

Richmond Hill Baptist Church  
October 9, 2011, **not a fan #4: The Comfortable Cross**

Prelude & Prayer Time  
Call to Worship: One Day

Welcome: Welcome to Richmond Hill. It is good to see you. We are super excited about the “not a fan” series and we are glad to have you with us. If you are a guest please fill out a Connect Card. Let’s greet one another.

You Tube: *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (5:49)

Sing: *I Will Follow You, My Heart is Filled with Thankfulness*

Children’s Corner:

Announcements:

1. Ladies Retreat: Oct 21-22, Canmore, & Charis Packets at table
2. Men’s Retreat: Oct 14-15, Rafter Six, Dan Gaynor
3. Long Range Plan Approved, OST + Work Teams, Vision Statement

Offering & Offertory: *Like An Avalanche*

Sermon: **not a fan #4: The Comfortable Cross**

**DVD: Week Four Sermon Bumper**

Today we are going to talk about the comfortable cross.

The fact is we love our comfort. We love our clothes, shoes, furniture, and cars to be comfortable.

**AutoGuide.com: Top 10 Most Comfortable Cars Under \$30,000.00**

**What makes a car truly comfortable?** Air conditioning? Heated seats? Power window shades? Sure, those are all a good start, but with today’s modern luxuries, there are so many extras that can make your commute a comfortable one.

**The folks at Kelley Blue Book have assembled the 10 most comfortable cars under \$30,000.** Not surprisingly Buick placed highly, taking both the first and second spots. And that first place went to none other than the new Buick LaCrosse.

Get the complete list of the Top 10 most Comfortable Cars (and why they made the list) after the jump:

1. 2010 Buick LaCrosse: Key comfort points include a spacious interior, soothing ice blue ambient lighting, and the QuietTuning system (reduces, blocks and absorbs interior noise).
2. 2010 Buick Lucerne: Boasts a smooth ride, soft seats and an impressively quiet interior.
3. 2010 Chrysler 300: Comfortably poised cruiser that's easy to drive.
4. 2010 Chevrolet Impala: Comfortable, sizeable and affordable.
5. 2010 Chevrolet Malibu: This vehicle offers quiet ride, confident handling, and a well-crafted look inside and out, as well as heated front seats, a two-tone leather-clad interior and Bluetooth.
6. 2010 Ford Taurus: Comes with ample passenger room for five and enough cargo room for plenty of luggage, as well as SYNC for your cell phone and portable music devices.
7. 2010 Hyundai Azera: Plenty of room up front and in the back, with seating that feels like you're in your favorite chair.
8. 2010 Subaru Legacy: Superb seating and roomy cabin, and offers excellent ride quality, minimal body roll and a quiet interior.
9. 2010 Toyota Avalon: Standard reclining rear seats, a relaxed ride, an inviting cabin and eye-catching styling make this one cushy ride.
10. 2010 Toyota Camry: Soft yet supple suspension, coupled with plush seats, make traffic tolerable, as does the quiet cabin with dual-zone automatic climate control.

In North America our desire for comfort has carried over the church. We want comfortable chairs, climate controlled worship centres, & heated baptisteries.

Sadly we often not pad the chairs but also pad the message. We speak of Christ's mercy, grace, forgiveness, love and the hope he offers and we should; but we need to temper it with the demands of discipleship.

Jesus said in **Luke 9:23**: *If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*

So what do comfort craving fans do with a cross? Well sometimes we try to make it more comfortable.

We pad the path of discipleship to make it as comfortable as possible. We excuse ourselves from painful, inconvenient, costly things that God calls us to.

We are no different than the folks that are described in Luke 9.

### **Luke 9:57-62**

<sup>57</sup> *As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."* <sup>58</sup> *Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have*

*necks, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”<sup>59</sup> He said to another man, “Follow me.” But the man replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”*

*<sup>60</sup> Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”<sup>61</sup> Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family.”<sup>62</sup> Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”*

We think we our excuses are pretty clever and we pad the path of discipleship to the point that we are no longer following Christ – we are on a different path.

