

**There is a Cost**  
**Pastor Paul O'Neil**  
**Mark 8:31-38**

**HUMC, February 28, 2021**

In his book, *Turning Point*, Glen Plashin wrote about the time he was a senior in college during the time of the Great Depression. Money was tight and his family could not secure any loans to pay for his college tuition which was back then, \$20 a semester.

But the day before college was to begin, a big truck backed up into the driveway and two men got out and laid down some pine boards. There was one thing that Glenn's mother had loved more than anything else and that was her wooden upright Gulbranson piano. What the two men did was roll the piano out of the house and onto the truck and handed the mother thirty-five dollars.

As the truck drove away, his father threw his arms around his wife as she wept. Then the father handed Glen the money and said, "Son, you can go back to college tomorrow." Your mother sold her piano".

When Glenn received the money, he immediately thought. "So, this is what God's love is like when he gave his most precious possession, His son". Glenn's mom also made an important sacrifice, Glenn made the spiritual connection.

My text this morning is a hard one. It is about the demands of discipleship where we are encouraged to die-to-self and take a stand for the gospel.

My text is Mark 8:31-39.

**<sup>31</sup> He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief**

**priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.**

**<sup>33</sup> But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."**

**<sup>34</sup> Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save their life<sup>[a]</sup> will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup> What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? <sup>37</sup> Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? <sup>38</sup> If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels." This is the Word of God.**

In Biblical times, the cross was a well-known method of capital punishment. Most people back then had seen someone crucified and the Roman considered this to be important in keeping law and order. So, when Jesus told his followers "To take up their cross," he meant it to be a sign of Christian discipleship.

It is almost like we lose our life for something better. Or we choose the intangible over the tangible, the spiritual over the physical or the invisible over the visible.

When we take up our cross, it is more than wearing a wooden, silver or gold cross around our neck to show what religious faith we belong to. But the cross is a declaration that we are a disciple who will share in Christ's life and teachings both in the good times and in the bad.

German Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was executed by the Nazi's just three weeks before WWII ended once said, **"Salvation is free, but discipleship costs everything we have"**.

General Booth, **founder of the Salvation Army once said, "I told the Lord that he could have all that there is of William Booth."**

Several weeks ago, I finished reading the book called **Hearts of Fire**. I would say this is the most important Christian book outside of the Bible that I have read in recent years.

It is about eight contemporary women in the underground church and their stories of costly faith. These women are: Adel from Indonesia; Purnima from Bhutan; Aida from Russia; Sabina from Romania; Tara from Pakistan; Ling from China; Gladys from India; and Mai from Viet Nam.

Reading this book made me realize that I am fortunate to live in the United States where I can go to church without being followed or arrested. I don't have to worry about torture, loss of job, or betrayal if I read my Bible or talk to others about my faith. Nor will I have to undergo show trials, lengthy prison sentences or execution if I give away a Bible or pray publicly with someone else.

I hope this will never happen in this country but this could change. In our American culture we are beginning to see censorship in social media in terms of the "cancel culture" and the "woke" madness. I just read on Saturday, that the Hyatt Hotel chain is being criticized for providing convention space for the CPAC, Conservative Party Action Committee as just the latest example of political correctness.

Traditional and biblical values in many parts of the country are now considered hate speech and if this continues along with other religious restrictions due to COVID-19, things could get worse.

Jesus said whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for me and the gospel will save it.

If you have not heard, Pastor James Coates of the Graceland Church in Alberta, Canada is being held in solitary confinement in a maximum-security prison in Edmonton for a repeated church COVID-19 violation where he was followed his conscience and tried to keep the church open.

Think of it 23 hours of solitary confinement, maximum security over a civil disobedience issue. A bit extreme! Pastor Coates was arrested on Feb 14 and he hasn't had a trial yet.

This story has similarities to what these eight women in the Hearts of Fire book experienced. And it makes you wonder how far it will go. If this happened in Canada, what is to stop it from coming over to the United States. But as Christian believers, we need to be prepared to follow the Lord with all our hearts, souls and minds.

When I think of the 12 apostles, the image of DaVinci's Last Supper comes to mind where they all sat with Jesus around a long table. Then there are pictures of the individual apostles in stain glass windows depicted in various acts of ministry. But they too counted the cost and look what happened to them.

**Andrew** was crucified on an X shaped cross.

**Bartholomew** was tortured to death.

**James the son of Alphaeus** was thrown off the roof of the temple.

**James the son of Zebedee** was beheaded at Jerusalem.

**John** was banished to the island of Patmos.

**Jude** was shot to death by arrows.

**Matthew** was speared to death.

**Philip and Peter** were crucified upside down.

**Simon** was crucified in the upright position.

**Thomas** was speared to death.

**Matthias** was stoned.

Earlier in our musical call to worship, we played the hymn, **I Have Decided to Follow Jesus**. Let me read to you're the lyrics.

I have decided to follow Jesus;  
I have decided to follow Jesus;  
I have decided to follow Jesus;  
No turning back, no turning back.

2. Tho' none go with me, I still will follow,  
Tho' none go with me I still will follow,  
Tho' none go with me, I still will follow;  
No turning back, no turning back.

3. The world behind me, the cross before me,  
The world behind me, the cross before me;  
The world behind me, the cross before me;  
No turning back, no turning back.

The cross of discipleship can be difficult. For me, there are times I would rather have the freedom to do my thing, in my own time and my own way, but to truly follow Christ, it is surrendering our lives to him. Just as General Booth Dietrich Bonhoeffer discovered.

There is a well-known hymn, **Trust and Obey** that speaks of discipleship and the chorus tells what happens when we take up our cross: **Trust and Obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus is to Trust and Obey.**

Let me close. It is a paradox that we experience fulfillment and joy when we follow Christ through self-denial and hardship.

At the same time, I do enjoy the religious freedom that our country provides and I hope we never lose them. But if the time were to come where we have to take a stand, may we do so with conviction. Meanwhile I would encourage us all to take the opportunity to grow your faith, pray for the persecuted church and thank God for the freedoms we do experience.