

**The Word Became Flesh**  
**Week 45**  
**John 15:13-25**  
**“The Cost of Friendship”**

**Introduction**

**Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, wanting to build a tower, doesn't first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, after he has laid the foundation and cannot finish it, all the onlookers will begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This man started to build and wasn't able to finish.'** **Luke 14: 27-30**

Salvation is a free gift to those who choose to follow Jesus. But following Jesus comes at a cost. And what is the cost of following? Everything. And upon realizing this central truth of Christianity, many turn back and refuse to follow. Judas is a perfect example of one who was marginally interested in following Christ, but chose to abandon Him when he realized the cost. The Scriptures are filled with such “fair-weather” worshippers, who abandoned the faith when times got tough. The Apostle John knew first hand such abandonment.

**They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. However, they went out so that it might be made clear that none of them belongs to us.** **1 John 2:19**

Many who claim to believe in Jesus, fall by the wayside, while others choose not to follow at all. For they desire the things of this world more than they desire Christ. They foolishly choose those things that are perishing over the One Who is eternal.

**Then He said to another, “Follow me.” “Lord,” he said, “first let me go bury my father.” But He told him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and spread the news of the kingdom of God.” Another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me go and say good-bye to those at my house.” But Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”** **Luke 9:59-62**

As Jesus was on His way to the cross, He reminded His disciples that they too must pay the cost of being His friends. To be a friend of Christ is to be an enemy of this world. For this world is at enmity with God. It is impossible to abide in Christ and remain entangled with this world, for they are not compatible with one another.

When a stalk of wheat grows, it begins with its roots firmly planted in the earth's soil. But as it matures and ripens, it stretches itself toward the heavens and begins to bear its fruit (seeds). Then the stalk does an amazing thing. It begins to die, and its roots begin to let go of the earth. The stalk of wheat has given its all in order to lift up its fruit as an offering to heaven. This is what a follower of Christ must do as well. We release our hold upon the things of this world as we bear fruit for the kingdom of God. In order to glorify God, we must die to self and loose ourselves from the things of this world. This is what it means to be a friend of God, separated from the world.

On the path to Gethsemane, Jesus explained to His disciples that He had chosen them to become His closest friends, but there would be a price to pay for this fellowship. Remaining in His love would cause them to be loved by Him, yet hated by the world. For you cannot stay where you are and go with God.

**Friends (vs. 13-17)**

**No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants anymore, because a servant doesn't know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from My Father. You did not choose Me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you. "This is what I command you: Love one another.**

Jesus was on His way to die, not just for these eleven disciples, but for any who would come after them and choose to follow. He was laying down His life for His friends. And a true friend is one who is willing to lay down his life for the ones that he loves. The whole theme of **John 15** is pretty simple: Jesus commands us to love Him as He loves The Father. He proved that love by obeying all The Father had commanded Him. We prove our love by being all that Christ commands us. As He gave His life in obedience to The Father, we offer our lives in obedience to The Son. This is Christianity! Anything less than complete surrender is but a worldly religious substitute!

There is a great price to pay for becoming a true follower of Christ. Each of us must stop and count the cost of following. In the end, it comes down to one thing and one thing only: whether or not we believe that having Christ is worth the cost.

**The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he found one priceless pearl, he went and sold everything he had and bought it.**

**Matthew 13:44-46**

One of the many things the Romans despised about Christianity was its teaching that all believers are equal. The Roman hierarchy had its Caesars, who were considered to be gods, along with the ruling noble class. Underneath all of these were peasants and slaves, who were considered to be the lowest of the low. But Christ has declared that even the slave, who chose to follow Him, was considered as a friend! There are no low class and high class within the body of Christ, only friends!

But to be a friend of Christ is also to become a slave of Christ. This is hard for people of this generation to understand, but it was perfectly rational to the disciples. They understood full well, that as friends of The King, they were in His inner circle, but they were also His servants. This is the reason that Jesus talks of servants and friends interchangeably. A perfect example of this concept can be found in ancient Judaism. According to the Law of Moses, a Hebrew could only be a slave to his master for a period of six years, then he was to be released. But some slaves so loved their masters, they were willing to forgo their freedom in order to remain in the master's household. Moses made provision for this.

**But if a slave declares, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I do not want to leave as a free man,' his master is to bring him to the judges and then bring him to the door or doorpost. His master will pierce his ear with an awl, and he will serve his master for life.**

**Exodus 21:5-6**

So you see, to be a friend of Christ is much the same. We love our master. And we wish to remain in His love by forever obeying His commands.

**As The Father has loved Me, I have also loved you. Remain in My love. If you keep My commands you will remain in My love, just as I have kept The Father's commands and remain in His love.**

**John 15:9-10**

Being a friend of Christ is to become a servant (slave) of Christ for life. To love Him is to obey Him. We are called to prove our love for Him by our obedience just as He proved His love for His Father by obedience, even unto death. This is what it means to be a friend of God. And if you choose to be God's friend, know that this world will despise you for it. The decision you must make is whether or not you believe that Christ is worth it.