The way of the cross seems strange in fact Paul writes this in his opening comments in 1 Corinthians.

### **1 Corinthians 1:18**

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

For those living in the first century the cross was the ultimate symbol of shame, guilt, torture, death, and weakness. The message of the cross was foolish to an outsider.

Interestingly we have taken this symbol of shame and softened up the cross by dressing it up as decorations and jewellery.

No person in the first century would have worn a cross around their neck or put up a cross in their home. This would have been the equivalent of wearing a guillotine or electric chair on their neck.

That’s the point! It was a symbol of death. Moreover that what make the cross so beautiful. God uses the most unlikely symbol to become a great symbol of love and life.

God takes what the world considers foolish and demeaning and makes it a powerful symbol of salvation.

Who else but God could take a cross that represented defeat and make it a symbol of victory.

Who else but God could take a cross that represented guilt and make it a symbol of grace.

Who else but God could take a cross that represented shame and make it a symbol of forgiveness.

Who else but God could take a cross that represented gloom and make it a symbol of hope.

Who else but God could take a cross that represented condemnation and make it a symbol of freedom.

Who else but God could take a cross that represented suffering and make it a symbol of salvation.

Who else but God could take a cross that represented death and make it a symbol of life.

No one else could; but God could!

What seemed like the ultimate moment of God's weakness became His ultimate place of strength.

Here is the point for today!

## **1. What God Did for the Cross, He Can Do for You.**

1 Corinthians 1:18, 27

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

The world sees the cross as a foolish thing but we who are being saved; we are reminded that it is the power of God. God can take our lives that are weak, broken, and filled with shame and make some beautiful.

Here is my second point:

## **2. When I am Weak, He is Strong.**

1 Corinthians 1:18, 27

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God...But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.*

When you are the weakest – you are exactly where you need to be for God to be the strongest. The upside down truth of the cross is that when you are weak you become strong in Christ. Paul said this in **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**:

*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. <sup>10</sup> That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Paul reminds us that God uses the weak to demonstrate his power.

Throughout the Scripture God chooses the weak over the strong:

Abraham was old.

Jacob was insecure.

Leah was unattractive.

Joseph was humiliated.

Moses stuttered.

Gideon was poor.

Samson was proud.

Rahab was immoral.

David was devious.

Elijah was suicidal.

Jeremiah was depressed.

Jonah was disobedient.

Naomi was a widow.

John the Baptist was eccentric.

Peter was impulsive.

Martha worried.

The Samaritan Woman had failed marriages.

Zacchaeus was corrupt.

Thomas has doubts.

Paul has poor health.

Timothy was timid and so on.

What about you? What is your weakness? How do you answer that question at a job interview?

You would never say: procrastinator, late, or have trouble working with others.

We try to come up with a weakness that sounds like a strength: I am a perfectionist or workaholic.

Our world despises weakness that's why there are over 2,000 self help books published every year. You can do it. In the eyes of Paul that is foolish because he knows that we can't do it on our own.

That is why his letters are filled with these statements: (in Christ, through Christ, & with Christ: all things are possible.

You can't carry this cross on your own.

Our DVD does a great job of applying this message to our times. In lesson 4, some of you saw it this morning. Eric leads his family to sell their mansion and buy a smaller home. Ana his wife is angry and she makes the comment we are bearing your cross no one else at church is selling their home. Eric replies I can't speak for them but this what God wants me to do.

We generally see two extremes: "Wealth & Prosperity Gospel" and the "Woe is Me Gospel." This is not about being rich or poor. The Bible is filled with examples of people who were both wealthy and poor. The decision to follow Christ is a person thing between you and God.

It is:

Daily Decision

Deliberate Decision

Dependent Decision (in Christ, through Christ, with Christ)

This is a decision to deny and die to your desires and choose to live for Christ.

Ask yourself: What does Christ want to do through me? Just know it might not be comfortable, convenient, or easy.

God you did something amazing at the cross. I wonder what do you want to do in me and you?

Response: *Wonderful Cross*