

## **GIVING UP EVERYTHING**

**“ . . . any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”  
(Luke 14:33)**

In this passage Jesus told two stories to emphasize the necessity of counting the cost before becoming a Christian. The first was of a man building a tower. He began, but didn't complete it. He had enough money to start but not to finish. He built the foundation, but nothing more. How sad! How foolish! The second story involved a king who was about to go to war. He had 10,000 troops but his enemy had 20,000. Jesus said that a wise man would analyze this situation and make a decision before the battle began. Perhaps it would be wise for him to send a delegation while the enemy was still a long way off and ask for terms of peace. “In the same way”, Jesus continued, “any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

This Scripture came to mind on a recent trip to Cuba. One Cuban Christian said: “Be thankful for what you have in America. I work all month long for \$10 and do not even have enough money to buy a candy bar.” Incredibly, this statement was not an exaggeration. Working people in Cuba may earn \$7 - \$10 per month, professionals like a pharmacist make \$15 per month, doctors \$20 per month, and highly specialized doctors perhaps as much as \$30 per month. Consequently, there is no reason in Cuba for people to buy storage sheds.

Even though the Cubans have little or no earthly possessions, it is still not easy to “give up everything” and follow Christ. Remember the two thieves that were crucified with Jesus. One of them, to the bitter end, refused to confess Christ. The other, realizing that he had little to lose, said: “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Luke 23:42). What a bargain! He had no earthly possessions to renounce and only a few hours of life left upon earth. As little as it was, however, he renounced it all. Then Jesus said: “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” (Lk. 23:43). How beautiful!

On the other hand, however, Jesus once met a man who had great riches. This man was so religious that he came running to Jesus and wanted to know what he had to do in order to inherit eternal life (Mk. 10:17). The all knowing Christ read his heart like an open book. Even though this man was religious, Jesus knew that he thought more of his possessions than he did of God. Consequently, Christ commanded him to go sell everything he had and give it to the poor. By so doing he would be laying up treasure in heaven where moth and rust could not corrupt and where thieves would not break through and steal. The man counted the cost and wouldn't pay the price. The Bible says that he went away sad because he had great wealth (Mk. 10:22). How stupid! He was giving up treasures he could not lose for others he could not keep.

Joe Garman said recently that when he ministers to prisoners, invariably someone will thank God for being put in jail. Once they have already lost almost everything, but it is much easier to give up what little is left. Dr. Garland Bare even told of a preacher in Thailand who thanked God for the “gift up leprosy” for the same reason. When we have great possessions and good health it is as hard for us to give up everything as it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. The problem is not when people have riches, the real problem is when riches have people.

Perhaps our great affluence is not an advantage after all. Perhaps the “things” we treasure may choke out our spiritual development and growth like thorns and thistles in the garden of life. In the light of eternity, our Cuban brothers may actually have an advantage. A wise man will always choose a dirty dime before a shiny new nickel. True value is not always easily understood or appreciated. Like Jesus said, we have to count the cost in order to understand it.

When Jesus told the story of the rich man and Lazarus He challenged us to think outside the box (Lk. 16:19 - 31). On the surface it seems that the rich man had won the game of life. He lived in luxury every day. Lazarus, by contrast, suffered every day. The true analysis of the story is not immediately evident. Actually, Lazarus won and the rich man lost.

Please do not be flippant and irresponsible when you count the cost. Do not be swept down by the world into an eternal sewer. Renounce everything you have and become His disciple!