

## Count The Cost!

Pastor Vijay Eathakota  
www.gracetabernaclehyd.org

*Father, we thank You, Father, for this morning. Father, we want to confess like Peter, 'Where shall we go? You and You alone have the words of life'. You said, Lord, "It is the Spirit which bring life, but the flesh profits nothing. And the word that You speak, they are spirit and they are life. I pray, Father, this morning, even as we meditate on Your word, O Lord, speak to our hearts. We want to hear from You. Father, impress, Lord, Your Word in the innermost parts and cause us to walk in Your ways. Write them on the tablets of our hearts. That's what You promised in the New Covenant. Father, the letter kills. Lord, it is the spirit which brings life. O Lord, I pray, Father, that You will take this word, anoint it, and impress in the deep most parts of our man; that we will change, O Lord, from the inside out. Not just merely external. O Father, to that end I pray, Lord, You would anoint the speaking and the hearing of this word, that You would grant us all, Father, the grace to concentrate and focus. O Lord, I bind every spirit of distraction in the Name of Jesus and release all of us to the glory of God. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

I've titled today's message as "Counting the Cost". We'll look at that today. If you were here last Sunday, we were talking about the two calls for every believer – that is "Come to Me," and "Come after Me." Just keep that in your mind even as we progress into today's sermon.

The Great Commission is to make disciples. "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe, to obey all the things I have commanded you and behold I am with you to the ends of the earth." This is the Great Commission. The Great Commission is not just mere making converts. No. The Great Commission is to make disciples and that's what Jesus was even as He grew up. It says in *Isaiah chapter 50*, 'The Sovereign Lord has given Me the tongue of the instructed, or a learned tongue.' The word in the Hebrew comes from the word 'limuth', which means to have a tongue of the disciple and He was Himself a disciple of God, of His Father. And He being a disciple of the Father says, "Just as the Father sent Me, I send you into the world. Just as the Father has sent Me and made me a disciple even as I grew up in His presence, I send you that you will make disciples of every nation." So, that is the call. And there is no plan B, by the way. It says in *Mark's Gospel chapter 16*, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, and he who does not believe shall be condemned." See! There is no plan B. There is absolutely no plan B. Sometimes, we have this wrong notion that, "I'm converted but discipleship is for this elect, this elite group of people." No. It's for everybody. The call is the call to discipleship, just not for mere converts. Therefore, we'll look at a very interesting passage in the New Testament. Keep in mind last Sunday's message— "Come after Me," and "Come unto Me". You'll see these two things and these two particular phrases coming together in a particular passage in the New Testament. I'm referring obviously to *Luke's Gospel 14:25-35*. We'll read first through the passage and then we'll meditate.

### Luke 14:25-35

<sup>25</sup> **Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them...**

Whenever multitudes come, He's never excited. Jesus is never interested in numbers. It doesn't mean that He doesn't want people to get saved. But that is not what He looks for. Great multitudes went with Him and most of them were this curious crowd, because He did quite a number of miracles. It says in *John's gospel chapter 2* that many of them believed in Him after they saw the signs that Jesus performed. But Jesus, on His part, did not entrust Himself to anybody, because He knew what was in every man. Just because you follow and you may be just curious, and Jesus is not looking to entertain people. This is a serious walk. This is what He's going to say,

<sup>25</sup> **Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them** <sup>26</sup> **"If anyone comes to Me** (You see that first part? We looked at that last time. That's the first call. Two calls.) **and does not hate** (Wow! It's a shock value! I mean, can you imagine the same God who says, love your enemies. Do good to those who persecute you. Same God says, "Does not hate,") **his father** (The closest of relationships) **and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot** (You'll see the word 'cannot' coming.) **be My disciple.** <sup>27</sup> **And whoever does not bear his cross and** (What?) **come after Me** (you see that? These two coming together? Come to Me and come after Me. So, coming after Him obviously involves taking up His cross.) **cannot be My disciple.** <sup>28</sup> **For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first**

***and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—<sup>29</sup> lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him,<sup>30</sup> saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish’?<sup>31</sup> Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?<sup>32</sup> Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.<sup>33</sup> So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all (What again? Cannot!) that he has cannot be My disciple.(you see that? The third cannot.)<sup>34</sup> “Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?<sup>35</sup> It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”***

That’s remarkable! It’s probably one of the most difficult passages to obey and if you look at the word ‘blessed’ in the New Testament, search for the word ‘blessed’, it’s very easy these days. You have search engines which help you do that. It occurs several times in *Matthew*. I think eighteen times and more than ten times in *Luke* and *Mark*. But when you come to the *Gospel according to John*, it occurs only twice, if I’m right. And the first time it occurs it says, “If you know these things, blessed are you if you (What is that? Anybody can complete that?) do them.” Blessing is not just hearing and knowing, blessing, true blessedness comes when you obey. Understand that. I just want to look at each of these aspects in some detail, not in great detail, to understand what does it mean to be a disciple.

*Luke 14*, let’s take a few verses at a time.

### **Luke 14:25-26**

***<sup>25</sup> Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them,<sup>26</sup> “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters,(Of course, we’ll come to them later.) yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.***

You might have read this word several times, but did you ever ask this question, “What does it mean to hate?” What does it mean to hate? It’s remarkable! Jesus never uses words without purpose. The same God who said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son,”; “I did not come to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved”; Jesus Christ is the God who died for your sin, not only your sin, but the sin of the whole world. The same God who said, “He’s the God of love,” uses the word ‘hate’. I mean, how do we understand this? I was trying to understand, “Lord, what does it mean to hate?” See, you need to understand, you might have had intuitive understanding when you read this – what does it mean to hate? We say, “Loving more, loving less.” Whatever. Whatever understanding you may be having. But we should understand it from Scripture. What does it mean to hate your father, your mother, your wife? One man of God when he was preaching from this sermon, he titled his sermon, “How to hate your wife”. (Laughs!) Shocking! And he just went on! So, if you men here want to hate your wife, almost sometimes, listen to this. You want to understand what hatred is and what God is talking about. What does He mean? I want to look it from Scripture. There is theory (doctrine) if you will, in the New Covenant and practically, things work out in the Old Testament. So, patterns are given in the Old Testament to see what hatred is.

