

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP



HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR BONHOEFFER'S WRITINGS

Years leading up to and during WWII.

Especially in Europe and North America, a time of nationalistic fervor: one's identity as German, English, Japanese, American, etc was touted as being more important than anything else.

Bonhoeffer and Bishop GKA Bell were among few leaders in the church at the time who demonstrated that their common cause in Christ was more important than boundaries of national loyalty.

THE PROBLEM OF CHEAP GRACE

- ⌚ The early Church was not nearly as unified as we are sometimes led to believe. It did, however, uniformly have the character of being an outlier, and often even an irritant, to the society in which it existed.
- ⌚ When Christianity became first accepted and later almost synonymous with the secular state the discipleship that grace demanded became far less intense.



THE MONASTIC RESPONSE

- ⌚ Monasticism arose in the centuries following Constantine. Individuals and communities of men and women distanced themselves from the world to practice a form of discipleship that was easily distinguishable from the lives most people were living.



THE PROBLEM WITH A TWO-PRONGED CHRISTIANITY

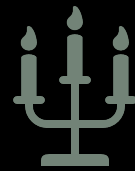
While appreciating monasticism, Bonhoeffer saw a major problem with it: It can actually be the opposite side of the cheap grace coin that is a secularized church. It creates the impression that the only way to engage in real discipleship is to separate oneself from the world and live in rarified company.

Real discipleship, the real acceptance of costly grace, Bonhoeffer asserts, requires that we live fully in the world while simultaneously renouncing it in favor of the precious gift Christ offers us.

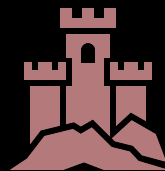
THE PARADOX



I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. (John 17:14-16)



The discipleship to which the grace of God in Christ calls us is complete. We must renounce all of our sins, all of our possessions, and all of our worldly attachments, and then follow Jesus wherever he leads us.



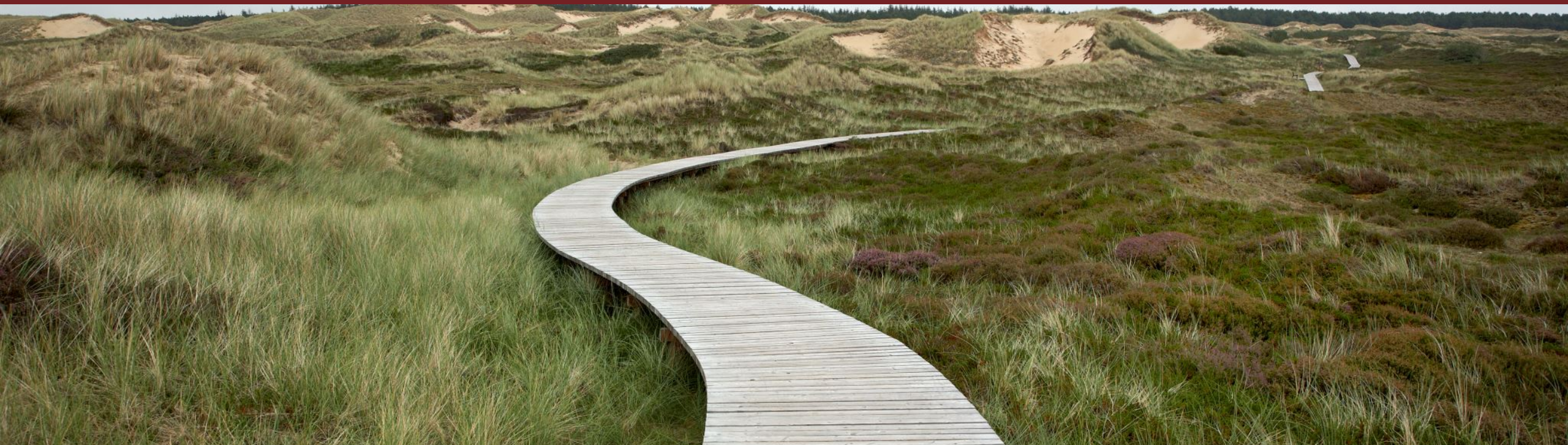
But...we can't then afford the luxury of leading a life disconnected with the world we just renounced. True discipleship calls us to still live in that world and engage with it.

SO WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

- ⌚ Accepting God's free gift of grace in Jesus Christ requires us to utterly renounce every sin and attachment from which we have been freed while still living entirely in a world where we continue to face temptation and sin every day.

How do we do this in our individual lives?

How do we do this as a church community?



AND WHAT ARE THE REAL TEMPTATIONS?

- 🕒 There's a lot of bluster about what it means to be a real disciple of Christ in today's context and what the temptations are that throw us of course. These voices come both from within and outside the Church.

What are the influences we face that throw us off the path of true discipleship?

How do we withstand and resist them?

