

Have you counted the cost of rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ?

Sermon by Pastor Diane J. Perkins - May 6, 2018

Sometimes I sit and ponder concerning the dramatic changes that have taken place in our society, our communities, our government and our homes in the last 50 years. As a child, the majority of people believed in marriage between a man and a woman, people married and living together outside of marriage was considered taboo. The Bible was respected even if people didn't read it, and everyone that I was acquainted with believed in God whether it was in our schools, home, or churches. The Bible was read every day in classes, the Lord's Prayer was said, and we were proud of our country's leaders and our country. We were taught about the Pilgrims coming to America seeking freedom to worship God and Christmas always was celebrated with songs of faith. Church attendance was encouraged as a way of life that brought happiness, joy and hope.

It amazes me now the many people that we come in contact with who have no knowledge about the Bible or Jesus Christ. Today I am going to share the basics of Christianity.

Proverbs 13:13-22 speaks about the path of the sinner versus the outcome of those who trust in God. "He who scorns instruction will pay for it, but he who respects a command will be rewarded. The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death. Good understanding wins favor, but the way of the unfaithful is hard. Every prudent man acts out of knowledge, but a fool exposes his folly. A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a trustworthy envoy brings healing. He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is honored. A longing fulfilled is sweet to the soul, but fools detest turning from evil. He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. Misfortune pursues the sinner, but prosperity is the reward of the righteous. God promises that a good man will have an inheritance to leave to his children's children, but a sinner's wealth will be stored up for the righteous."

All through the Bible God's message is clear. Those who love God's commandments and build a relationship with our creator will receive blessings in this life and in eternity will receive everlasting life. Those who rebel against him and follow after Satan will reap thorns, thistles, sorrow and death. John 8:32-36 tells us that if we do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God, we will die in our sins. We will know the truth and the truth will set us free. Those who believe and follow Christ's teachings are his disciples. He asked the question, "How can you say that you love me, yet you don't obey my commands?"

That is a very thought provoking question. Do we honor God with our lips yet our heart is far from him? Are we thankful for the power of God that will set us free from the bondage of Satan or do we cling to ungodly habits that can bind us to this earth? Are you hungering and thirsting after righteousness or are you content to just nibble on crumbs that fall from the master's table. He has invited us to feast on the bountiful spread that he places before us, but many try to juggle the world on the one hand and eat from God's

hand on the other. No man can serve two masters. We must choose who we will serve and give the best that we have to the master of our choice. God is a jealous God and he will not allow us to worship idols (things that we place before him).

In John 3, a man named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came by night to ask Jesus some questions about eternal life. He recognized that Jesus had been sent by God because no one could do the miracles that he did if God was not with him. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." The ruler asked "how can that happen; could a person enter into his mother's womb a second time to be born again?" Jesus didn't ridicule him for his ignorance of spiritual matters. He clarified it by saying that every person needs to be born both naturally and also born of the spirit." What does that entail? First we agree with God's word that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. Some people find it hard to admit that they are sinners. They look at the good things that they do and they expect that God will accept them on their own merits. Not so! We have all broken the Commandments of God and if we break one, we are guilty of breaking them all. The only person who could live the Commandments completely was Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Romans 3:23. We must confess our sins. 1 John 1:9 says that if we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light we will have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 1 John 1:6-8.

To Nicodemus, Jesus revealed the depth of his Father's love. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God's love compelled him to come to this earth to destroy Satan's schemes and dominion over God's creation. It was revealed in Genesis 3:15. Satan would bruise the Messiah's heel, but in the process his head would be crushed.

Those who refuse this wonderful gift of salvation will not have peace in their hearts.

The result of rejecting this offer of redemption results in being a slave to Satan and these people will believe a lie and be damned. 2 Thessalonians 2:11 gives us a glimpse of what will happen to those who refuse to believe the truth of God to receive salvation. Satan will at some point be able to display counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders and in every sort of evil that deceives those that are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and be saved. For this reason, God will send them a powerful delusion and they will believe the lie and be condemned. All will be condemned who have not believed truth but have delighted in wickedness.

