

Rightly Dividing and Counting the Cost - A Brief Detour

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[0 : 00] Well, thank you once again for your presence, and we will continue our consideration of the gospel according to Luke. Actually, we are taking a brief detour from the miracles that we began undertaking a few months ago, and we are doing so because what we are considering has to do with our Lord's parabolic ministry, the teaching of parables, and we are examining some of the parables, certainly not all of them, because there are over 30 of them that are listed, but we are examining some of the key parables simply because they were a consequence or a result of the teaching that he gave regarding some of the miracles.

So some of the parables and the miracles are piggybacked together, and they kind of belong together, so we are not hastening to eliminate the parables and concentrate only on the miracles because in these we see a connection between the two, and we want to note that.

It is nothing more than another example of a point that we've made in the past that everything in the Scriptures is connected to everything in the Scriptures.

It is a complete whole, and we are going to try our best to make the connections that are there, and therein lies always tremendous spiritual benefit.

So as we return to Luke's Gospel, chapter 14, we've already considered the teaching that he gave regarding self-humbling and self-exaltation, and this was in connection with the Pharisees and the scribes seeking the chief places and the seat and the synagogue and at the feast and so on, and Jesus gave the remedy for that, and the remedy is simply don't overestimate yourself.

[2 : 02] You know, this is not only in the Gospel, but Paul taught the same thing. In addressing the Corinthians, he said, Let no man of you think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think righteously, soberly, and justly in this present world.

That doesn't mean that you're not supposed to think highly of yourself. You are. You are supposed to think highly of yourself because you have intrinsic, innate value that is not acquired value, but it is intrinsic value placed in you by the fact that the Spirit of God is in you and you are made in the image and likeness of God.

That in itself gives you a value, high value. Matter of fact, we even find that demonstrated in the burial of humanity.

The point that I've often made at graveside services is that of all of the biological life forms that exist, man is the only one that buries his dead.

And the reason we do that is because there is value and dignity in the human body. And we assign value to that by the way we care for the body and provide for the body with burial or with cremation or whatever it may be.

[3 : 34] But there is a recognition there that the human body is not to be treated as would an animal body. Our value and our dignity is derived not from acquisition, not from acquiring it, but because it is innate.

You have value, dignity, because you are made in the image and likeness of God. So it doesn't mean that we are not to think highly of ourselves because we are.

But we are not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. That is an elevated opinion of oneself and this is where the ego comes in and creates all kinds of problems.

And the answer to that, of course, is humility. And I am convinced that a humble person, a truly humble person, is simply someone who has faced the reality of their existence.

That is all. No big deal. You face the reality of your existence. And you see yourself with your value and your dignity coming from God, but insofar as it being acquired is concerned, let no man think

more highly of himself than he ought to think.

[4 : 50] So it's a mixed bag. Someone has said that the moment you think you have acquired and attained to humility, you've lost it.

You can get to the place where you become proud of your humility. And then, of course, that's a contradiction in terms and it's right out the window.

So it's a deceptive thing. But it is something that Jesus Christ takes great delight in because as we looked at Philippians 2, we saw him in the great kenosis, the condescension.

He's being equal with God, came all the way down as a servant and died a death on the cross and humbled himself and all. That's Philippians 2. He became the ultimate example of true humility. And the way we humble ourselves, and by the way, that's a... We've all experienced some things that have happened to us that were humbling or maybe even humiliating, but it was usually as a result of something that we did and somebody else pointed out and we are embarrassed or humbled by it.

[6 : 03] That's one thing. But the scriptures say that we are supposed to humble ourselves. And how do you do that?

Very simply. By putting others first. That's the best way we can demonstrate true humility is by putting others first. That's a great principle and it's found not only in the Gospels but in the Pauline Epistles as well.

So, let us continue now, if we may. We are in Luke chapter 14 and we've already seen the lame excuses for not coming to the Messiah.

As we've just briefly gone over this, recall, if you will, beginning in verse 16, certain man made a great supper, bade many, sent forth his servant at supper time to say everything is ready, come, all things are ready, they all began with one consent to make an excuse.