You know the story of Jacob. Jacob is the man who fell in love. You remember the story of Jacob? Jacob is the first person in the Bible who experienced love at first sight. And he paid for it. It’s remarkable! The Bible is such a candid book! It does not whitewash anybody. It shows the flaws of the people involved just the way they are, except one man where you cannot even find a flaw. And that is who? Jesus Himself. Every other character including the greatest apostle, apostle Paul is flawed. So, you know the story of Jacob and when he falls in love. He goes to Laban and says, “I want to marry your daughter.” Laban says, “Work for me seven years.” And you remember the story, right? He says seven years and he works for seven years for Rachel. And because of the love for Rachel, it seemed to him just like few days. That’s remarkable! And then what happens? This guy meets his match. Jacob meets his match in Laban. And Laban is a very smart fellow. He understands, “My elder daughter is a little squint-eyed. Nobody is going to see her. How do I get her married?” So, he devises a plan. He gets Jacob drunk on the night of the wedding and Jacob has no idea what’s going on, because he’s absolutely drunk. He’s thinking, “I’m going to meet my love tonight.” So he meets somebody in the night. And Scripture is graphic and I like to read it from the KJV and KJV is kind of, it puts some funny notes in it. *Genesis 29:25-31*, of course, what does it mean to hate? Don’t forget the context. Why am I saying this? In which context am I saying this? *Genesis 29:25-31* in the King James Version.

**Genesis 29:25-31**

**<sup>25</sup> And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah...**

David Paulson! He puts it very graphically. It's very graphic! He says, "Just imagine." Okay. This guy, he gets up in the morning (He's yawning.) And he turns and two eyes are just looking at him. Jacob is looking at these two eyes, squint eyes. He gets up! Just imagine! He just wraps and he runs out of the tent. He runs to Laban and then, he uses the KJV language.

***...and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?*** (I want to do this play – two characters speaking in KJV. It didn't happen that way. That's the reason why I put that. It's sarcastic.)

**<sup>26</sup> And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.**

And Jacob did so. "Okay, so you want to take my other daughter as your wife? Seven more years Work for her and you'll have Rachel." He loved Rachel! Just because God allows it, doesn't mean He endorses it. You need to understand something. One of the greatest men in the Old Covenant which I'm sure everybody loves, a man of passion, passion! Passion for God! Who's that man? David. Absolutely passionate about God! Incredible passion! There was one mistake, one weakness in David. Clearly it says in the *Book of Deuteronomy 17*, to the kings, it says, "Don't multiply wives." But you'll see, David is taking one wife after the other and ultimately, that becomes his downfall. And that gets into the family. I think, if I'm right, he's got seventeen partners David has. And Solomon uses the principle of compound interest, and exponentially multiplies the number of wives. Think about it. Seven hundred wives! Three hundred concubines! I mean, even if he had to spend one night, how many, if he comes back in one round in periodic fashion, four years maybe, I don't know! "Oh! You're my wife! Hi!" See, just because He allowed doesn't mean He endorsed it. And you know what happened, the mess! It says in the *Book of Kings*, the women that he loved took his heart away from God, turned his heart away. And he loved other gods. That started off a domino effect on Israel and you have one king verse that the other. Of course, after the split. So, Jacob loves. Unfortunately, here, in this case, he's in the Old Covenant, we just give him a break. So, he says, "I love Rachel." He works for seven more years. And because of his love, again, seven more years seemed like one day.

**Genesis 29:28**

**<sup>28</sup> And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also.**

So, he got married again. And then, of course, trouble begins.

**Genesis 29:30-31**

**<sup>30</sup> And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah,**

Means, he's completely enamoured by this lady! "Rachel! Rachel! Rachel! Rachel!" I don't know. Bajana! (chant!) "Rachel! Rachel! Rachel!" I don't know. Possibly, just think about it. What does he mean? He's trying to look for opportunities even in his first marriage, to sneak out and spend more time with the second wife. He's completely dedicated. From his vantage point, he says, "I love Rachel more than I love Leah. Okay, I love Leah, but I don't love her as much as I love Rachel." But that is his vantage point.

***...and served with him yet seven other years.*** (Look at God's vantage point. This is interesting!)<sup>31</sup> ***And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated*** (The Lord saw that Leah was hated than Rachel), ***he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.***

You know what God is saying? "When I see every earthly relationship that you are involved in, when I compare it to My relationship, there are only two options, there is no more love and less love; it is either love or hate." That's the point. No, you will say, "Come on, Vijay. You are just extrapolating it. You are an engineer, right? You look at the equations and you extrapolating."

Let's see in another place, the word 'hate' in Hebrew is 'sânê'. Where does it occur again? Let's see in another place. This is in *Exodus chapter 20*, The Ten Commandments, and look at what it says.

**Exodus 20:3-5**

<sup>3</sup> *And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. (Okay, Thou shalt have no other gods before Me) <sup>4</sup> Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup> Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God,*

It's like jealous, meaning? It says in *Proverbs*, "Jealousy is a husband's fury." He doesn't like divided loyalties. Absolutely. "I want you for Myself. You are Mine. I bought you the price." That's what it says, "You are not your own. You are bought at a price. You are not your own. I purchased you. You are mine. I cannot tolerate divided loyalties. And look at what it says,

**Exodus 34:9**

<sup>9</sup> *visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. Of than that, hate me and showing mercy unto thousands than that love me and keep my commandments.*

First comes, what? Love comes first and then? You see the order, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments, and My commandments will not be burdens. It's because You love me so much, that you are absolutely loyal to Me."

