

Packing for the Right Expedition

Luke 14:25-33

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When you go on a trip and begin making your packing list, most likely you begin by checking the weather in the place you will be visiting. You want to ensure that you are packing for the climate you will be entering. Jesus wanted to make sure His disciples understood the climate where they were going on their way to Jerusalem. He knew that many of His followers were expecting a hero's welcome and a coronation, but He also knew the reality would be quite different. And so, He challenged His disciples to earnestly and soberly count the cost of following Him.

In his commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Kent Hughes wrote that the Franklin expedition to find the northwest passage from the Arctic to the Pacific Ocean was doomed from the outset—and here's why—because they prepared for the journey according to weather conditions inside the Royal Navy officer's club in England rather than the harsh realities of the frozen Arctic region.

No one knew what lay ahead. Franklin's expedition didn't seem to have any data or even awareness of the severe weather conditions there in the ice jammed waters off north Alaska.

They had not packed any special clothing for the Arctic region beyond their military uniforms, thin topcoats, gloves, and silk scarves.

They ate off China place settings for offices and men, cut-glass wine goblets, and ornate Victorian silverware with the initials of the officers engraved in their own personal settings.

History records that in 1845, Sir John Franklin and 138 officers set sail in two ships, expecting to find the passageway within a year or two.

The ships set off amid enormous fanfare and press and personal prestige and glory. Two months later, a whaling boat captain met them in Lancaster Sound and reported back to England on the high spirits of officers and men.

That whaling captain would be the last European to see any of them alive. None in the expedition survived.

Several years later, search parties would eventually spend 12 years retracing the path of the Franklin expedition and piecing together the puzzle.

Native Eskimos provided many of the pieces to this puzzle.

The expedition had been stalled by freezing water. They reported seeing a group of men pushing a wooden lifeboat across the ice. Eskimos had discovered a place now named Starvation Cove, where the remains of thirty-five men were found; they had evidently been seen dragging one of the lifeboats for several days, expecting to find an open water channel.

Eventually, members of one search party saw the haunting sight at Simpson Strait: three wooden masts sticking up through the ice.

Perhaps the most tragic discovery was the fact that neither ship had stocked any coal. Each ship had turned their huge coal storerooms into a lounge filled with a 1,200-volume library, an organ, and extra cupboards for China settings and silver.

R. Kent Hughes, [Luke: Volume Two](#) (Crossway Books, 1998), p. 123

Every member of this expedition, including their leader, Sir John Franklin, was confident in their expectations, but they were not prepared for the challenges of what lay ahead.

If you were to compare walking with Christ to an expedition, what is it that you're expecting along the journey?

Jesus said, "I came not to grant peace on earth but division; members in your family will be divided, father against son, and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother; mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law" (**Luke 12:51-53**).

Hebrews 11 records that many believers endured cruel mocking and martyrdom.

Believers were promised persecution for the gospel's sake (**Galatians 6:12**).

The apostle Paul promised suffering for the godly believer in Christ Jesus (**2 Timothy 3:12**).

He wrote in **1 Corinthians 4:11-13**, "***We are reviled . . . we are persecuted . . . we are slandered . . . we are roughly treated . . . we are like the scum of the earth.***"

Are we expecting this?

At this particular point in Jesus' public ministry, He is on His way to Jerusalem; He's less than four months away from His crucifixion.

But because of His amazing miracles—feeding the multitudes, raising the dead, healing the sick, setting the Pharisees straight, promising a kingdom— He's obviously qualified to be the Messiah and the crowds are only growing larger.

Bruce B. Barton, [Life Application Bible: Luke](#) (Tyndale Publishing, 1997), p. 361

They assume He's on His way to Jerusalem to be crowned; He will be, but not with gold—with thorns.

But at this point, the multitude thinks the trip to Jerusalem is a parade and everybody loves a parade. But this parade won't end with a 21-gun salute and the bands playing, "Hail to the Chief."

David E. Garland, [Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke](#) (Zondervan, 2011), p. 600

That's what they're expecting: cool breezes and lots of lounging in the library; so, they've packed their topcoats and silk scarves, so to speak, for this expedition.

But Jesus is not a salesman. He isn't selling tickets by "promising benefits and wonderful experiences.

Barton, p. 361

This is not a parade and Jesus isn't interested in bigger crowds.

He doesn't want numbers, He wants disciples.

Darrell L. Bock, [Baker Exegetical Commentary: Luke, Volume 2](#) (Baker Academic, 1996), p. 338

So, once again, here in ***Luke's Gospel***, the Lord is going to stop and clarify the danger and the difficulty ahead for the people if they do indeed dare to follow Him to Jerusalem as one of His disciples.

If I could paraphrase what Jesus tells this multitude of would-be followers—and boil it down to four phrases—the first would be this:

Arrange your love life in order of priority.

We're now at Luke 14, and verse 25:

Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."

