

## Gathered: Deeply

Good morning everyone. Please turn with me in your bibles to the gospel of Luke, 14:25.

Great job to everyone involved with the Operation Christmas Child rummage sale, we raised almost \$2700 to send OCC boxes overseas. OCC sends shoeboxes with toys and different things around the world, but more than that, in each box is also an opportunity for kids to hear the gospel and place their faith in Christ. So great job to everyone involved in raising money. We'll have some boxes for you to fill as well in a little while.

Our sermon this morning is the third in a series called "Gathered: The mission and vision of Rock Prairie church. Two weeks ago we talked about our new mission statement, which is actually just a rewording of the original mission statement the founders of our church wrote back in 1852.

And that mission is:

### (SLIDE)

TO MAKE CHRIST KNOWN FROM OUR NEIGHBORS TO THE NATIONS

That's right.

### (SLIDE)

And our vision, the way we want to accomplish our mission, the way we want Christ to be known is Truly, Deeply, and Widely.

Last week we talked about making Christ known Truly, which we do through Christ-centered preaching and worship. This week we're talking about knowing Christ deeply, through prayer, discipleship, and fellowship.

### (SLIDE)

So look with me in your bibles at Luke 14:25.

<sup>25</sup> Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, <sup>26</sup> "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. <sup>27</sup> Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup> 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? <sup>29</sup> Otherwise, when he has laid a 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 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? <sup>32</sup> And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup> So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Let's pray.

*Father, we praise you once again for an opportunity to gather together to worship you. To encourage and admonish one another, and to glorify your name. Thank you for all that you're doing in and among us. Thank you for the lives that you're changing as people come to know you truly, and deeply, and as we make you known widely. Help us by your Spirit to understand your word, make us hunger for it. Rid us of any thought that we don't really need your word, give us a hunger for it, make us desperate for it, and for you. Guard my thoughts and my words. In Jesus' name, amen.*

<sup>26</sup> "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. <sup>27</sup> Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple

If Jesus had come to earth today instead of 2000 years ago, his PR people would have been mortified at some of the things he said. They would have told him, "Jesus, if you're really going to grow your brand, you need to cool it with some of the things you're saying."

“People don’t like it if you focus on the negative, maybe instead of talking about what they have to give up, why don’t you talk about all the benefits they get from following you.”

“Jesus you’ve got all these crowds following you, and we’re worried you’re going to scare some people away. “Maybe instead of saying,

‘you need to renounce everything you have,’ give them something easy to do like, “you need to post about me on facebook more.”

“We just don’t want anyone to feel excluded.”

Jesus would have been his PR people’s nightmare.

Following Jesus is costly. And even though it wasn’t popular, Jesus is saying that his disciples, his true followers, need to count the cost.

I fear that too often, especially in a culture where we value things based on whether or not they make your life easier, or more convenient, we don’t count the cost of following Jesus.

Look at what he says here: He says **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.**

That’s a strong statement! What that means is that for followers of Jesus, Jesus comes first. There’s no other relationship that comes before Jesus. He’s using the word ‘hate’ figuratively to get across the fact that no one can come before him.

Meaning, if your family disowns you because of your relationship with Christ, you’re sticking with Christ. If you’re persecuted, if you’re ostracized, if you stand to lose everything, you’re sticking with Jesus because losing everything pales in comparison to losing Christ.

He goes on in Verse 27

**27 Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple**

Bearing your cross means embracing suffering on a regular basis. Every follower of Jesus has to pick up his cross daily. And that looks different for everyone.

Whether it’s outright persecution for your faith, whether it’s denial of self and gratifying the desires of the flesh, or something else, being a follower of Jesus involves picking up the cross daily and embracing suffering.

Again, not the most popular message. And that’s why Jesus says to count the cost.

