

**September 4, 2022**  
**Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Meditation:** “For everything there is a cost”

My mother used to have a lot of sayings. One of them was, “For everything in this life there is a price to be paid.” Want a health care system, pay your taxes. Want unprotected sex, be prepared for an unplanned pregnancy or an STI. Want a big house and a fancy car, better work hard for the money to pay for it. For everything there is a price to be paid. It almost sounds like something out of the book of Ecclesiastes....for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.....for everything there is a cost, and a price for every desire or action in life.

The gospel lesson talks about a different set of costs. Listen again:

Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ... none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

Unless you are willing to let go of, to give up all that you treasure, all that is most precious to you, you cannot become my disciple.

Wow. That’s harsh, I mean difficult, I mean demanding, I mean almost downright impossible. But think of another story you know from the Bible. Remember the story of the prodigal son? It took the loss of all that he had, his father, his brother, his family, his home, his reputation, his wealth before the son came to his senses. And the father, forgiving the one son cost him his relationship with the other son. There is a cost for every decision, every act in this life, and all too often we don’t like the price we have to pay. Sometimes we don’t even anticipate what the price will be. I mean, do you think the father anticipated that forgiving one son would cost him his relationship with the other son?

The other day the October/November (I know, too early) edition of the Broadview magazine arrived. There was an interview with social ethicist Miguel De La Torre. It made me wonder, what is the cost of being a disciple of Christ right now? He talks about the need to decolonize Christianity. I know, it sounds like some fancy academic thing. What does it mean to decolonize a religion? He is talking about the need “to separate the message of a marginalized man who lived in Judea 2,000 years ago from the faith of European kings and rulers.”

Christianity has been appropriated by Ceasars, starting with Constantine, and kings to legitimize their rule and their actions. As it has evolved, it has resulted in a Christianity in which white supremacy and oppression run deep.

Decolonizing that Christianity is about getting back to the message of Jesus, which was a message of healing, and reconciliation, and right relations between people, and fairness for all, regardless of their status, or lack thereof.

Decolonizing means speaking out against all the forms of privilege that we experience: white privilege, male privilege, middle class privilege, first-world or Western privilege, heterosexual privilege, and so on. The cost is that we wind up losing our privilege, even when we may not feel that we are privileged to start with.

Decolonizing the Christianity that we have grown up with is what it is going to take to reconcile our culture with the indigenous peoples of this land, and that sounds like a lot of work, hard work, possibly even work we may not want to engage in.

But you know the funny thing? I think that the cost that is spoken of in the gospel lesson isn't the cost that we think it is. I think that what looks like a cost is really an invitation, an invitation to stop trusting ourselves and to start trusting God. What looks like the cost of letting go of the control we think we have, of admitting to ourselves that we never were in control of everything, of letting go of who we think we are, is the cost of discovering who God is calling us to become.

What looks like a cost in decolonizing Christianity is really the promise that we can be reconciled with our indigenous brothers and sisters, and our bipoc brothers and sisters, and our non-heterosexual fellow humans, and learn to live together in peace in this land.

The real cost hidden in the gospel lesson is in failing to accept the invitation to becoming a disciple of Jesus. The cost of that is the loss of a relationship, or a deeper relationship with God.

This fall I am offering a book study on Marcus Borg's book, *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith*. It is a book about discovering the heart of God. Let me know if you are willing to pay the price of a little time and thought to deepen your relationship with God.

God's invitation into deep relationship has no expiry date, well, except one, your expiry date. As long as you haven't expired, the invitation is open. Are you willing to accept the cost of not accepting?