I am just looking at our lives; I am sure it will happen at every one of our lives at different levels, but especially, if you come from a non-Christian background, the moment you follow the Lord, I mean, if you come from a Christian background, if your parents don't believe, they are not born again, the moment you accept the Lord as your Saviour, you see; remember that, in the last message, Pastor James was talking about, Thomas, called 'the doubting Thomas', in Scripture, it says, Thomas the twin (I don't know why that was used). Thomas says, "Unless I feel Him, I will not believe." And then, Jesus appears the second time, after eight days, and Thomas; And He comes and says, "Thomas, touch Me, Thomas. But touch Me, believing." When Thomas touches, he uses something very powerful, he says,

**John 20:28**

<sup>28</sup> *Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"*

It's powerful in the Greek, "Ho, kuios mou, Ho Theos mou."; it means "My Lord and my God." That means, he looks at Him and says "You are my God. You are my Master. I am Yours." And He says, "You saw Me and you believe Me. Blessed are those who do not see Me and yet, believe." And let me tell you something, the movement you genuinely believe, if you come from parents who do not believe, immediately, there is a strain in every relationship. Period! It's going to happen. Be prepared for that. Because they will not be able to understand. Even if they have a Christian background but are not born again, they will not understand.

Francis Schaeffer, he got converted when he was a teenager, and his father and mother are not believers, and even when he was growing up, he got a call, he felt the call of God, that he should go and serve God and he should go into the ministry. Therefore, he wanted to enrol himself into the seminary. His father didn't even want him to get educated but one day, the story is that, he applies for the college and he gets the admission, and after he gets the admission, there is a deadline which he needs to respond, that he accepted the admission. And his father says, "No, you can't do it. Either it is my will or your will", I mean, he says that it is very difficult for him, he immediately goes down to the basement and he breaks into tears. He says, "Lord, Lord, what should I do?" And this comes to his mind, "if any man doesn't hate his father, his mother, his wife, his children, you cannot be My disciple." Then, he goes up, prays and he looks up into his father's eye and says, "Dad, I love you. I respect you but I have to go. My God needs me." You know what happened later on? The father couldn't do anything, he left home; and after he left the home, few years later, I mean few decades later, his father got saved, and he told his son. He said, "You know what? If you had not been as decisive as you were on that day, where I felt that you hated me, and you loved your God if you should not show me that testimony, I would never become a believer."

You know many Christians are not radical and therefore, they become a stumbling block. They say, "You love your God, and if you really love your God, are you absolutely crazy about Him?" And because they are not crazy, one atheist said, (powerful statement) "I hate Christians who don't try to convert me." That's remarkable, isn't it? That's remarkable. It

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shows how divided our hearts are. We think that we can love God and we can also love the world. It's impossible. That's what it says in *2 Kings 17:33*, "They feared God and also worshiped their idols." But God says, "That is not done with Me."

So, what are the lessons I need to learn here? "No earthly relationship can take the place of God." if it does, if it really does, this is what you are saying; I mean, if you don't do that, only God can save, not man; if you actually give importance to earthly relationships more than God, you know what you are saying? "My father or mother or wife or children, they can save me and not God. They are my saviour. My pastor or servant of God can save me and not God." That's what you are saying! But they are not your saviour. That's what you are trying to say. You are saying, "These people died for my sin." That's what you are saying, they have replaced that person has become your saviour and that happens in our country, right? *Mathru devo bhava* (revere your mother as God). Sorry, you can be sentimental. *Pithru devo bhava* (revere your father as God), *Aacharya devo bhava* (revere your teacher as God) and some cases, *pathi devo bhava* (revere your husband as God); what is the meaning? He is my saviour! You are looking to this man, to save you, you what Paul says, Paul make some very fantastic statement, I want to show that to you, from the Scripture.

### **1 Corinthians 1:10-13**

**<sup>10</sup> Now I plead with you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing,** (oh boy, can you imagine a Church like that?) **that there is no divisions among you, but you perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement,** **<sup>11</sup> For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.**(there are contentions, there are divisions, there are fightings among you, why are they fighting?) **<sup>12</sup> Now this I say, that every one of you saith, "I'm with Paul," or "I'm with Apollos," or "I'm with Cephas," or "I'm with Christ."** **<sup>13</sup> Is Christ divided? Was it Paul who was crucified for you?...**

Now think about it; "I just want to listen to this preacher when he comes. Otherwise, I will just ignore." You know what you are doing or saying? You are not here to hear the voice of God, the person who is preaching is your saviour. You know, in many Churches, it happens. "Who is preaching today?" You know what you are doing? You are indirectly saying that you didn't go to the house of God to listen to God but man and that man is your saviour; he died for your sins. He was crucified for you. You were baptized in his name. That is what you are saying. And Paul goes onto saying, "I thank God that I did not baptize. Otherwise, you would have made me God."

If you come to Church prepared, I am telling you, I was in a mainline denomination several years and if you know mainline denomination, I am not judging anybody but I used to feel that the sermons were boring when I was growing up but you what happened after I got saved? When I was 18 years, I got saved. I would go and I would listen to the person everybody said was a boring preacher. I would listen to him and I would get convicted and would come back home weeping and God is my witness, I am not lying. You know why? I didn't go to the house of God to listen to man; I went to the house of God to listen to God. Think about it. That is the reason why real true discipleship would strain on every earthly relationship. He challenges it. It shows it what it is. For some people, their parents are more God. It's remarkable. How many young people are like that in India, especially boys? I don't know why.

