesus wants, and don't give 50 percent,
3 or 70 percent, or 90 percent; give it all you have.

4 It's not a function of success or failure; it's a
5 function of just giving it all you have and you will be
6 blessed.

7 And then run the race, run it hard to the very end,
8 until you have no more breath in you.

9 Run the race, don't give up, stay salty, and you
10 will bless God and be greatly rewarded in heaven.

11 Let us pray.

12 Lord Jesus, your word is very powerful, even when
13 sometimes it's difficult for us to hear, but it does teach
14 and does encourage and it does transform, Lord Jesus, and
15 that is my prayer, that your word was heard today; that we
16 maybe know a little bit more about discipleship.

17 I pray that we would give you everything we have,
18 knowing that you are our source of strength.

19 I pray, Lord Jesus, that you would come first in
20 our lives.

21 And I pray, Lord Jesus, that until the day you call
22 us up we glorify your name and give you all the praise you
23 deserve. In your precious name we pray. Amen.

24

25