

Priceless!
Luke 14:27

A footy scarf of your favourite team: \$29.95

Annual membership for your favourite footy team: \$250

A Premium Package to the AFL Grand Final (don't waste your money if you're a Crows supporter): \$6,295

But, what does it cost to be a follower of Jesus? What does it cost to be a Christian?

Well, what does the guy who started it all say?

Jesus acquired somewhat of a celebrity status around Palestine in the first century. He performed miracles, he healed the sick, he preached amazing sermons, he related to the ordinary people . . . it's no wonder large crowds traveled with him wherever he went. Whatever he had, they wanted some of it. Jesus was the man of the moment . . . the star of the show . . . and people were voting with their feet.

But, he turns to the hanger-on-ers. He turns and says: "If you want to be my disciples . . . if you really want to follow me . . . you'd better first count the cost . . . because there's a cost involved . . . a cost someone has to pay."

And, what's the cost? The cost is giving up all your possessions. All of them!

Now, there's a hard word. And, if it was a hard word for people back 2000 years ago when they didn't have many possessions, how much harder is it for us today when we can have anything we want, when we want it, on 20 months interest free terms!? We have so much stuff, how could Jesus expect us to give it all away?

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Giving up everything:

Well, let's see . . . let's count it up:

The house: well, the median house price in Adelaide is \$906,000

All the stuff in the house, let's say: \$150,000

The car: \$60,000

The superannuation: \$500,000

Giving up everything: a bit over one and a half million dollars!

One and a half million . . . that's quite a cost! Could we do it? Well, I reckon we probably could . . . if push came to shove we could probably do that . . . we could probably give it up. There are more important things. Even we know that. There are more important things than our 4K TVs and mobile phones. There are more important things than the stuff that makes us comfortable. You'd give it up, wouldn't you, if you had to pay for a life-saving operation for one of your children? It's our families we hold dear . . . it's the people in our lives that give them meaning . . . the people we love are much more important than any material stuff we have . . . I'd like to think we could give up our possessions if we really had to.

But, the trouble is, Jesus hasn't finished yet . . . he goes on . . . "Whoever comes to me cannot be my disciple unless he loves me more than he loves his father and his mother and his wife and his children and his brothers and sisters" . . . unless he is willing to give them up too.

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Giving up all our stuff: \$1.5 million

Giving up Tresma, and Emma, and Lachlan, and Samuel?

My family! What sort of God would expect me to give up the people that are most dear to me? The sort of God who demands total obedience and total loyalty. And, really, if he didn't he wouldn't be much of a God would he?

But, how can I put a value on my family? How could I give them up? The cost is too great! I couldn't do that . . . I *wouldn't* do it!

But, that is what Jesus is asking potential followers to do . . . to count the cost . . . whatever it is . . . just count it . . . and the facts are straightforward . . . whoever does not give up everything they have they cannot be Jesus' disciples. They are the cold, hard facts . . . everything, including those I love most dearly . . . it's too much to ask. And, that's how it is with us . . . there is always something that we will *not* give up. So, no matter how good I am, no matter how helpful and kind, no matter how well versed in Scripture . . . no matter how much I pray . . . no matter how good my sermons are . . . the truth is, by my own effort, I cannot be a follower of Jesus . . . I cannot, because I *will* not . . . I will not give up everything!

And yet, miracle of miracles, I stand here this morning as a Christian . . . as a child of God . . . as a disciple of Jesus . . . and so are you! But, not because you were willing to pay the price . . . that price is too high for us . . . we are followers of Jesus because God found another way . . . because God counted the cost and he was willing to pay the price for us.

You see, as the crowds followed on behind Jesus hoping for more miracles and miraculous signs, Jesus was making his way to Jerusalem. He was making his way to Jerusalem to make the ultimate sacrifice – to give up everything . . . everything! Including possessions and home and family. To give up those things that are most important to us, but even more . . . Jesus was so far above all the things we think are important . . . all the things we hang on to . . . he was perfect and holy . . . he was God . . . but, he gave all that up to be like us . . . to live among us . . . he gave it all up to go to Jerusalem to be laughed at, and spat on and punched and whipped and taunted and jeered . . . he gave it all up to be nailed to a cross . . . to be crucified . . . to die.

He gave it all up for you.

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Becoming a Christian: Zero! Nil! Nothing! Gratis! It's Free! A gift!

A gift that, if you're like me, you received at your baptism. A little bit of water and God's word that gave us faith . . . faith to hold on to the free gift of discipleship.

Occasionally when I prepare a child for baptism the parents will ask me how much it costs . . . and I have the great pleasure of saying: "For you, it costs nothing . . . this is God's gift to you".

But, just because it costs us nothing it doesn't mean it was cheap. It wasn't cheap. It cost Jesus everything to give us the gift of faith and eternal life.

Jesus' death on the cross paid the price. He paid the cost of discipleship. He paid the entry fee into heaven. He paid it for us. Jesus knew the cost was too high for us to pay. But, Jesus comes to us having already paid the cost – and he makes us disciples. Not because of the price we paid, but because of the price he paid. We are worth that much to him.

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Jesus' death on the cross: Priceless!

Absolutely priceless!

Pastor John Strelan
St John's Lutheran Church, Unley
Pentecost 13, 2025