First said, I bought a field, must have to go see it, another had bought five yoke of oxen, another said he bought a wife, and so on. These are all lame excuses for not signing on with the Messiah.

[7 : 11] And fellas, here is a perfect example of how we have to make a distinction between the demands that Jesus was making then as opposed to the demands that he makes now.

What's the difference? The difference is he was making demands in the context of the kingdom of heaven coming to earth and those who were involved preparing themselves and making themselves ready and prepared for that kingdom.

But that's not what we're looking at now. We're looking at a different situation. We are not preparing ourselves for the kingdom. This is kingdom stuff.

And you need to understand that and it will become more and more apparent as we go through it. In other words, what we're saying is that Jesus Christ and the demands that he made on the other side of the cross, before the cross, were radically different from the demands that he's making now on this side of the cross.

So you have a Christ before and a Christ after. Same Christ, same person, but my oh my, what has happened in between is remarkable because the cross changed everything.

[8 : 40] we are moving away from the kingdom motif and we are not proclaiming to people now, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

That's not our message. Our message is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. That's our message today. The kingdom is still coming but it's held in obedience.

The kingdom has been postponed and what we are now living in is referred to by the apostle Paul as the church age. The dispensation of the grace of God or the administration of the grace of God where everything is dependent upon our believing, our placing, our faith and trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior as opposed to the message that was preached before the cross which was repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

So we've got two different messages, two different sets of good news and Christ is at the very center of both of them but the Jesus after the cross is different than the Jesus before the cross. Now, after the cross he has a glorified body, he's ascended to heaven, he's at the right hand of the Father and he's awaiting the time to return for the second coming. So when we are considering these things in the gospel, we need to put them where the Bible puts them and that is before the cross and that's very, very significant.

[10 : 14] However, the principles that are found in the gospels like the principles that are found in the Old Testament are timeless. They're for every and all dispensations because they don't change

and you can take those to the banks.

The principles don't change but other things in connection with that do. So here, we've got excuses, lame excuses for their not coming to the Messiah and this was for not coming to him then when he was here on earth when the twelve had joined and later we know that seventy will join as disciples and he will send them forth two by two and this is a time of recruitment when Jesus says follow me means he's got a job for them to do.

For us today it's different. We are still called individually we are called to be salt and light for a failing world we are called to bear the image of Christ to a dying world but we are not called for the same thing that they were called for yet a call is a call and when the master calls you answer it doesn't make any difference what dispensation it is.

So all of these lame excuses are given for not coming on board with Jesus and when he is offering the kingdom to Israel and they're going to turn their nose up at it at least the rulers and the leaders are the what we would call the deep state of Israel is going to reject that but he is calling to himself hundreds of people thousands of people and many of course are coming we are told that the common people heard him gladly so there are lame excuses that are given here for not coming to the Messiah and then we read in verse 25 of Luke 14 now there went with him great multitudes now these great multitudes are mixed some are there because they want to hang on every word Jesus has to say and they want to do everything that he requires of them others others are there just to satisfy their curiosity others are there just because there's action there's something taking place and they want to be in on all kinds of motives involved here and now what he's going to talk about in chapter 14 beginning here with verse 25 of these great multitudes he's going to thin them out he's going to separate if you will the sheep from the goats because not everybody is here for the right reasons and we are told this great multitudes he turned and said unto them if any man comes unto me and hates not his own father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters yea and his own life also he cannot be my disciple and the word disciple in the grape is and it means a learner a follower after one who attaches himself to a teacher for the purpose of learning from the teacher so as to become like the teacher that's the meaning of the disciple and here the ranks are going to be thin and Jesus is deliberately thinning them it's time to find out who is with you for the right reason and who is just tagging along because they don't have anything else to do we would call it separating the boys from the men remember