He illustrates it in verse 28:

Verse 28: **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? 29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, 30 saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’**

He’s giving a picture here of someone who started a building project but couldn’t finish it. It’s like if someone was bragging to all his friends that he was going to build his dream house. Going on and on about how many bedrooms and what kind of countertops and all the other things he was going to do to the house, and then 6 months later he runs out of money and just the studs are up, reminding everyone of his poor planning.

Jesus is saying you need to count the cost before you follow me. You need to realize that all your priorities need to change. You need to understand that there will be suffering, that some of you may even die because you’re following me. It’s not easy.

And he says “You cannot be my disciple if you’re not willing to give up everything to follow me.”

When I read that, Rock Prairie, what it does in my heart—and I hope it does it in yours too—is causes me to ask myself, “Am I willing?”

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Am I really willing to give up everything for the sake of following Jesus? Is he worth it to me?

Even if it means great suffering? Even if it means all my priorities need to change? Am I willing to follow him no matter what?

Some of you might be feeling the tension of this right now, in a real way. If you work somewhere and your boss is asking you to do something that your conscience does not allow you to do because of your faith in Christ, and you're weighing in your head, "I could literally lose my job right now because my faith demands that I have a conversation with my boss and tell them why I can't go along with this."

That's real.

Others might have a family member or friend where you know you need to say something that could risk losing your relationship moving forward.

If that's you, or if that's ever been you or if it ever will be you, you can take comfort in the fact that Jesus doesn't say, "If you experience suffering, you're doing Christianity wrong."

He says you can expect to suffer.

And you need to count the cost. Meaning you need to decide, is following Jesus really worth it. Is it really worth what it could cost me in reputation, in relationship, or even in my very life.

And the answer to that question is, yes! It is worth it! But that doesn't mean it isn't costly.

This morning we're talking about knowing Christ deeply. When we talk about discipleship, this is where it starts. We cannot expect to know Christ deeply if we're doing it halfway. If we're only cool with this whole Christianity thing until it starts to cost us something.

Jesus wasn't selling an infomercial version of Christianity. An infomercial says, "This product will make your life easier in every way, and it can be yours for only 3 easy payments of \$19.99."

He wasn't selling an infomercial, he was recruiting the special forces. What's the Marines tagline, "The few, the proud, the marines."

Not "Everyone should be a Marine, it's not that big of a deal. Sign up!" No, they invite you to count the cost.

Jesus says the same thing. He says in Matthew 7, **For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. <sup>14</sup> But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.**

Count the cost, Jesus says. And follow him in the strength that the Holy Spirit supplies.

There are three things that we talk about when we talk about knowing Christ Deeply at Rock Prairie. Prayer, Discipleship, and Fellowship.

### (SLIDE)

**First, as we count the cost of following Jesus, we need to have a life oriented toward prayer**

First of all, let me say that I was so encouraged by our time of corporate prayer last week. If you were there I trust that you were too. It's one of those things that you can't really explain, you just kind of had to be there to experience the Spirit moving as we gathered and prayed together in groups. Seriously amazing.

I was also encouraged by the turnout. I don't know how many were there, but it was a lot. And let me just encourage those who came to continue to make every effort to be there. And for those who couldn't come, I totally understand that life happens and sometimes other things take priority or are unavoidable, but if there's any way you can organize your schedule to join us for our Second Sunday prayer once a month, I can't encourage you enough to do that. Super encouraged.

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We cannot do anything, we cannot accomplish anything meaningful or lasting or worthwhile, if God doesn't do it. If God doesn't move.

And we cannot expect God to move if we do not pray.

If the gospel is the heart of our church, prayer is the lifeblood. We need to be fully devoted to it if we expect God to move. That means individually and corporately.

Individually, as you grow in your faith, your thoughts should more and more naturally go to God. And that should cause us to naturally lift things up to him in prayer.

We can also grow in praying together. I tell you, one of the most encouraging things for me to see as your pastor is when I go into the lobby after church and I see one of you with your arm around a brother or sister in Christ praying for them.

That's powerful! And that's something you can do, right now.