Luke 14:25-26

This is quite a dramatic statement. And it seems to contradict other messages where the Lord tells us:

- to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43);
- and to honor our parents (Ephesians 6:2);
- we're to love our children (Titus 2:4);
- and to love our wives as our own bodies (Ephesians 5:28); which implies that we love them and ourselves as well.

But Jesus here says that we must hate them all if we want to be His disciples.

In our world today, the word “hate” refers to hostility and aversion and dislike. But in the literature of the ancient Near Eastern world, hate was word that often referred to priorities.

Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Luke* (Zondervan, 2012), p. 373

For instance, Esau hated his birthright and sold it to Jacob for a bowl of lentil soup (**Genesis 25:34**). Esau didn't have an aversion to—he didn't loath—his birthright, he just didn't care about it, it wasn't as important as his hunger was that evening and so he traded it for a bowl of lentil soup.

You must be hungry to trade anything for lentil soup!

But here's the point: his hatred simply meant he was willing to set it aside for something else.

That's the idea in **Romans 9** where we're told that God loved Jacob and hated Esau. That's not a statement of emotion but determination.

Adapted from J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Zondervan, 1981), p. 332

God determined that Jacob would be His priority in carrying out the Abrahamic covenant.

So, what's Jesus saying here? Tear up your Christmas gift list and stop calling your parents? No; He's saying this: all other relationships are lower on the priority list as Jesus takes first place.

He's saying that all other loves in your life, and they may be legitimate loves in your life, but all other loves are overruled and superseded by your love for Christ.

Adapted from Hughes, p. 125

There's a manufacturer in the church who always comes in second in the bidding process with another larger competing company. Suddenly he receives a contract in the mail for a huge order that will set his company on the fast track to another level. But there's a deadline attached to the contract. And he knows he'll not be able meet that deadline. He could sign the contract and then come up with excuses later on; but he knows they would be lies. And so, he writes the client a letter explaining that because he's a Christian, he can't honestly promise to meet that deadline. The business is given to his competitor once again.

He has effectively declared that his love for Christ is greater than his love for money.

There's a parent in church and they make it clear that the staff and ministries of the church should be designed to teach and disciple their sons and daughters. The youth ministries much be excellent and exciting, camping in the summer, retreats in the winter, discipleship groups on the weekends; it's critical that their child be around other godly adult volunteers so they can learn to love Jesus—and the church couldn't agree more. But then that child is invited to join a traveling sports team which will occupy most afternoons and weekends over several years.

Whether they realize it or not, they have just declared their love for their child's athletic development to be greater than their spiritual development.

There's a single woman in the church, wanting to be married, wanting to give her love to a husband and children, and she falls in love with a man. But after dating for some time, she begins to wonder if his love for Christ is as important as hers; yes, he picks her up for church; he says he believes in God; he has his own copy of the Bible; he volunteers to say the blessing before meals, but as time goes along, she begins to sense that his possessions, his career, his hobbies occupy much of his time; his conversations are never about the Lord; his interest in the church is basic at best. But then he proposes. Her cherished hopes of marriage and a home and family are at stake.

Although it crushes her dreams and breaks her heart, she says no. She has declared her love life is based on the priority of Jesus first.

You want to be a committed disciple of Christ? Then arrange your love life in order of priority and make sure Jesus is at the top of the list.

The second principle could be stated this way:

Accept the ridicule and rejection of the world.

Verse 27:

“Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”

Luke 14:27

By the way, the phrase here “**come after me**” literally expresses the idea of getting in line behind someone.

Swindoll, p. 374

This multitude is following Jesus on His way to Jerusalem, and they think they’re in a parade; Jesus knows it’s a death march; it’s going to take Him to Golgotha.

It will involve ridicule and mockery and rejection.

What’s your expectation as His disciple? Silk scarves and soft breezes?

Jesus says—quite literally—if you want to follow Me, get in line, and expect to be handed your own cross.

Be careful that you don’t make this passage a list of requirements for salvation, as some have. And without meaning to, they’ve made salvation a matter of justification by faith plus works.

Jesus is not giving us a prerequisite to our salvation; He’s describing our expectation for those who walk with Him.

As Warren Wiersbe wrote so insightfully on the words of Jesus as He said the same thing in Luke chapter 9; “This is not about sonship, this is about discipleship.”

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate: Luke 1-13* (Victor Books, 1989) p. 103

This is what to expect if you follow Christ as a faithful disciple on His expedition to Calvary.

Now Jesus is making a statement that His generation would immediately understand and ours wouldn’t.

The cross represented the most humiliating death in early Rome. It was the death no one wanted to die. The cross was not only the tree of torture, but the symbol of shame.

It was the ultimate humiliating subjugation of a person to the Roman empire.

Taking up your cross in the first century would have been the most dramatic way of announcing that your life was not your own, that you were no longer in charge of your own destiny.

