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My grandmother was the classiest woman I ever knew.

She was stylish and charming. She always knew what to say and what to wear and what to serve. She was old-school elegant—she never learned how to drive a car (Grandpa was her chauffeur), she always wore gloves to a wedding or a funeral and she never, ever left the house without first putting on lipstick, always fire-engine red.

My favorite thing that my grandmother wore was a classic black Chanel suit. She looked positively smashing in it. I don't know what happened to it after she died, which broke my heart because I am the exact same size as she was, and I would have loved to have inherited it. But, mysteriously, no one seems to know where it ended up.

So one day about a year ago, I called a Chanel boutique in Chicago just to see how much a suit similar to my grandmother's would cost. When the saleswoman told me the price, I almost choked...so much for that dream. The cost was impossible for me, it was unattainable...it might as well have cost \$1 million...there was no way I would ever be able to afford a black Chanel suit.

Sometimes, things simply cost too much. Sometimes, the price of something is simply impossibly high. This is a difficult thing to teach to children, who have little or no concept of money or abstract things like value and worth. Sometimes, we just don't have the money to buy the things we want, and sometimes, when times get tough, we don't even have the money to buy the things we need.

But cost doesn't only apply to concrete things...it also applies to abstract things, like relationships, for example. Sometimes, a relationship costs too much; we all have a relationship with someone that demands too much, it is too draining and gives little, if anything, back. Sometimes, a decision costs too much; those who booked tickets on the Titanic made a very costly decision. Sometimes, basic human rights cost too much; Martin Luther King Jr.'s movement for black rights cost him his life. Sometimes, religion costs too much; my friends in Kathmandu were thrown in jail simply for being a Christian. Everything has a cost. *Everything*.

Jesus talks today about the cost of being his disciples. This is something we don't often think about, because Christianity is not illegal in our country. Christians aren't up against the wall in our country. In fact, while our country claims to be a God-fearing nation, it seems as though we are in fact a nation of practicing agnostics, because while we want to claim Christian morals, we certainly don't want our faith to inform or interfere with our daily decisions. Christianity is more mocked than revered in our country. And while that's insulting, it's not really the cost that Jesus is talking about.

Because the cost that Jesus is talking about is a price we are at best unwilling to pay and at worst unable to pay. None of us can claim to be literal interpreters of the Bible if we pay attention to Jesus' words this morning—if you want to be my disciple, you must give up all of your possessions. Exercise caution, because if you really do interpret the Bible literally, you wouldn't have driven here in your own car and you wouldn't even be wearing any clothing and you wouldn't go home after church because you would have given your home away, along with all of its contents. Jesus names a cost of discipleship that we refuse to pay, either out of pride or ability.

And so it seems Jesus expects the impossible from us.

We simply don't want to give up all our stuff to follow him.

His price is too high.

We cannot possibly afford to be a true disciple of Jesus.

In his book "The Cost of Discipleship," Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, "When Jesus calls a person to be a disciple, Jesus calls that person to come and die." Now, that's a high price. In order to be a true disciple of Jesus, we have to be willing to die? Now, this sounds like religious fanaticism, like those terrorists who die in the name of Allah...does Jesus expect the same of us? That's not how we understand religion. Religion for most people is a thing of comfort and warm-fuzzies, not a thing that might cause actual suffering or death. Bonhoeffer, however, took his own words to heart, and died in a Nazi concentration camp in April, 1945, because of his involvement in a plot to assassinate Hitler.

There are exceptions to this, of course. There are some who are willing to pay the price of Christian discipleship. There are the Mother Theresa's out there, there are the Oscar Romero's, the Martin Luther's, the host of martyrs who were boiled in oil, drawn and quartered, dipped in wax and set on fire while Nero played the violin. There are brave ones in the world who stand up for what they believe in, there are people of principle out there, who use the confessions of the church and the words of Christ not as weapons but as means of grace. Are you one such person? Am I?

Maybe, but even with our best efforts, we still fall short...we still don't have enough money to pay the bill...and we all know that terrible feeling you get when your credit card is rejected, when you discover you left your wallet at home, when you realize your paycheck simply won't cover your basic needs....it is a paralyzing fear to not have enough, to not measure up, to try your best and still come up short.

So, then, are none of us disciples of Jesus, because none of us have given up all our possessions, like Jesus tells us to? Are we not disciples because we haven't laid down our lives for another, like Jesus tells us to? Are we not disciples because we can't help ourselves from thinking lustful thoughts, from wanting what our neighbor has, for despising those who think or look or act differently than I do? Is the cost too high?

Yes.

Then it's settled, neither you nor I can pay the price to be a true disciple of Jesus.

It is like the cost of that Chanel suit, but much more enormous....impossible.

So, then, what do we do? Give up faith altogether? Find another faith tradition that justifies our own overindulgence and spiritual flabbiness? Or do we finally admit that we are not the disciples we think we are...

...and then cling with all our strength to the one who gladly pays the price we are not able to pay, and that is, of course, Jesus himself. We are the ones who broke God's perfectly ordered creation, and Jesus is the one who has to pay the damages, and he does this by dying on the cross. His death undoes all that we have done and all that we have failed to do.

While we stand there staring at a bill, turning our pockets inside out, knowing we cannot possibly pay for all that we have broken, Jesus pours out his blood over the entire, broken world, and pays our bill with his own life, saying to us, "I know you don't have enough...I've got you covered."