

## **The Cost of Followership**

Exodus 3:1-12  
Matthew 16:21-28

I entitled this sermon “The Cost of Followership”. So far as I know, I made up that last word. Traditionally, in the church we speak of the cost of *discipleship*. One of the classic theological books of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has that title. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a man who knew all about paying the price, wrote it. A pastor and professor in the German Confessing Church—a group with beliefs similar to the Reformed Churches (including us)--Bonhoeffer wrote about Jesus' Sermon on the Mount as an ethical imperative, a clear set of commands for how to live a Christlike life. At the time he considered himself a pacifist. But as the Nazis took power and their atrocities became apparent, Bonhoeffer came to believe they must be resisted with force. He thought Jesus would expect it, as he wrote, “If in the present moment our faith is to have any validity, we must combat the evil that surrounds us.” He became involved in the plot to kill Hitler. The Nazis arrested and executed him in a prison camp.

I coined the word “followership” in order not to presume to say my thoughts belong in the same league as Dietrich Bonhoeffer's. For one thing, I am unsure I would have the courage to risk my life, even for the sake of Gospel. For another, “follower” probably means more to most of us than “disciple”. Many had disciples in New Testament times. John the Baptist did, as did the rabbi Gamaliel. Jesus'

disciples literally dropped everything—jobs, homes, families—to walk with him. Few of us have, or would. Yet we can still follow him.