The umbilical cord, right from childhood to all the way till teenage, twenties to thirties to fifties to sixties... "Munna, khaana kha liya? Kya banaya tumhare gharwali ne?" (Son, did you eat? What did your wife make?) Your wife and not my daughter-in-law; you see. It's remarkable; I told Shrikar one day when he asked, "Pastor, why it is like that?" and I told, "You know one of the job descriptions of a Pastor is to put on his gloves, take the surgical knife and cut of the umbilical cord." That is what they need to do because they are not released. That is what happened to Abraham, Terah (Terah means thirteen in Hindi language), for thirteen years. Literally, for thirteen years, he never heard the voice of God. He became a big stumbling block. You know what he is saying? "My dad is my saviour." For so many people. God is not their saviour; their parents are their saviour and most of them are stumbling blocks to them. You need to make that this year. You honour them and especially, it's a challenge for people who come from non-Christian backgrounds. I cannot empathize; meaning – I can sympathize with you but I cannot empathize with you because I did not go through the same experiences. For me, when I got saved my parents were so happy. They were very happy. "Thank God this guy somehow got saved." That was my parent's response but most of you are coming from different background and this is not the case. It's not the case. So, I sympathize with you. I am sure it's a battle for you but this year, you need to ask God, "God, if this is the year of destiny. Teach me to hate the way You want me to hate. Only when I hate, then I truly love them. Then, they will see this fire and say, 'what is this God?'" They will be driven to jealousy. It's like this; that is what He says, "You gentiles have to drive this

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unbelieving Jews to jealousy.” That is what He says. These people who are a part of this so called mainline congregation, they see the fire in you and say, “I thought I was worshipping the same God and look at this guy, what is this fire?” He should ask that question. There should be driven to jealousy. You know what that means? Think about it.

I have daughters in my home and they play with toys and the toys get old very fast. So, we give them a new tough toy. They keep and play with it. One day, two days, one week, two weeks and after that, they get bored with it and they throw it out. Suddenly, you know what happens? After two months, a friend comes home and they all want to play with toys and they will look at the toy that they threw away, “I want that.” Suddenly, Abigail will say, “How come? It's mine!” I am not kidding. I remember some time back, I have seen that in my home. I am their father. Abigail and Emmanuela, for those who don't know, they are my children. I learn a lot from them. I don't spend so much time putting them on my lap; not much but every now and then, if I put Siri on my lap suddenly, Emmanuela will come and later, Abigail will also come – twenty-five kilos! Something happens you see. That is what has to happen. That is what should happen. You love God so much; suddenly, “This God whom I despised; what is this about Him?” You will be driven to jealousy. That is what it means to be it.

Let's move on and learn a few more lessons. *Jeremiah 17:5*. Look at what He says,

### **Jeremiah 17:5-7**

<sup>5</sup> **Thus says the LORD: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength,** (Look at that, the moment you look to man as your savior what happens to your heart?) **Whose heart departs from the LORD.**

Lord does not see divided loyalties; He is very binary – 1 or 0. “Either you are completely with Me or you are zero with Me.” There is no middle ground.

**Whose heart departs from the LORD. <sup>6</sup> For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited.** (And the next verse) <sup>7</sup> **“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD.**

Understand that, saints. Many people are depressed. You know why? It's because your hope is not the Lord. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote a book called ‘Spiritual depression’ and in that book, there are twelve sermons precisely placed in a book and the thesis of the book is from one verse of *Psalms 42:5*,

### **Psalms 42:5**

<sup>5</sup> **Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?** (Or depressed/ discouraged) **Put your hope in God,**

What does it teach me? Why am I downcast? Why am I depressed? It's because my hope is not God. My hope is something else. My hope is this person, career, medal or whatever your hope is.

I was just doing a statistic of how many medals India won in all its Olympic appearances till 2016. Any guesses? I will give you a range: less than 20, 10 or 30) Come on! Hrishi is absolutely killer; he says, “It's less than 10.” No, he is wrong. Come on, guys. 34? But not even 34; it's 28. Till 2016, the total number of medals including gold, silver and bronze and they won gold only in hockey during those days when there was no AstroTurf; remember, only those days. Including gold, silver and bronze, there are 28 medals. 1.3 billion people is equal to? You know who is the most celebrated Olympian or the most decorated Olympian? Michael Phelps – 21 gold medals. It's remarkable, this guy is a machine. You know what he used to do during those days? During the Olympic Games, when I used to watch like anything, he was asked what his diet was. He said, “I eat, I swim.” That is what he used to do. That is his routine “I eat, I swim.” I eat, I swim is equal to 21 gold medals. 1.3 billion people in all their history, 28 medals and when we get 1 silver, we take her and we get upset at RGV, Ram Gopal Varma, for those people who don't know. You know what happened to this guy yesterday? This is yesterday's news, the headline says, “Phelps, “I thank God I did not kill myself.”” This was CNN yesterday. I was shocked and said “What?” And then, I go to the website, this is the story. Suffering from depression; they asked Michael Phelps, “Phelps, you must have worked really hard to get those 21 medals.” He says, “That was the easy part. The tough part was after I got those medals and when I came back and felt so empty that I wanted to kill myself.” I am not kidding guys. This is headline news in mainstream media. He said, “That is precisely the reason why I got into nirvana because I can't get satisfaction.” Ian Thorpe, who was one of the greatest swimmers, who was senior of Michael Phelps, was the decorated swimmer before him. He

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challenged Michael Phelps and said, “Michael, it is impossible for you to get 8 gold medals in any single Olympics,” and you know what he did? This guy put that, “Ian Thorpe said that it is impossible for me to get 8 gold medals. I am going to prove him wrong.” That is 2008 or 2012, if I am right and he got 8 gold medals and you know what he said? “I came back home and wanted to kill myself.” You know why? I could look at that and say if your hope is not in God, any path you choose is going to kill you. Every idol will demand your blood and will give you nothing in return. It will demand your life. You fill yourself that is the reason God said, “I placed eternity in your heart and who can fill that eternal space? Only an infinite God can fill that eternal space.” He tells through John’s gospel, “If you love Me and you keep My commandments, I and My Father with the Spirit will come and will make our abode in you and We will fill that eternal gap.” Every other dream is only going to shatter you. Young people, let me tell you something here – as your senior elder brother; I’m not your father; I’m your elder brother for sure and I’m not like the elder brother in the prodigal son for sure. I love you. Whatever the case, no girl, no career, no movie, no talent, no career is worth it. Take it from me. You find God; he who has the Son has life. That is Zoe; and he who does not have the Son does not have life but the wrath of God abides in him. And if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed. Otherwise, you will be in bondage to your idols and your idols will ultimately, swallow you. And that is the reason why God hates. Do you know what He says? “Unless you hate.” You don’t understand. “When I’m saying ‘hate’, I’m telling you because I love you so much. Only I can fulfil your dreams.”