Gideon's 300 separated those who really meant business and who were armed and equipped mentally and ready for combat as opposed to the huge number that was out there and he ended up with 300 same principle find out who is really with you and for you for the right reason and that's what he's doing here and he makes this demand that on the surface and to most people really sounds pretty ridiculous and the first thing we need to consider is this when he uses the word hatred here and love he's talking in terms of what shall we say comparisons he is not saying if you love me you are supposed to go home and hate your mother and hate your father and hate that's not what he's saying at all and we have to keep this in the Jewish cultural context all he is making is a basis of comparison and he is saying that your love and your devotion to him is supposed to be compared to hatred for others and there is a wide swath there why is he making that kind of a demand and what is behind this and who pray tell me has the right to make a demand like that what is beneath this what is what is he actually claiming he is claiming get a handle on this he is claiming deity he is claiming creatorhood where is the creature in comparison to the creator no contest no contest the gap separating creator from creature is immeasurable it's incalculable the distinction this is the claim that Jesus made on numbers of occasions one time he was confronted by the [16:34] Pharisees in connection with I don't recall exactly where it was all I remember it's all I remember is in the gospels and Jesus said tell me they took up stones to stone him and he said tell me for which good deed that I did are you prepared to stone me and they said well we're not stoning you for any good deed that you did but because thou being a man makest thyself to be God which was blasphemy and that's why we're going to stone you well why didn't Jesus come back and say oh hold it right there fellas you got me all wrong oh I'm not making any claim like that that's a complete misunderstanding I've given you the wrong impression I'm so sorry I didn't mean to make any claim like that at all no he's not saying that this is this is tremendously significant because because thou making thyself to be the son of God equals him with God now how does that work in the

Hebrew culture and their understanding the son of the father means he's the same as the father it means he is of the same essence and makeup and character and nature of his father you are too you are of the same essence nature and nature of the father in other words you're made of the same stuff you're a human being and human beings beget human beings and those they beget are just like them Jesus is referred to as the only begotten of the father and he is of the same essence character nature and makeup of the father he is not the father he is not the spirit they are separate but they are all compacted into one

God because there are not three gods one God subsisting in three persons father son and holy spirit and they are all of the same essence character nature and makeup if you understand that explain it to me because I don't I'm simply suggesting that and to me this is the key to the deity of Christ and this is the key to the trinity if we can come to grips with this and I realize that it isn't flattering to our humanity because we like to think we can understand everything but we need to be advised and reminded that God that deity dwells in a sphere that is totally removed from our experience of humanity and the most marvelous thing about deity is that it took upon itself humanity so that

Jesus became the God man Emmanuel God with us not half God and half man all God and all man comprised in one sacred person man you cannot comprehend that if you could you would be deity but you can't so let's be satisfied with our humanity this is a great problem and this is a real difficulty that so many have in rejecting the trinity because they insist that it be brought to our level so that we can grasp it understand it appreciate it and know it well you can forget that that's the same thing as saying I won't be satisfied until I can know eternity and know everything well forget it you fellas we have to deal with our creatureliness we are not creators we are creatures we are not the beginning and the end we are finite beings deal with it it's still a wonderful thing to be alive as a human being and to think that we have to be God in order to understand well this is just really something so let's look at this

Luke 14 he's talking about this what appears to be an incredible demand and I'm not going to take you there but well let me let me let me just give you this brief aside because it's it's related even though we won't go there I'm talking about John 6 and Jesus talks about eating his flesh and drinking his blood and some are turned off at that because they're thinking that's that's gross that's terrible what is this cannibalism he's he's unless you partake of my blood drink my blood eat my flesh you have no part in me and he is making statements there that are designed to thin out the crowd that's exactly what it's going to do and we're told in John 6 that when Jesus made those statements about eating his flesh drinking his blood etc of course he wasn't talking about literally but some and the text says some of his disciples get that