You can imagine people in Jesus' day hearing this and being completely offended—scandalized. They were following the Messiah; they were expecting a kingdom, not a crucifixion.

Jesus isn't handing out crowns, He's handing out crosses, as it were; we are invited to get in line behind Him to declare that we are no longer in charge of our destiny; we are now subjugated by His empire; we are willing to endure anything for Him.

You say, "Nobody that's fanatical about something they want to do, to risk their lives!"

I was watching a documentary about an annual marathon through the Sahara Desert. Hundreds of people show up. Windstorms, scorching heat, grueling miles over the several days. There are markers along the way, but they can be blown over by a sand storm; runners can get lost as they often run alone. Each runner must fill out a form before the competition begins, and they must answer this question—get this: "If you die during the competition, where do you want us to send the corpse?"

And by the way, none of the Lord's closest disciples followed through with their commitment, they all abandoned Him, except John who showed up with Mary and some other women at the cross.

Later, after the Lord's resurrection, this band of disciples regathered around Him. They didn't have to get saved again—they were truly His disciples, but it's possible to be an unfaithful disciple.

It must have been humbling as they recommitted to Him, knowing what He'd gone through without them.

I think of John Mark, a passionate disciple of Christ, so much so that the early church identified him as the perfect missionary companion for none other than Paul and Barnabas.

These three men took off on a missionary journey, but somewhere along the way, Mark grew disillusioned and discouraged; it wasn't what he expected, it was harder than he thought it would be; the Apostle Paul described that expedition later as including beatings, reviling, hunger, and thirst.

Mark evidently thought it would be mostly blessings; he hadn't packed his suitcase for blizzards. And so he quit and went home. Paul described it in Acts 13:13 as desertion. "Mark deserted us!"

Later, Mark evidently apologized and wanted to sign up again. Barnabas said "Yes, let's take him." But Paul said, "Over my dead body"—that's in the Greek language.

Paul and Barnabas so strongly disagreed about Mark that they split up. Paul took Silas and Barnabas took Mark and they sailed away in different directions.

Mark didn't have to get saved again to go with Barnabas, but he had much to learn from his failure as a disciple and later, God, in His grace, would use him to write the Gospel of Mark.

Now the Lord goes on here with two illustrations and a third principle of what it means to be a faithful disciple of Christ:

Anticipate the cost of your commitment.

Verse 28:

“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.”

Luke 14:28-32

The repeated phrase here is **“first sit down.”**

This phrase refers to someone deliberating and tallying the cost, sitting down and taking stock before rising to meet the challenge.

Garland, p. 602

Being a disciple of Jesus isn't so much about emotion as it is about reasonable calculation.

Sit down and think—think it through—what does it mean today to follow Christ.

And by the way, this isn't something you think through as you *begin* your walk with Christ, but *all along* your walk with Christ.

And that's because the cost for following Him might mean one thing today and another thing tomorrow.

So, you are prayerfully, carefully anticipating the cost.

Finally, this fourth declaration is this, in principle form:

Assume your expectations will change along the journey.

Verse 33:

“So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”

Luke 14:33

The word **therefore** goes back and basically summarizes everything Jesus has already said in this encounter.

Adapted from Dale Ralph Davis, [Luke, Volume 2](#) (Christian Focus, 2021), p. 27

Therefore, be prepared to renounce everything.

The word here for renounce is the word used often in the New Testament for farewell or saying goodbye.

Garland, p. 603

This summarizes the issue again, of priorities:

- that Jesus matters more than any other relationship;
- more than the approval and acceptance of others;
- more than any other enterprise;
- more than any desire or expectation along the way.

Simply put, nothing matters more than belonging to and walking with the Lord.

Adapted from Davis, p. 27

For twenty years, search parties combed the frozen sea where Sir John Franklin and his 138 men perished. The search parties arrived this time, prepared for blizzards and snow and ice.

They would piece together what happened; they found one tent at what would be called Terror Bay, and inside were 30 frozen bodies still dressed in their uniforms; in their pockets were chocolates and tea.

Another group of frozen bodies was found, the officers huddled together. Inside the jacket of one officer was his set of silverware, engraved with his initials, he evidently couldn't leave it behind.

Many miles south, another person was discovered, he came to represent this ill-planned, tragic expedition. One author described the scene: He was lying there, frozen in time, in uniform; trousers and jacket of fine blue cloth, edged with detailed embroidery; sleeves with five covered buttons each. Over his uniform, he had on his blue topcoat and his black silk scarf was still neatly in place.

They had packed for the wrong expedition.

For these disciples on expedition to Jerusalem—and for us to this day as we effectively head to Jerusalem as well—here’s the reality check on our expectations.

Let’s honestly arrange our relationships in order of priority.

Let’s humbly accept the rejection and ridicule of the world.

Let’s carefully anticipate the cost of your commitments.

And when it’s all said and done, let’s be prepared to bid farewell to anything that matters more than Jesus.

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