### **Foes (18-25)**

***“If the world hates you, understand that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. Remember the word I spoke to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they don’t know the one who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now they have no excuse for their sin. The one who hates me also hates my Father. If I had not done the works among them that no one else has done, they would not be guilty of sin. Now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. But this happened so that the statement written in their law might be fulfilled: They hated me for no reason.*”**

To remain in the love of Christ is to be despised by this world. For they resent anything and everything that has to do with submission to God. This world hates Christ for three reasons. First, they do not know God (**vs. 21**). Second, they love the darkness and hate the light (**vs. 22**). Third, they hate The Father and The Son (**vs. 23-24**). So we should not be surprised when they despise us for choosing to love everything they despise.

Jesus told His disciples to expect this world's hatred toward them, for He had chosen them out of this world. Therefore, every believer is no longer a part of the world (**vs. 19**). The Child of God has been set apart. This world is no longer our home. We do not and cannot belong here. It seems these days we hear so much about the deep divisions in our country. Well, these divisions are mainly caused by the fact that God's people have nothing in common with the devil's children. We do not find pleasure in the things that give them pleasure. We are called to be selfless, rather than self consumed. We strive for holiness, rather than debauchery. This world celebrates everything that God despises. So how can we remain in Christ's love and remain united with the world? Answer: It is impossible.

It seems these days that the wickedness of our society is increasing exponentially. Things that men used to do in dark corners are now glorified and celebrated in the light of day. It is not possible for the people of God to co-exist with such evil. The battle lines are clearly drawn, and I believe that the end is near. So what is the believer to do in such times?

***The end of all things is near; therefore, be alert and sober-minded for prayer. Above all, maintain constant love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins.***

***1 Peter 4:7-8***

So what is old Pete telling us exactly? Stay connected to Christ and to one another. The Church must remain in the vine and be of one accord in order to withstand these evil days. There can be no union with the world, if we are to remain connected to The True Vine!

Jesus also reminded His followers that a servant (there is that slave reference again) is not greater than his Master. If the world hates our LORD, then it will hate us as well. He is The Light of the world. They love darkness and hate the light. We have been called to share His light. So we should not be surprised that if they hate The Light then they will also hate the ones who “turn it on”. To preach the gospel is to point out God's displeasure with sinfulness. It is the wicked deeds of men that nailed Jesus

to the cross. Those who love their evil deeds most certainly do not wish to be reminded of their inevitable conclusion.

***The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our LORD.*** ***Romans 6:23***

Those who have no desire for repentance despise the message of Salvation. For they do not know God, nor do they desire to know Him. And as the hardness of their hearts increases, they move from a hatred of the light to a hatred of the very source of the light. They hate everything to do with God. And therefore, they detest those who choose to live in His light.

The works of Jesus were proof of His divinity, but those who witnessed those works would rather deny them than acknowledge the truth and repent. We must never forget that Jesus' primary adversaries were extremely "religious" people. The Pharisees and Sadducees were some of the most "pious" observers of Judaism, and yet, they were still lost in their sins. In my own personal life, I have experienced some of the most intense hatred from so-called "church members", who claim to love Christ. Many people have been driven from churches because of this reality. But it is important to remember that going to church and having a religious mindset does not make you a true disciple of Christ. To believe in Christ is to follow Christ. And His followers are known for their love.

***By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.***

***John 13:35***

So, how then can a Christian make other Christians feel unwanted? Answer: They cannot. Again I tell you, just because a person goes to church doesn't make them a follower of Christ. There have been many tares sown among the wheat by the enemy (***Matthew 13:24-30***). So do not be surprised when people within the church persecute you. The true church of Jesus Christ cannot be in union with the world, but the world does everything that it can to creep into the church to corrupt it. Satan has been doing this since the church age began. One need look no further than *Revelation* to see how worldliness had begun to creep into the churches of Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea. And how does this worldliness first begin to find a foothold within the inner sanctum? It begins, when God's chosen people drift away from their "first love" (Ephesus, ***Revelation 2:1-7***). It begins, when we fail to "remain in His love" by staying connected to Christ and remaining in The Vine! We have to make the decision each and every day to maintain our love relationship with Christ, because He is worth everything to us!

Jesus quoted from ***Psalms 69:4 "They hated Me without cause."*** It is interesting to note that this *Psalms* was written by David, when King Saul was pursuing him in the wilderness in order to take his life. David had been anointed by God, called to be His servant and a man after God's own heart. And though he had never acted in anything but love and obedience to King Saul, the king despised him nonetheless. Why? Because he could see God's hand upon David, and he hated him for it. The children of the devil despise the children of God. Only if they repent and find salvation can they begin to love the Church.

You have been chosen by God to share The Light of Christ with this dark and sinful world. You will be despised for it, but Jesus also offers us this hope:

***If they kept My Word, they will keep yours also.***

***John 15:20(b)***

So you see, many will hate you, but some will hear The Word and be saved. And that makes all the testing and trials worthwhile. We share The Light, so that some may turn from the darkness and find salvation. But first, we must count the cost. We must make the decision that Christ... is worth it!

***But if it doesn't please you to worship The LORD, choose for yourselves today: Which will you worship — the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living? As for me and my family, we will worship The LORD."***

***Joshua 24:15***

Let the friends of Christ say... TRUTH!!!