

Ninety-nine cents is one of the most frequent gimmicks used in advertising. You can get a 27 inch stereo television for \$499.99. You can get an 18.6 cubic foot refrigerator for \$549.99. A loudspeaker for \$38.99. A CD for \$11.99. Now, we all know that CD is going for \$12, but for some reason, 11.99 sounds a lot less. It's an old gimmick, but we still fall for it so much that advertisers rarely round up the figure to the nearest dollar. They want us to think about the product, not the cost. The reason is simple. We're human. We like pleasures, we don't like sacrifice.

However, we are no strangers to sacrifice. If you're going to buy that CD, you may have to save up some money for it. You may sacrifice clothes, pizza, or a movie in order get that recording. We just don't think about it as sacrifice, but we are always setting priorities. People sacrifice time with the family in order to work for a paycheck. They sacrifice a favorite TV show to watch a child's soccer team. They sacrifice a trip in order to increase savings. We do this all the time. Sometimes sacrifices are not so praiseworthy. People sacrifice time with the family in order to feed a gambling addiction. They sacrifice a favorite TV show to make a petty theft. They sacrifice a trip to commit infidelity. We're always making sacrifices--but some of them aren't too good.

Jesus asks the rich young man for a huge sacrifice. The guy sounds ready to do anything to follow Jesus, but then he finds out what Jesus wants. Jesus does not conceal sacrifice from his message. He doesn't say, "Come follow me and you'll get to travel, you'll meet new people, you'll get meals, you'll have a lot of free time, you can go swimming in the Sea of Galilee, people will hang on your every word"--all of which would have been true. Jesus does not hide the sacrifice; he doesn't say it'll cost you only \$99.99. He says if you want to follow me, it'll cost you the works. It'll cost you possessions, time, family, property, your independence, your Sunday mornings--it'll cost. He does not hide the cost to promote the product; the cost is part of the product.

Christianity does not remove pleasures from one's life. It brings pleasure. It brings the pleasure of hope, of community, of friendship with God, the pleasure of helping someone else, and the pleasure of doing what's right. These pleasures come to those who sacrifice everything else to follow Christ.