[22 : 57] John 6 this isn't just ordinary people but these are some of his disciples went back and walked no more with him and they said this is a hard saying who can who can stomach this who can handle this and his some of his disciples peeled off they were not committed and the first thing that he gave them that was difficult for them to handle they bolted Jesus turned to the twelve and said okay fellas what about it are you going to leave too this is where the rubber met the road he said are you are you guys are you guys he said to the twelve are you going to bail out also and Peter said to whom shall we go you have the words of life if we leave you where are we going what's left where are we going there isn't any place to go we're sticking we're with you now they're going to vacillate over that we know

Peter's going to have tremendous doubts connection with ready to get it on with that crowd that came to arrest Jesus and he sliced that guy's ear off and Jesus said put away your sword and Peter said but but but they but I would and Peter is confused this isn't going the way it's supposed to and they all head for the tall grass all of the disciples they're in the garden of Gethsemane they all bolt and take off running in different directions so there's some vacillation there's uncertainty there's doubt there's regret all of these things part of this human condition Jesus makes these claims and can make them simply because of his identity that's all the person that's all the reason that is needed and it is just whosoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple and only one can make that kind of demand is none other than the one who made it for which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost now this is a little parable that he's giving and it's just to bring this situation of commitment and dedication down to where everybody can get a handle on it and understand exactly what he's talking about and he's saying you need to commit to me but you need to do so intelligently you need to count the cost this

isn't my cause fellas isn't something that you just jump into some kind of a knee jerk reaction this you're deciding to follow me requires deliberate thought think this thing through what is the price you're going to pay is it worth it count the cost and the illustration he gives by way of a parable is which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost whether he have wherewith to complete it otherwise he's going to be a laughing stock he gets the thing halfway built and he doesn't have any more material and he doesn't have any more money and it really makes him look foolish stupid uncommitted not thinking he's got this tower that's halfway built what good is that this man began to build and was not able to finish or what king as he goes to encounter another king in war will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand you've got to pick and choose the hills you're ready to die on you've got to count the cost assess the situation think it through don't jump into something or else while the other is a great way off he sends an ambassage and acts conditions of peace so therefore whosoever he be of you that renounces not all that he has he cannot be my disciple now here we've got a beautiful illustration of things that differ of right division let me ask you this do you own any property do you have an automobile that is in your name well if you want to be a follower of Jesus you need to liquidate all of your assets turn it into cash give the money to charity and if you don't do that you're really not a disciple you're not really following the Lord is that what this is saying now if you do not make a distinction between the kingdom message and the message we preach today what are you going to do with this becomes very difficult doesn't it and the point is it needs to be made is when you when you rightly divide the word of truth it's all the word of truth all of it and when you rightly divide it you put what belongs here there and what belongs here there and you see there is a distinction to be made between the two this command this demand was standard operating procedure for the kingdom message that's not the message for today you don't have to sell your assets you know remember

I'm getting ahead of myself I know this but remember in Acts chapter 2 and 3 the early church this is after the resurrection this is after the ascension Jesus has gone back to heaven and Peter is still preaching and what is he preaching he's preaching the kingdom same message hasn't changed same message what we're saying is and this is so important so important guys so many people so many Christians so many churches think that the kingdom opportunities that Jesus extended to Israel ended when they crucified him that was over and they're thinking that God is saying okay my son came preached the kingdom he would be the king you rejected him so the deal is off no more kingdom forget it that's the end of it no no not at all that kingdom message continued to be available after the cross after the resurrection that's what

Peter is preaching in Acts chapter 2 and he preaches it again in Acts chapter 3 and he tells them as he addresses all of these Jewish people many of whom are leaders he tells them Jesus was crucified you by wicked hands crucified and slain the Lord of glory God raised him from the dead but if you will now embrace him as your king as your messiah God will send him back that's as clear as it can be in Acts chapter 3 and they continue to reject then in chapter 4 the persecution begins so what they are doing is solidifying the message of the crucifixion and their rejection of him as the messiah but the point I want to make about this selling your goods and so on we are told in Acts chapter 2 and 3 that the early disciples had all things common that they sold their property and brought the money and laid it to the apostles feet for the distribution of the poor and

