



# Links Players

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## Counting What's Important

*But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ. (Philippians 3:7-8).*

There are many wonderful stories associated with the Masters. Tiger Woods opened with a 40 on the front nine in 1997, then shot 22 under on the last 63 holes to win by 12 strokes. Phil Mickelson finally broke through to win his first major in 2004. Tiger won in 2019 after an 11-year major drought, and of course, Jack Nicklaus, written off as too old and a non-factor, shot a 30 on the back nine in 1986 to claim his 6th green jacket at age 46.

There are also the sad, touching stories of those who didn't win, and perhaps the most heartbreaking of all is what happened in 1968. Roberto De Vincenzo shot a remarkable 65 on Sunday that set him up for a playoff with Bob Goalby. But there was a problem. His playing partner, Tommy Aaron, had marked Di Vincenzo's card with a four instead of a birdie three on the 17th hole. Unfortunately, Roberto had quickly signed his card after the round, not bothering to check the scores.

The result was a final round 66 instead of the 65 he actually shot, thereby missing the opportunity to claim the green jacket. Roberto, who handled the whole incident with grace and class, will always be remembered for his counting mistake and his legendary comment afterward: "What a stupid I am."

Anyone who decides to follow Christ also needs to do some serious counting. There is a cost involved, and Jesus clarifies this several times throughout scripture. In Luke 9:23, he said, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." A few chapters later, in Luke 14:33, Jesus says: "So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."

Deny yourself...take up your cross daily...renounce all you have. Those aren't minor adjustments that Jesus is talking about; He's telling you to put everything else on the back burner if you are going to follow Him. That's why 15th-century theologian Thomas Kempis said, "Jesus has many lovers of His heavenly Kingdom, but few bearers of his Cross."

This is an excellent time to reflect on what's most important in your life. One quick check is to look at the three C's - your calendar, your checkbook, and your commitments. Are you living for the treasures of this world, or are you living to please Christ?

Remember that Jesus did not come from heaven to make a few tweaks to how we live; He came so that we could be born again as a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), one who is willing to count the cost to follow Him as Lord and Savior.

With his words from Philippians 3:7-8, the Apostle Paul tells us he was willing to give up everything, counting all of it as loss, to gain Christ. We are called to do the same. To the world, our decision to follow Jesus may seem like we are giving up a lot. But as it's been said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

**Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for your son's gift, Jesus Christ. Help us to keep our focus on Him – following, trusting, obeying, and bringing glory to His Name.**

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John Bown

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