

## **Reshaped for Christ's Kingdom: Counting the Cost of Discipleship**

Luke 14:25–33, Jeremiah 18:1–11, Philemon 1:1–21

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The Gospel today speaks with a sharp edge: *"Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple... none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions."* These are not easy words. Jesus does not invite us into a religion of comfort or convenience. He calls us into costly discipleship, a life that demands surrender and courage.

This is a message for the whole church—clergy and laity alike. For discipleship is not only for those who wear vestments or hold office. It is for every baptized person who confesses Christ as Lord.

### **Counting the Cost**

Jesus compares discipleship to building a tower or going to war. Both require careful reckoning of what is at stake. Following Him requires that same reckoning. For the ordained, it may mean letting go of privilege, resisting the temptation to be served rather than to serve. For the laity, it may mean reordering daily life, making choices of integrity at work, at home, and in society, even when those choices are costly.

Discipleship is not about joining the crowd that follows Jesus out of curiosity. It is about walking the long road with Him, carrying the cross.

### **The Potter's Hands**

Jeremiah reminds us that God is the potter, and we are the clay. When the clay resists, the potter reshapes it. God says to Israel, *"So are you in my hand."*

The church too must be clay in God's hands. This means both ordained and lay must be open to correction, renewal, and even painful reshaping. For clergy, it may mean repentance from clericalism, pride, or silence in the face of injustice. For laity, it may mean re-examining the ways we participate in systems that exploit or exclude.

God does not abandon the clay; He reshapes it for His purpose. But the clay must yield. Are we willing to be reshaped?

### **From Slave to Brother**

Paul's letter to Philemon gives us a living example of this transformation. Onesimus, once a slave, is now to be received as a brother. This is not a small adjustment; it is a radical reordering of relationships. Philemon, a church leader in his household, is called to act not from duty but from love.

This speaks to us today. In Christ, we cannot cling to old hierarchies—master and slave, rich and poor, ordained and lay, powerful and powerless. We are called to see one another as sisters and brothers. The church must be a place where human dignity is restored, not diminished.

For clergy, this means living as servants rather than rulers. For laity, it means refusing to remain passive but claiming one's vocation in ministry, mission, and service.

### **A Word to the Church**

Taken together, these readings give us one message: God calls His people to radical transformation. He reshapes us like clay. He asks us to redefine our relationships in Christ. He warns us to count the cost of discipleship.

This call is not only for priests, bishops, or deacons. Nor is it only for those who fill the pews. It is for the whole body of Christ. Each one of us—whether ordained or lay—has a cross to carry, a life to surrender, a relationship to reorder, a witness to give.

Too often, churches fall into the trap of division: clergy protecting their authority, laity remaining passive or disengaged. But the Gospel does not permit such separation. We are one body, with different gifts but a common calling: to follow Christ.

### **What This Means Today**

What might costly discipleship look like for us?

- For clergy: preaching the truth even when it is unpopular, resisting the seduction of wealth and influence, and choosing simplicity and service over privilege.
- For laity: practicing integrity in business and work, refusing to be silent in the face of corruption, and living generously, even when it demands sacrifice.
- For the whole church: standing with the poor, defending the oppressed, caring for creation, and witnessing to Christ in a world that often prefers comfort to truth.

We must also ask: do we define our relationships by status, or do we live as brothers and sisters in Christ? Do we allow God to reshape our lives, our families, our church, even when it means letting go of old ways? Do we take discipleship seriously enough to count its cost?

### **Conclusion**

Jesus' words are demanding, but they are also life-giving. To be reshaped is not to be destroyed, but to be renewed. To give up possessions is not to lose life, but to gain

freedom from what enslaves us. To embrace one another as brothers and sisters is not to lose control, but to discover the joy of God's kingdom.

This is the invitation for all of us, clergy and laity together: to be clay in the potter's hands, to be partners in Christ's mission, to bear the cross with courage, and to walk the costly but life-giving road of discipleship.

And perhaps, if we look around us, we will see that these words are not abstract. There are stories—some of them close to us—of ministries that have been reshaped in unexpected ways, of vocations that have carried a heavy cross, of people who had to leave behind certainty and comfort for the sake of faith and justice. These are of witness: reminders that God is still at the potter's wheel, still forming His people, still calling us to give all for Christ.

May we, as one church, answer this call with faith, humility, and love.  
Amen.