### John 12:25-26

**<sup>25</sup> He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life (where?) in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.**

And you know what that ‘honor’ will be? You know what Paul will say? “These light and momentary afflictions are preparing me for, what? Eternal weight of glory.” I’m going to give you that. Eternal weight. What do you want? I’m telling you, honestly, in my limited experience as a Christian and in my limited experience in the ministry, God is not worth substituting. I’ve experienced that. Every other earthly relationship, even your husband, if he is your saviour, he is going to disappoint you. If your wife is your saviour, she is going to disappoint you. That is the reason why Jesus said, “There are eunuchs who have been born as eunuchs. There are eunuchs who have become eunuchs because of medical issues but there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs for the Kingdom of God’s sake. He who has ears let them hear and not everybody can receive it but blessed are you, if you receive it.” You know what Peter will say? “It is better for sure not to get married. And Jesus does not disagree. Keep that in your mind.

No earthly relationship. “You are my life. Tu meri jaan hain.” Nonsense. Tu meri jaan nikalni vaali hain (you are one to take my life). So tho hain (really). Don’t ever. Only God can fill your gap, saints. No earthly relationship. Even a minister. Learn that.

Next part. Let’s go back to *Luke 14:25-26*,

### Luke 14:25-26

**<sup>25</sup> Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, <sup>26</sup> “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.**

What does this mean? Very simple - “You want to serve God?” He will not tolerate divided loyalties.

### Luke 16:13

**<sup>13</sup> “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”**

That’s what happened to the rich young ruler. Jesus loved him. He said, “Sell everything that you have. Give it to the poor, come and follow me.” Mammon was a saviour. Even in your company, even if you are working for the same company and you have one boss and another boss, you can only love the one and hate the other. Have you experienced it? I have experienced in my life. There was one time when I was working as a faculty in IIT. They gave me in a semester, three courses to teach. And if you come to Engineering, it’s a killer. It drains you out completely. The problem was, I was working in a Lab as a Researcher, my Lab was not paying me; my University was paying me. So, as far as my research is concerned,

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my Advisor was my Boss; as far as my teaching was concerned, my Director was my Boss. And I used to fail deadlines in my Research. My Advisor used to come and say, "Come on, Vijay. Paper deadline, paper deadline!" I said, "Sir, in the Bible, it says, 'No one can serve two masters. Either he will love the one and hate the other, you will be loyal to one and despise the other.' Director is on my head and you are on my head, whom should I serve?" He was very angry. "I am going to talk to PJ now." I said, "Sir, Sir!" I didn't say that. I said it in my heart, "You are not paying me; he is paying me." It happens even here, I am sure. Which boss will be happy if you are loyal to his parallel? Impossible. He will hate that. God is saying, "Either you are hundred percent for Me or you are not." In many ways. Let's look at,

### James 4:4-5

<sup>4</sup> **Adulterers and adulteresses!** (Very careful with gender because we have male adulterers and female adulterers.) **Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?** (Do you believe that?) **Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.** (How many of you want God to be your enemy?) <sup>5</sup> **Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?**

He is not going to tolerate. "Woh sirph meri friend hai. To kya hai?" (So what he is just my friend?) You know it happens, right? In your courting days – "Woh kyaun hai tumare bagal mein bethane wali?" (Who is that girl who sitting next to you?) "Woh mera friend hai." "Friend?" Expressions will change. Tone will change. "Friend means?" "Yes, Friend means friend." And suddenly, enmity will start. In every earthly relationship, it's like that. That is what it says. You cannot. Look at another place,

### 1 John 2:15

<sup>15</sup> **Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**

So precise! Thomas Chalmers, very old preacher, he preached a sermon called "Expulsive power of a new affection." If you really want to fall in love with something, you can't kill the desires of it. Let's say if you want to concentrate on God and don't want to concentrate on world, you cannot kill your desires of the world, you have to replace the desires that you have for the world with the greater desire towards God. That is how you fight desire with desire; fire with fire in other words. Let's go to the next -

### Luke 14:27

<sup>27</sup> **And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.**

It's the continuation of that. This is a seamless progression. We are taking flavours of it, we can't take it as points, they are just flavours. It is continuity. **And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.** Luke 9 will expose a little more,

### Luke 9:23

<sup>23</sup> **Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.**

I need to ask myself, what does it mean to hate is the first question. What does it mean to carry the Cross is the second question. We may be having several ideas. I am sure they could be right; I am looking at it in a different perspective. What does it mean to carry the Cross in a new way? Not necessarily in a new way, but that is which is in line with today's message.

### Philippians 2:5-8

<sup>5</sup> **Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,** <sup>6</sup> **who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,**

Meaning - He did not hold on to His rights as God, He held it loosely, He was willing to get rid of it. Every time, He would say, "Lord, Your will be done, not My will." So, what was He, in effect, saying? "Yes, I am God but in this situation – who is God? You are God; I am not God." You got that? That's what he was trying to say. Keep that in your mind. "You are God; I am not God." How do we get this again? How do we understand this?



We look at again a story in the Old Covenant. Twelve brothers reached Egypt. They settled down with their father. Israel blesses the twelve tribes and after that he dies. After the death of Jacob, the ten brothers are scared. "Now that our father is dead, he will kill me." Now, Joseph is a type of Christ, keep that in your mind. Everybody is scared now. They are shivering, they sent a word, "Remember what our father said, 'after I die, don't kill your brothers.' Just follow the story now,

**Genesis 50:17-21**

***<sup>17</sup> 'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you." Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.' And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.<sup>18</sup> Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are your servants."<sup>19</sup> Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?***

It's remarkable. "Am I God?" Remember Namaan. Somebody tells Namaan, "There is a guy named Elisha in Israel. Go to him you will be cured of leprosy." So, Namaan packs his money, he gets his donkeys and he comes to Israel and goes to the King of Israel, "Where is that Prophet? I want to be healed?" And what does Elisha do? He tears his clothes and says that "Am I God?" Remember Rachel; she did not conceive, she says, "Give me children!" You know what Jacob says? "Am I in the place of God?" It's remarkable. Carrying the Cross means either God is God or you are God. That's what it means. And Joseph is looking at his brothers and said, "You didn't understand my heart. Am I in the place of God? That's what exactly had happened "if you are really God 'Come down' and we will believe." "Lord, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." Same!

