



Roanoke, Virginia

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“Self-Inventory”

Luke 14:25-33

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²⁵ Now large crowds were travelling with Jesus; and he turned and said to them, ‘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. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, “This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.” Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

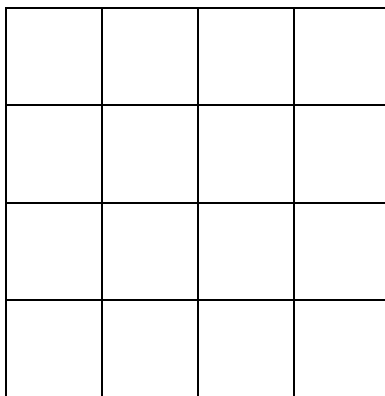
This past summer, our youth went to Montreat Youth Conference. The theme for this year was “More than enough.” We explored various aspects of what this phrase means... we looked at how we need to recognize that without God, we are not enough; that we need to receive God’s love, and that makes us are more than enough; that we need to rely on God because in God’s hands, we are more than enough; that we need to resist the evils of the world and by God’s power,



we can do more than enough; and we all need to realize that filled with God's Spirit, together, we are collectively more than enough.

In the opening keynote on Monday morning, Pam Driesell, the keynote speaker, put an image on the screen. She asked us how many squares we see.

So, I ask you: how many squares do you see?



Yeah, right off the bat we see 16 squares. It is a 4 x 4 square, so in total we see 16. And then, we have the big 4 x 4 square. That makes 17.

And then we have the top left 2x2 square—that makes 18.

Top middle 2x2 square—19.

Top right—20.

Middle left 2x2 square—21.

...Middle-middle / Middle-right / Bottom- left / Bottom Middle / Bottom right—now we are up to 26 squares.

Then the 3x3 squares.

All in all – we find 30 squares!

Pam did mention at Montreat that someone told her there is 1 or 2 more we missed but I cannot seem to find them... so, if you get bored during my sermon, I give you permission to continue the hunt for square number 31 and 32.

The theme word for Monday was “recognize.” ***We are these squares.***

What Pam was trying to illustrate is that there are always messages around us that tells us what we have to be and what we have to do in order to “be enough.” Our 16 squares need to look a certain way to fit in. Our 16 squares need to be aligned and polished in such a way to be enough in the eyes of the world.



She then transitioned to say that isn't this how we go about our day-to-day interactions. Are we not judging and being judged each and every day by our 16 squares? The things that are easy to see and recognize about other people and ourselves.

You could describe my 16 squares like this: white, male, relatively young (some may look at me and say old but that's just because of the grey hair I suppose), I am married, I have an infant son, I am a pastor. These outside things, the things that are visible in my day-to-day life, these are the things that make up my 16 squares.

Think of your own 16 squares.

Now, could you describe my 17, 18, 19, 20th square?

Some of you may know me enough to offer some insight... but I won't have you shout these out however...

I may describe these next squares like this: I am competitive, I have a hard time accepting failure, when things are stressful I seek to control more, and when I lose control I become stressed. I compare myself with others too often. I sometimes think that I am not enough.

These are the things that are not easy to see. It takes relationship to see them. It takes intentionality. It takes trust. It takes trust in two ways: one for me to show them, and two for you to be open to recognize and receive them as a true part of who I am.

How would you describe your 17, 18, 19, 20, your next level squares?

Dare I ask about your 22? 23? Or even your 27?

We are now getting into squares that we ourselves have difficulty recognizing. These are the deep things inside of us that make us who we are, the true self. The true self that we sometimes hide, bury, or do not even know yet.

But sometimes as we go deeper, and we find things within us, we quickly run back to our 16 squares to work on the outer squares instead of our deeper squares because individually and collectively, we associate good or bad, successful or failure, privileged or profiled largely based on our 16 squares. And too often **when** we see other people's 16 squares, we do not seek to understand them from the other person's perspective or experience.

The crowd that followed Jesus reacted to the 16 squares of his ministry. The crowds were amazed and astonished at his teaching and preaching and his healings. The crowds followed because of the things they could see. They heard his Sermon on the Plain. They saw him debate with the experts of the law, the scribes, and Pharisees. They witnessed the healings. So, they followed.



The crowds were eager to be part of this transformational ministry. They were eager to become followers of Jesus, but, up to this point, they were eager to follow only based on the 16 squares they could see and hear.

But Jesus turns to them and offers them the next level squares of what it means to truly be his follower.

“You may see the healings,” rephrasing what Jesus said here, “but if you don’t turn from your family, leave your way of life as you know it now, and forfeit all things you have worked for, you cannot be my follower.” Jesus is telling the crowd that truly following him is next level stuff, it requires a deeper understanding of sacrifice, a deeper understanding of selflessness.

Jesus goes on to offer two illustrations: Which of you, if you are about to build a house, does not first sit down to calculate the budget, to calculate the materials needed, to calculate the time it will take? Which of you, will just jump right into the project without first weighing the cost?

Jesus continues: Imagine a king, who has an army of 10,000, will the king not sit down and consider if his army can defeat an army of 20,000? If the king does not think he can win against the opposing army, would he not then send a delegate to begin talks of peace?”

Jesus is asking the crowd this: Have you considered the cost—the real cost—of following me? Have you looked deeper, beyond the 16 squares that you can see and hear, to consider the real sacrifice of being my disciple?

There is more to following Jesus than what is on the surface. Following Jesus requires losing your life, leaving your father and mother, turning from your family and the way you have been living, to join the family of followers and enter a new way of living.

This is like what Jesus says in Luke 16: you cannot serve two masters, for you will then hate one and love the other or be devoted to one and despise the other. Thus, in becoming a follower of Jesus, one truly puts Jesus and his ministry above all else.¹

Have you considered that you must lose your life, and all that is in it, to truly be my disciple?

The same is asked of us today. Have we considered, truly and deeply considered, all that is involved in following Jesus?

With every decision in life, we weigh the options and the costs. But have we done this with living out our faith?

There is a cost to the priorities we make!

Perhaps putting the two illustrations into modern terms may help: What parent, before signing their child up for a traveling sports team, wouldn’t count the cost of travel, time, and

¹ Luke 16:13



commitment, and what new employee wouldn't consider whether she is willing to work long hours and possible weekends before taking a job?

The two parables Jesus offers then lead us to the condition of discipleship that involves giving up everything. If you, if we, seek to follow Jesus, then we must understand first that what is required is all you have, and all you are.

This brings us back to our squares.

Discipleship requires all 30 of our squares—every part of who we are, known and unknown, seen and unseen.

Have you taken inventory of yourself? Have you considered who you are and what you have in order to more fully, and more completely, follow Jesus?

Do you know yourself enough to lose yourself? Do you know yourself enough to give up hiding behind your 16 squares, to be fully seen in order to be fully known? And fully give yourself to the work of God's inbreaking kingdom?

The cost of discipleship is high because the cost of discipleship is transformation. And this transformation is entering into an intimate relationship with God in Christ, who is inviting us to take inventory of who we are and who we hope to become.

Beloved, You are made in God's image, formed by the hands of the Creator, given life through the Spirit.

And Christ is extending an invitation, to truly consider and truly count the costs and the crosses of life, asking you to give him all of who you are...

because he has given all of who he is **for you**.

Pam Driesell also asked us to find our pulse. Find your pulse. Either on your arm or your neck. You feel that? Can you feel the life of the Spirit inside of you, coursing through your veins. Friends, that is grace.

And in the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "The call to discipleship is a gift of grace and that call [to discipleship] is inseparable from grace."²

Amen.

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (NY: Macmillan, 1963), 55.