Over and over again, Jesus used the words, "I tell you the truth!" He is called the Bread of Life, the Prince of Peace, the Everlasting Father, the door, the way, the life, Almighty God, Rose of Sharon, Great I AM, the Lamb of God, the light of the world, and the most wonder of it all is that loves us and wants us to be with Him forever!

To those who came to Him bowed down with sin and sorrow, He delivered and gave them a clean slate! There are so many wonderful stories of his delivering power that we can all have hope for He stands ready to do the same for us.

If you read John chapter 7, you will find that there were arguments concerning the carpenter of Galilee who was claiming to be the Son of God. The Jewish leaders didn't accept him and they tried to trick him and debate with him for the sole purpose of discrediting him, but they never succeeded. Some called him a deceiver, some even said he did miracles through the power of the prince of Satan. The leaders sent guards to bring Jesus in to be questioned and when they came back empty handed they asked them "Why didn't you bring him in?" They answered, "No one ever spoke the way this man does!" The Pharisees retorted, "Oh, you mean he has deceived you also?" There were many who believed that Jesus was the Christ for the common man heard him gladly. After this, Jesus went into the Mount of Olives and the next day he went to the temple courts and sat down and taught the people. The people gathered around him and listened as he preached to them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery and made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "This woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they continued to question him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She answered, "No one, sir." Jesus declared, "Then neither do I condemn you; Go and leave your life of sin." Jesus offers the same to all who come to him, forgiveness rather than condemnation. He commands us to leave our sinful life and follow him.

I love the story found in Mark 2:1. Jesus entered Capernaum and began to teach the people in a house. People were packed in like sardines and there was no way that this group squeeze in. People were crowded around the outside doorway in order to hear Jesus sermons as he preached to them. Four men arrived carrying their friend on a cot for he was paralyzed. They were disappointed when they saw the crowd for they realized that they could not get to Jesus to heal their friend. They were determined so they climbed up on the roof and pulled up shingles and opened the roof enough so they could lower the man down through the roof. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." The teachers of the Law that were in attendance questioned, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God only?" (Having your sins forgiven is more important than having your body healed). Jesus, knowing their thoughts answered them, "Why are you thinking these

things? Which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven or to say Get up, take up your bed and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins," he said to the man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." The man stood up and took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed all and they praised God saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

Nothing is impossible with God. The book of Acts says that he is not far from any one of us. Have you talked to God this morning? Have you brought your concerns, your burdens, your praise and honor, to the King of Glory? He is worthy of honor and praise!

If you are tired of the load of care that burdens you down, let Jesus come into your heart. If you desire to have peace, joy, gentleness, kindness, love, self-control and meekness, invite him to come into your heart. He will give you a clean slate; he will give you a new heart and renew a right spirit within you. Make Jesus the Lord of your life.

There is a beautiful song that says "open your hearts door to him right now and don't reject him any longer. Let Jesus come into your heart".

Never take your salvation for granted for it is a miracle that is the greatest of all times. To be forgiven, to be a new creature, to be adopted into the family of God is an amazing, amazing work of grace, mercy and love beyond words.

He didn't choose to come as an angel. He didn't come to earth as a king with a palace and worldly wealth. He came as a lowly baby given to a lowly carpenter and entrusted to a young virgin girl to nurse and care for. The Bible says that he was not handsome to look upon and when the time came, he chose men of low degree, fishermen and tax collectors for his disciples. None had credentials for expertise in the Religious Laws. Mary, his mother, praised God with these words after the angel had given her the message that she would give birth to the Son of God who would take away the sins of the world.

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me-Holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him from generation to generation." She went on to relate how God brings down the proud and haughty and elevates the humble and those who place their trust in him. None of us are worthy of his blessing that he bestows on us. That is mercy! Mary said, "He fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty."

"Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled". I urge you to build a relationship with the Lord; forsake the world and its empty promises, for only God can satisfy your soul. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love him." 1 Corinthians 2:9. Following Christ does guarantee a life without trials and tribulations, but it does promise peace in your heart, joy in your soul and a hand to hold even as you approach the valley of the shadow of death to alleviate all fear and bring comfort to you. Jesus loves you!