***<sup>20</sup> But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. <sup>21</sup> Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.***

Let me tell you my, dear brothers and sisters, every time you withhold forgiveness, you are saying, "I am God and God is not God." "I will not forgive," you hold on to bitterness, you hold on to unforgiveness, you know what you are saying? He deserves it. Mera bas ho tho usko thekh lunga. And if you really have the power, you would kill him. You withhold forgiveness from people, you know what you are saying? "I am God." How many would need to extend forgiveness today? Ask yourselves this question. I am not pointing to anybody. You are holding grudges deep down inside of your heart.

**Romans 12:17-21**

***<sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. <sup>19</sup> Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. <sup>20</sup> Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.***

Let me tell you something this is precisely the philosophy of the Non-Violent Movement. Gandhi literally just plagiarised this from the Bible and applied it and got the freedom for our nation. He said, "If somebody slaps you, show them the other cheek." From where did he get that? He got it from the Sermon on the Mount and he used it, principle of Non-Cooperation and he got the freedom for our country and today we are living in a place where you want to kill this nation. *Those who live by the sword will die with the sword.* 'This is the way of the Cross' I am not saying this. Let us look at

**1 Peter 2:21-23**

***<sup>21</sup> For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: <sup>22</sup> "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; <sup>23</sup> who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;***

Saints, that is the way of the Cross and of course it is in context with earthly masters. And every time you rebel against your master in your Church, in your Company, you are saying, "I am God." Let's move on.

Now Jesus gives two analogies:

**Luke 14:28-33**

***<sup>28</sup> For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—***

So, it is very important to finish your race. One of the things I always wanted to look at people, to follow people who have finished what they have started. When I came first to Church in 2008 when we were the part of this Church, Pastor James used to drop me home on his bike. And we used to have fantastic time of fellowship and he used to mentor me and say, “Vijay, if you come to me and tell me ‘God has called me to full time ministry,’ you know what I will tell you?” “Go and finish your PhD and then, come.” How will I entrust something into your hands when you are not proven that you can finish what you have started? That is the connotation if you will and so many believers they don’t finish. You are not a B. Tech until you finish your B. Tech program without any backlogs. You cannot say, “MBBS, two backlogs left.” Think about it, some guy says, “Doctor so and so,” and he has a consultancy. I just want to ask him “What is your marks?” Nobody puts their marks. Have you ever seen a doctor putting their marks? Doctor, MBBS, so and so MD in anatomy. Anatomy – I just passed! “Anatomy just passed and I have to give my anatomy into her hands?”

That is the reason why you see there is no excellency among the ministers of Word of God also. They have just one gift, there is no depth. They have one gift and they make a monument. You know what the monument is? Have you seen that? Mic – always like this. I don’t know why? I have the gift of the gab. That’s all you have. When I listen to you, there is no depth. Think about Engineers or Structural Engineers, just passed in strength of materials. “What are you?” “I am constructing Hyderabad Metro.” “O Lord, have mercy on me! No wonder the Metro is going so slow.” That fellow is very careful while driving.

Think about it. The blessing is not in the starting, saints. The crown is not for those who started the race. The crown is for those who finish the race. *I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith, I finished the race. Now a crown of righteousness is waiting for me and not only for me for who loves his appearing.* It is not for those who start their race is the crown. Yes, the race is not for the swift for sure, but the race is for those who finish whether you are swift, fast or slow. It doesn’t matter your phase. You know the story of the hare and the tortoise? I don’t have to tell you that. So, let’s

***<sup>29</sup> lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, <sup>30</sup>saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish?’ <sup>31</sup>Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup>Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. <sup>33</sup>So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.***

You know what he is trying to say? If you have begun this construction, it takes everything from you. C. S. Lewis wrote a book called “Mere Christianity” and I am sure some of you know about it. He wrote a chapter, in that chapter the title of chapter is “Cost of discipleship” and he says something fantastic. He says a very interesting analogy. He says whenever he used to have a toothache, I used to hate my toothache. I used to hate it for two reasons – first of all, I should go to my mother and my mother would immediately give me an aspirin, but the problem is – my mother wouldn’t just stop in giving me an aspirin; the next day, she would be taking me to the dentist. And then, you go to the dentist and as the old poem says, “Some tortures are physical, some tortures are mental, and the one which is both is dental.” That fellow will look at the root canals that there is one black thing over here, decay over here, he is going to invade your teeth. And you know what Lewis says? “I hate that. I would rather have my pain cured but I never wanted to go to the dentist.” But the problem is – when God comes, He is going to invade everything in your life, EVERYTHING, EVERYTHING – your time, your money, your resources, your relationships, everything. And if you want to finish this, it will take everything from you. Every ounce of your energy is going to be required to finish this. That is the reason why Paul says, “I labor to this end, not with my own strength but with the strength that God gives me, I labor because I want to finish this race.” Everything – no half-hearted Christians. The problem is – in the last days, on the Day of judgment, you will find many buildings, half constructed. Many, that’s the sad state of fears – you think everybody will finish the race? No. They will just quote that verse when they die, what does it mean? It means something, if I try to build my secular life, and I also want to build my spiritual life, God says, “Forget it. It is not going to work! They are not two different mutually exclusive jobs.”

**Haggai 1:2-4**

<sup>2</sup> *“Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, saying: ‘This people says, ‘The time has not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built.’”* <sup>3</sup> *Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying,* <sup>4</sup> *“Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?”*

Half constructed, in shambles? An embarrassment to me? And you call this a House of the Living God, the Creator of the world? Look at it, it is an embarrassment.