[32 : 00] Barnabas same guy who is going to teen up later with Paul Barnabas was a Levite and he had land and he sold it and they are giving their proceeds to the apostles to distribute to the people and they had all things in common why were they doing that they were meeting the kingdom conditions remember when Jesus was talking to the rich young ruler and he said what must I do to inherit eternal life and Jesus said well you know you keep the commandments and by the way is that what we tell people today well you just keep the commandments well in the first place we don't keep them anyway but but but he he went through this Jesus said and the rich young ruler said all of these things I've done from my youth I've always kept the commandments piece of cake I've kept the commandments Jesus said alright if you would be complete you sell everything you have give it to the poor and come follow me what and the text says the rich young man went away grieving he was sad for he had much goods that he wasn't willing to part with is that our message today are you going to hear an evangelist tell people if you really want to be saved if you want to be a

Christian if you want to follow Christ you you've got you've got a title to your car you bring it in them over to me and I will take all of your all these homes all these deeds and titles and I'll cash them and

turn them to cash and then I will decide who the poor gets what's going on here fellas fellas there's two different programs you see that this is not the same the cults changed everything and yet they were still continuing in that kingdom motif and the time is going to come when the opportunity for the kingdom to be received by Israel will be gone I'm not real sure when that is and I know some of my brethren some of my grace brethren are quite convinced that it was with the stoning of Stephen and that was a catalyst some are convinced that it was later on with the calling of the apostle Paul that was a catalyst also some are convinced that it wasn't until the end of the book of Acts with the destruction of

Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD and that was the final I don't know exactly when it was I just know there was such a time and God knows it but what Joe I'm just going to say there's a good argument for when it was Stephen because they already rejected God and now they had rejected Jesus because they crucified him and rejected him and now if you read the part about Stephen it was the spirit now they had rejected the spirit that third part of the triune God so man that's it that's total God three strikes and you're out exactly that's entirely possible I'm not disputing that I'm simply saying I just don't know so we've got two different programs going at the same time and boy that's confusing because you've got when the apostle Paul comes on the scene he has been raised up of God to deliver a message primarily to the

Gentiles he's the apostle to the Gentiles well the Gentiles didn't have an apostle the Jews had twelve Gentiles didn't have any now Paul is going to be the single apostle to the Gentiles and he's also going to preach to the Jews so what we've got is a message that Paul is preaching and do you think that Peter and the twelve apostles have scrapped the kingdom message and that they're now going to preach the gospel of the grace of God no they continue preaching that kingdom message and you've got Paul preaching the gospel of the grace of God and you've got Peter and the twelve and this by the way is spelled out as clearly as as they acknowledged the legitimacy of his call and he was to call to the

Gentiles and they or to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the Jews. And the time is coming when that message will not be in vogue any longer.

[36 : 58] That will be set aside because the kingdom has been set aside temporarily. And what is in place now is the gospel of the grace of God. And the message is not repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The message is Jesus Christ died for your sin. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. The message is not to a nation.

It's to individuals. It's an individual decision that a single person makes when they come to faith in Christ. But the message for Israel was the kingdom and it's an entirely different thing.

Jesus, before he ascended, right before he ascended, he told them to do that to teach the kingdom gospel. Right. And he told them to keep following the law too.

Right. And he also told them that they would have the power to work the miracles that he had been working. So that's all kingdom stuff. And it was designed to convince Israel that Jesus was their Messiah.

[38 : 01] And all they could focus on was the promise of the Messiah's second coming. They overlooked his first coming.

And they thought, where is the power and the great glory? Where is the defeat of the Romans? Where is the establishment of this glorious throne? All Jesus is doing is walking about, spouting off these parables and healing a bunch of sick people.

That doesn't look like the Messiah to me. And they rejected him on that basis. So they confused the second coming and the first coming. They got hung up on that. And of course it led them astray.

And he would have come back if they would have, after the cross, he would have come back soon.

And they all expected him to come right back. But they would not believe. They didn't. And as a result, the whole kingdom program, where Israel is to become the head and not the tail, where as Jesus promised, when the disciples asked him, you know, in that same text there, and I think it's in, I think it's in Matthew 19, I'm not sure about that, about the rich young ruler.