If you ask someone in the lobby, "What are you up to this week," and they say, "I have this doctor's appointment that I'm pretty nervous about," you can say, "I'll be praying for you," or you can say, "Hey do you mind if I pray for you right now?"

That's something I'm trying to do more and more. Because I forget sometimes if I tell someone I'm praying for them. And besides, it's so encouraging to pray *with* your brother or sister in Christ.

Let's try to pray with and for one another more and more, and see how the Lord works.

I have been convicted over the last few weeks how utterly dependent we are on the Lord, and how utterly necessary it is to pray. We need to be a people who live lives oriented toward prayer.

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**Second, We need to have a life oriented toward others.**

That's what I mean by fellowship. Being a disciple of Jesus means orienting our lives around others. Followers of Jesus don't have the luxury of being selfish with their time.

At Rock Prairie, our fellowship is where we practice the one-anothers of scripture:

### (SLIDE)

#### Love one another

We're called to love one another.

Jesus said in John 13:34-35

**A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (John 13:34-35)**

Our foremost witness to the world isn't door to door evangelism, or posting scripture on facebook, or having a Jesus bumper sticker on your car—our number one witness to the watching world is how we love one another. True fellowship starts with loving one another in the same way Christ loves us.

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#### Encourage one another

1 Thessalonians 5:11 says

**encourage one another and build each other up.**

Are your words encouraging or discouraging? Are you speaking about a Christian brother or sister either to their face or behind their back in a way that builds them up or tears them down?

Your words have incredible power to do much good or much harm. We're called to encourage one another. As you love one another, speak words of encouragement to one another.

### (SLIDE)

**Gathered: Deeply****Guard one another**

Or put another way, keep one another accountable. We grow in relationship with the Lord as we keep one another accountable in love.

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. As we pursue knowing Christ Deeply, there is no way for you to do it on your own. You're not allowed to do it on your own. We grow in the context of Christian community.

We're called to live lives that are oriented toward others.

That doesn't mean you need to be the most outgoing person ever. Living a life oriented toward others isn't just for extroverts. You're not called to personally disciple everyone.

Rather, It means that in the relationships God gives you, you are called to intentionally pursue true Christian fellowship together in the way that you love one another, encourage each other, and guard one another's hearts and lives.

Let's be a church made up of brothers and sisters who pursue Christ together in fellowship.

**(SLIDE)****Finally, We need to have a life oriented toward Jesus**

We need to have a life oriented toward prayer, toward others in fellowship, and finally toward Jesus in discipleship.

Being a disciple means following Jesus. Discipleship is the process of becoming more like Jesus. In learning, being, and doing.

**(SLIDE)****Learning**

It's the life-long process of learning all that God wants you to know – becoming like Christ in his knowledge. The way we do that is by knowing God's Word. By reading it, studying it, memorizing it, meditating on it.

Asking questions about it. One of my favorite ways to study scripture is printing out a chapter and writing all over it. Circling repeated words, writing down questions like "what does this mean?", "why would he say this here", and so on. And often times those questions would go unanswered. Studying God's Word doesn't mean you have all the answers. But it does mean you're willing to ask questions to understand the heart of God more and more as he reveals his truth to you in his Word.

**(SLIDE)****Being**

Being a disciple means Being all that God wants you to be – becoming like Christ in his character (love, compassion, mercy, justice, godliness, etc). It means you will become more like Jesus the longer you follow him.

Our goal for you as Pastors is to see you grow. We all go through different seasons of life with different challenges. Sometimes we grow really fast, sometimes our growth is imperceptible, but our goal, our desire, is to see every member of our church becoming more like Jesus.

Next year at this time I want you to be able to say, "I still have a long way to go, but I'm more like Jesus than I was a year ago." And so on. Discipleship means being more like Jesus

**(SLIDE)****Doing**

It also means Doing all that God wants you to do – becoming like Christ in his deeds

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It means a greater willingness to do whatever the Lord is calling you to do. Some of you are doing ministry right now either here at church or with your coworkers or neighbors or something else where you can look back and say, “if you told me 5 years ago I would be doing this, I would tell you you’re crazy.”