**Haggai 1:7-9**

<sup>7</sup> *Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Consider your ways!”* <sup>8</sup> *Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,” says the Lord.* <sup>9</sup> *“You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?” says the Lord of hosts. “Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house.*

You tried to build your life at the expense of building your relation with God. It is not going to work, it is going to be a half-constructed embarrassment. Warren Wiersbe wrote a fantastic book, one of my favorited books, “On being a servant of God”, I go to this all the time to get some solace, you know what it says? “Your secular life, your Church life, they are not mutually exclusive. Your family life, building of the Church and building of the home are not mutually exclusive. Look at what he says, “*The best thing my wife and I could do for the Churches we served was to build a good home (the best thing for the Church was to build a home.) and raise children who were credit to the Lord and to the Church. And the best thing we could do to our home was to build a good church for our children to attend. The two became one.*”

The best thing that we could do for our Church is to build a godly home. The best thing that I could do for our home is to build a godly Church and the two are one. They are not two different things. So, if you are trying to build your home at the expense of the Church, of your relationship with God, boy, you going to have an embarrassment. Sometimes, I feel, remember that Secretariat flyover, it was not constructed for a while? And we used to have Deccan Chronicle those days and we used to have these cartoons, near the telugu talli? There was one part, half constructed and the other part was near the lower tankbund, big gap, and the cartoon said, “You want to look at the fly over? Car, flying over.” Embarrassment. Want like that? It is going to take everything from your life. Be prepared for that, okay? Be prepared. And you considering Christianity, some of you are considering baptism? Boy, you get into the waters of baptism, you know what you are doing? You are getting into trouble with God, with the principalities of darkness, with everybody who is half hearted. So, don’t make it a sentimental thing. This is serious business. It is going to take everything, everything.

You know, I was hearing Derek Prince. Somebody asked him, “What is the confirmation that you had the baptism of the Holy Spirit,” you know what he said, “Trouble. Trouble started after I got baptized, especially in the Holy Spirit.” Troubles will start for you.

Second analogy. Few more minutes and we will be done. Second analogy is that of – A War. You know what it means? “This is a War unto death, no negotiation at all.” *Judges 2:1 onwards,*

**Judges 2:1-4**

<sup>1</sup> *Then the Angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: ‘I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you. ’* <sup>2</sup> *And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this?* <sup>3</sup> *Therefore I also said, ‘I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.’”* <sup>4</sup> *So it was, when the Angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept.*

You can’t negotiate with the flesh, you can’t negotiate. You know what it says in *Ephesians*? “*Don’t even give a foothold to the devil.*” You know it’s like the old Arab with his camel, it is literally that – “Poor camel.” One day, the camel is in and that fellow is out. That is exactly what’s going to happen, no negotiations. And finally ends with this,

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**Luke 14:34-35**

<sup>34</sup> *"Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?"* <sup>35</sup> *It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"*

We have another passage.

**Matthew 5:13**

<sup>13</sup> *"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men."*

What is this salt?

**Mark 9:43**

<sup>43</sup> *If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off...*

**Mark 9:45**

<sup>45</sup> *And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off...*

**Mark 9:47**

<sup>47</sup> *And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out...*

**Mark 9:49-50**

<sup>49</sup> *"For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. <sup>50</sup> Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another."*

You know what it means? You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of this world. What does salt do? It does two things – it gives flavour; and it also delays decay. Everybody knows it, na? "Baaga uppu gotti rudhala" (telugu - put lot of salt and marinate/rub/mix) Why? Because you want to delay the decay. And second thing, it also gives flavour to food. The food is chicken curry, "Uppu takvundi" (Salt is less) and you will quote a poem also, "Uppu leka ruche puttakanayya bhaskara." (without salt, there is no flavour, brother Baskara). And then, out of sarcasm, your wife will get the salt, and then, you put the salt, and you taste it, and you say, "Uppu chala bagundi." (Salt is very good) Will you say that? You will never say that the salt is very good; you will say, "The chicken curry is very good." Otherwise. you will get the entire chicken curry in your head. (In our language, they call it as kodi vegudu). What does it mean? First thing – salt means, "You will slow the decaying process"; meaning – in the church, or wherever you are in your offices, if you are a person who is delaying the decay, then you are salt. I remember, I have been very vivid. When I was just 2-3 years in the programming, in my University, all my colleagues used to discuss about girls and everything. Suddenly, I just enter into the lab, pin drop silence. Everybody will go to the desks like that and they will start working. Does it happen to you? Or when you enter into the lab, "Manode, ra mama (It's our guy only, Come brother). Discussion jarugthundikada. Oh em matladthunav (Discussion is going on, What are you talking?). Ah, latest movie? There two more will also come." Have you become the salt? No. It's a challenge friends.

Another thing – in the Church, are you salt? Are you salt to one another? Look at what it says in *Colossians 4:5-6*,

**Colossians 4:5-6**

<sup>5</sup> *Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. <sup>6</sup> Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*

Whenever you get into conversation with your brothers, do you edify them? After you finish the conversation, are they really exhorted? Like Ravi Zacharias said, "Some people bring happiness wherever they go, some people bring happiness whenever they go." Are you the 'whenever' category? "Vadu ellipoyadu ra babu. Chalu ra naina (he left. That's enough)." I am talking about in the Church. "Oh, this lady? Oh gossip gossip gossip! Aipoinda? Is it done?" What is the relationship? Who is your conversation? I mean that is the challenge for me. I tell myself, "Lord, when I met my brothers, I should be a positive influence. I tried that even with young people. Young; meaning, children. Honestly, when I started, I used to get

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irritated with them, now, I started practicing, I said, “Lord, I want to be a positive influence to Charan. I want to be a positive influence to Siri. I want to be a positive influence to Raksha. I want to be a positive influence to Anu. I want to be a positive influence to Abigail and Emmanuella and all the children in the school. I talk with them. You know what? I got one compliment I got from Raksha, “Pastor Vijay is so cute.” I said, “Thank God.” Otherwise, I thought they hate me. I said, “Wow, I love that. She is so cute.” Once I called her and whenever I teach them, whenever they get distracted, I get irritated, I say, “Raksha, what’s your problem?” She looks at me and says, “I don’t know. How am I supposed to know what my problem is? You are the one who is supposed to know.” “Pastor Vijay is so cute,” I said, “Thank You, Jesus.” You don’t know, you know, I was just looking for that. I want to be a positive influence. They should not hate me. Yes, they will say, “Vijay is thump, but, he is a loving guy. You can enjoy the time with him. You can learn to worship the way he enjoys to sing the song, the way he leans the lyrics and whatever he is,” boy I want to be that influence in your life, I want to be a sign post to Jesus.