And Jesus told them, told the rich young ruler, sell everything he had, come follow me. And he went away sad.

[39 : 22] And then Peter, Peter turns to Jesus. And they've heard this whole conversation. They've heard all of this, Jesus talking to the rich young ruler. And Peter turns to Jesus and says, well, we did that.

We did that. We left our families. We left our fishing business. We left the boats. We left the nets. We left all that stuff. And we've thrown in our lot to follow you. What's the payoff?

Legitimate question. Peter asked, what are we going to get out of this? What's the pay? Twelve thrones. And Jesus said, verily I say unto you, that you who have followed me, and he's talking about then and there, their earthly following, back at that time, before the cross, you who have followed me in the regeneration.

What's that mean? Regenerate means to make new, to make over again. What's going to be made over? The earth. The planet.

That will be the kingdom come. Thy kingdom come. So that thy will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And fellas, as I've told you before, this is not it.

[40 : 46] This is not the kingdom. This is not even close. And Jesus said, you who have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on his throne, you also will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

You would be amazed how many people believe. That's now. Oh, it isn't literal.

It's figurative. Well, what does that mean? And would they have ever taken that to mean anything other than literal?

Peter's thinking, wow, I'm going to sit on a literal throne as a literal judge, judging the twelve tribes? He wasn't thinking of some kind of spiritual fulfillment.

And what in the world would that be? And how would you describe it? Fellas, when you get removed from the literal meaning, the interpretation is at your mercy.

[41 : 58] It's whatever your imagination will allow. And you take six people and they'll come up with six different answers. But when you take it literally as it was intended, as they took it, as they intended it, it makes perfect sense.

The time is coming when there are going to be twelve literal thrones. And these, these same guys are going to be resurrected.

David the king is going to be resurrected. And he is going to judge Israel. And we, if we die before the Lord comes, we're going to be resurrected.

We're going to be a part of this. I don't know exactly how Gentiles are going to figure into it, but I do know everybody's going to have a responsibility and there won't be any complaints. And it's going to be wonderful.

So what we're talking about here is something that has to be kept in context. This man began to build and he talks about the war and etc. And this is all kingdom stuff.

[43 : 01] And all he's saying is count the cost. And then we've got, how are we doing on time here? Okay, let's, let's jump into this if we can just a little bit. In the Pharisees and the scribes, murmur against Jesus for receiving sinners.

That they, they, they, they got in their jabs of criticism anytime and every time they can. And when Jesus is kindly to sinners and publicans and so on, they took that as a perfect indication that there is no way that Jesus can be right in his values because look at who he's hanging out with. Birds of a feather flock together. And the fact that he is treating these people this way indicates that he's just like them. Therefore, he's worthy of rejection.

And we're told in Luke 15, The Pharisees and the scribes murmured saying, This man receives sinners and eats with him. Hmm.

And what's this going to, what's going to be his answer? He's going to give a parable. And this is a made up story that is designed to make a point.

[44 : 22] And he said, What man of you, having a hundred sheep and having lost one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he finds it.

What's he saying here? What's he saying? He's saying that these, these individuals, these sinners that you're criticizing, they are representing that one lost sheep.

What Jesus is doing is something that the scribes and the Pharisees refused to do. Jesus was assigning value to the individual.

That's a really important point. And it's going to be borne out in the one lost sheep that is found, and in the one lost coin that is found, and in the one lost son that is found.

All of these illustrate one and the same thing. The value of the individual is not to be discounted. What? And all that sheep that he left there, the group, were lost and didn't know it.

[45 : 32] Right. That's an important point to make. They were lost and didn't know it. That's an important point. And he's going to talk about repentance, and he said, There's joy in heaven among the angels over one sinner that repents, as opposed to ninety and nine that need no repentance. And he's not saying that they don't need repentance. That's not what he's saying at all. He's saying that in their eyes, in their eyes, they consider themselves beyond the need for repentance. Amen.