Being a disciple involves growth in learning what God wants you to learn, being in who God wants you to be, and doing what God wants you to do.

### (SLIDE)

There’s no perfect strategy for discipleship. I wish there was. Pastors can drive themselves crazy trying to find the best way to do discipleship at their churches.

But the truth is that we have an enemy who wants anything but a church full of people who are becoming more like Jesus. We’re in a spiritual battle.

Let me just encourage you to jump in. Like I said a few weeks ago, we’re hoping to have some more answers in January about what discipleship is going to look like at Rock Prairie, but I want to encourage you even now to jump in.

When Emily and I were first married, we were attending College Park in Indy and we were in a small group. And the small group was great, but by far the best part was that this couple allowed us to stay after and we would just talk.

I don’t really remember any of our conversations, but they would ask us about our new marriage and struggles we were having, and we would observe how they would parent their young girls. They would intentionally live their lives right in front of us.

It wasn’t like every week we felt like they said the exact perfect thing, they were just a few years ahead of us in life and following Jesus, and they were letting us into their lives so we could observe and grow.

I promise you, you can do that too.

Knowing Christ deeply means pursuing him intentionally with our whole lives. It means living lives that are oriented toward other people, and seeking the Lord in prayer.

And ultimately, knowing Christ deeply means counting the cost of all these things. Jesus said, **Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple**

Let’s be a church that seeks to know Christ deeply. Because he’s worth whatever it costs.

### (SLIDE)

## Lord’s Supper

In a few moments, we’re going to take the Lord’s supper together as a body. It’s a reminder to us of the very reason why we can even know Christ deeply.

The Lord’s supper is for anyone who is a believer in Jesus Christ. So parents, if your kids have made a profession of faith, and you feel you’ve seen genuine fruit of the Holy Spirit in their life—because the Holy Spirit indwells all believers at the moment of conversion regardless of how old they are— If they’re a follower of Christ, they are welcome to take part.

The Lord’s Supper is what Jesus commanded us to do to remember his death on the cross and his resurrection. To remember that every single one of us was dead in our sin. That we were running in the opposite direction of God. That we had no hope to be saved until the gospel transformed our hearts and reconciled us to God.

The deacons and their wives are going to come forward to pass out the elements. As they do so, I want us each to take a few minutes to pray. To thank the Lord for the gospel. To pray for our families. Dads, Parents, if you want to take this time to pray over your kids audibly, to lead them spiritually in this moment, that would be awesome.

The bread and juice are stacked together, so make sure you have two cups. And like I said, this is something that is for believers in Jesus to take together to remember the gospel. So I’d ask that if you don’t yet

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know Christ, to please let the bread and cup pass by. I promise no one around you will judge you for it.

When you get the cups, wait to take it. After several minutes of us spending time in prayer, I will lead us in eating and drinking.

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In 1 Cor 11:23, Paul says – For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. IOW this broken piece of bread is symbolic of the sacrifice he made on our behalf. Do this [he said] in remembrance of me.

(Eat)

25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. IOW this cup and what it contains, represents the blood of Jesus, the life he gave – to secure the promise of salvation, the new covenant Do this [he said], as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. As often as we eat and drink at The Lord's Supper – we proclaim his offer of salvation, the gospel, until he returns and makes it complete

Let's do that now.

(Drink)

Let's pray.

*Father, we praise you for the cross. We thank you for sending your Son to die the death that we deserved. To bear the just punishment for our sin. He became sin who knew no sin that we might become the*

*righteousness of God. We praise you for that this morning. Help us to be a people who seek after you. Who want to know Jesus deeply. Who aren't satisfied with a shallow relationship but who grow up into full maturity. Give us grace to do that, and to grow alongside one another in love and humility. We praise you. In Jesus' name, amen.*