### Colossians 4:6

<sup>6</sup> *Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*

That is the reason it says, “Let the word of God dwell in you richly, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, speaking to one another,” with what? Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, I like the word – hymns and psalms and spiritual songs – in that order. How do you speak to each other? This year, that is the cost to disciple. Count the cost! But you know what? There is a joy there. There is a joy in that one small voice saying, “Pastor Vijay is so cute. I like that positive influence. Finally, the exhortation for the day, “Ye who have ears, let him hear.”

Let me tell you something, you know what it tells me? Do you have a teachable spirit? Do you have that? I want that. I want people to tear me apart left, right and centre. I don’t want people to mollycoddle me and say, “Vijay, what will he think if I say anything about his sermon?” I don’t want that. I’m not looking for that. I want to be an Elisha. I said, “Lord, Elisha, Elisha, Elisha. I want to be that.” You want to be one? “I want to be a Joshua, Lord. It doesn’t matter. Let people scold me, smite me, I am looking at the price there, I want to be that.” I want to be an influence in my generation. I want to be a sign post for God. I want to be a salt. I want to be a disciple. Give us ears to hear. Let’s pray.

### Closing Prayer

*Father, we thank You. Challenge us today. You are a Father who wants to give good things to Your children and because You love us, You rebuke us, You chastise us, You discipline us so that we maybe partakers of your holiness when we endure the chastisement and your discipline, Father, this year, Lord, You said, Lord, “This is going to be a year of destiny.” Let everyone in this Church fulfil God’s destiny for their lives. To that end, I pray, Lord, You would bless us as a Church, it is Your will that everyone finishes the race. It is Your will that everyone receives a commendation, “Well done, My good and faithful servant.!” Charge our densities. It is Your will. It is Your will, Lord. You said, Lord, “If you, being evil fathers, can give good gifts to your children, how much more your Father in Heaven?” Oh Lord, we want to love You, Lord. We want to honor You. We want to honor those people whom You have placed us under. We want to make You proud so that, one day, You can say to the powers of darkness, “Have you seen my servant? There is none like him. A man in whom there is no pride and blameless and one who fears the Lord and hates evil.” Oh Lord, we don’t have plan B. Challenge us to that and we pray, challenge every one of us, especially the young ones here, my brothers, my contemporaries, juniors here. I pray, Lord Jesus, that every one of us will lead by example; we will be that sign post in that generation. They will look at us, and they will follow Jesus. They will hear us, and they will follow Jesus. Oh Lord, bless us to that end. We thank You, Father. We praise You. We worship You. We give You glory. We give You honor.*

Even as we pray, can you stand up, surrender? Just encouraging each one of us. Just a few minutes. In your own words, just lift up your voices, and hands and say, “Lord, I surrender, I surrender.” Speak out if you want to.

*“Lord, let this year, Father, even as You promised this Church that this year will be a year of destiny. I want to fulfil God’s good, pleasing and perfect will in my life.”* Let that be your prayer.

Let that be your prayer this morning. And to that end, God says, “Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of worship; and be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Don’t neglect fellowship, don’t neglect the teaching of the Word, don’t neglect your time with the Lord, don’t neglect devotion with God,

## Count The Cost!

build a relationship with Him. Let Him show you what is His will for your life one day at a time. Offer your bodies this morning. It says, it is the altar which sanctifies the sacrifice this morning. The day you offer your bodies on the altar, you say, "Lord, my body for the Lord and He would sanctify it. It is the altar that sanctifies the body. It is the altar that sanctifies the sacrifice.

*O God, we want to fulfil Your destiny for our lives, O Lord. O God, we don't want to be rebellious, O Lord. We don't want to shorten Your hand in our lives because of our unbelief, O Lord. O God, we don't want to be like the children of Israel, O Lord, who rebelled in the day, transgressed and You said and You swore in your wrath that, "You will not enter My rest." O Lord, let it not be said about any one of us here. O God, I pray that You would touch us. O God, touch us, O Lord. You said, Lord, You will circumcise our hearts; that we will love You with all of our heart, with all of our strength, with all of our mind. O Father, do it, O Lord. Circumcise our hearts, O Lord, that we may love You. O Jesus, young ones, I pray, Lord, that You would touch them, Lord. Touch them, Lord. Especially teenagers, O Lord, who are in the crossroads of decision, Father, so many people in the valley of decision, I pray, Lord, that this year they will take a stand, they will take a stand for God, they will take a stand for God and they will say, "As for me, I don't know about my household; as for me, I will serve the Lord all the days of my life." O Jesus, bless us to that end. Thank You, Father, for this time. Thank You, Father, for our mentors, Lord. Thank You, Father, for our Pastor. Thank You, Father, for his faithfulness. We bless him in Your Name, O Lord. Lord, I pray, Lord, for a double portion of Your anointing to rest over your servant O Lord, even as he leads this Church, O Lord Father. I pray, Lord, that You would grant him wisdom, discernment, understanding, more revelation and insight into Your Scripture so he will be able to lead us all, O Lord Father. And Lord, that we will, Lord, surrender, submit and follow. O Jesus, have mercy. Grant us grace to that end we pray, we thank You, we praise You, In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

### **Benediction:**

*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with each one of us, Amen!*