

## Matthew 8:18-34

### Section 1: 18-22 – The Cost of Discipleship

*<sup>18</sup> When Jesus saw a large crowd around him, he gave the order to go to the other side of the sea. <sup>19</sup> A scribe approached him and said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” <sup>20</sup> Jesus told him, “Foxes have dens, and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” <sup>21</sup> “Lord,” another of his disciples said, “first let me go bury my father.” <sup>22</sup> But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.” (CSB)*

As Jesus finishes preaching, teaching and healing in Capernaum and about to head across the sea of Galilee a scribe approaches Him. Jesus often answers questions that are never verbally asked. Like with Nicodemus, Jesus goes straight to the heart of the scribe. Jesus talks about being homeless which leads us to believe that the scribe, much like the rich young ruler, had a problem with giving up the material things of this world.

Why was Jesus being homeless a big deal? The imagery here could be twofold. (1) Jesus was literally homeless and understood that the scribe believed he could live a luxurious lifestyle as a follower of Jesus. Scribes loved the positions of influence and power. It's a possibility that the scribe saw all the healings of Jesus and how large crowds followed Him and wanted to “jump on the bandwagon”. Or to put it another way, he wanted to get in on the ground floor of a powerful ministry. (2) Jesus was speaking of His relationship to the world. This world is not His home, He belongs to a different Kingdom. Again, this would be significant to the scribe because of the desire for influence and power in this world. Either way the end result is the same. Following Jesus requires you to give up the things of this world. They are to become of no value compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ as Paul said in Philippians 3:8.

*<sup>8</sup> More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ...” (CSB)*

Right after the scribe desires to “follow” Jesus, immediately we see a disciple wanting to delay His following of Jesus. Why does Jesus seem so harsh when He says, “let the dead bury the dead”? We are called to follow Jesus wholeheartedly and immediately. It seems the scribe was immediate but not wholehearted in responding to Jesus and the “disciple” was wholehearted but not immediate in responding to Jesus. This “disciple” wanted to wait until after his father had passed. How long until this happens? Days? Months? Years? If you are willing to make one excuse to not follow Jesus now, you will quickly make more later. That is why immediate, wholehearted obedience is important.

There is a cost to following Jesus. The cost is to give up the treasures of this world and ultimately be rejected by the world (John 15:18-25 & Matthew 16:24-25).

### Discussion Questions

- ❖ Are you a follower of Christ for a relationship or for material gain? Why is the difference important?
- ❖ Why is it important to follow Jesus wholeheartedly?
- ❖ Why is it important to follow Jesus immediately?
- ❖ What is it so dangerous to make excuses when it comes to following Jesus immediately?
- ❖ How often do you consider the cost of following Jesus?

## Section 2: 23-27 – Jesus is Sovereign over Nature

*<sup>23</sup>As he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. <sup>24</sup>Suddenly, a violent storm arose on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves—but Jesus kept sleeping. <sup>25</sup>So the disciples came and woke him up, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to die!” <sup>26</sup>He said to them, “Why are you afraid, you of little faith?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. <sup>27</sup>The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the sea obey him!” (CSB)*

As Jesus and the disciples cross the sea of Galilee a violent storm begins to overtake the boat. We know the storm was intense because the professional fishermen were panicked. During this intense storm, where was Jesus? He was asleep. Jesus was able to sleep because His mission was impossible to stop. Because Jesus’ purpose is unstoppable, peace in the midst of the storm was possible.

Through Jesus we too can have peace. But having a biblical understanding of peace is important. Peace is not the absence of conflict, tribulation or hardship. True peace is trust in action. Regardless of our lack of abilities, gifts, understanding; it all really does come down to trusting God with all our hearts. Proverbs 3:5-6:

*<sup>5</sup>Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; <sup>6</sup>in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight. (CSB)*

Jesus showed us how to perfectly trust our Heavenly Father. Jesus knew His mission and trusted that nothing could stop it. Whatever God calls us to do, we can trust that God will accomplish it. We can see Paul’s confidence in Philippians 1:6:

*<sup>6</sup>I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (CSB)*

The disciples became desperate enough that they woke up Jesus. Again, this storm had to be intense if the professional fishermen were waking up the carpenter for help. We know they didn’t wake Him up because they believed He could stop the storm. They just wanted the extra help in trying to keep the boat from sinking. We see this fully when Jesus calmed the storm and the disciples were overly amazed. Matthew 8:27:

*<sup>27</sup>The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the sea obey him!” (CSB)*

Before Jesus calms the storm, He questioned their faith. Did they really believe that this was the end? They had missed the purpose of Jesus like so many others. Jesus was going to the cross and no person or thing could stop Him. As He calms the storm notice the results again are immediate. Every command given to nature, demons or sickness was immediate. Jesus didn’t have to conjure up the “spirits”. Jesus didn’t have to beg God to work. Actually, Jesus didn’t have to pray at all. He just spoke and nature obeyed immediately. This points to the fact that Jesus was the one who created nature and nature will always respond immediately to the Creator. We see this truth in John 1:3.

*<sup>3</sup>All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. (CSB)*

The storm obeying Jesus amazed the disciples. That would amaze anyone. The disciples are starting to understand that Jesus is more than a prophet, more than a teacher...He truly is Immanuel, God with us.

### Discussion Questions

- ❖ How do you respond when the storms of life come your way?
- ❖ How would you describe peace to others?
- ❖ When is it easy to have peace?
- ❖ When is it difficult to have peace?
- ❖ Why is it important to remember that true peace is only possible through Jesus?
- ❖ How does Jesus “calming the storm” point to the fact that He is the Son of God?

### Section 3: 28-34 – The Light is Too Bright

*<sup>28</sup>When he had come to the other side, to the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him as they came out of the tombs. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. <sup>29</sup>Suddenly they shouted, “What do you have to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?” <sup>30</sup>A long way off from them, a large herd of pigs was feeding. <sup>31</sup>“If you drive us out,” the demons begged him, “send us into the herd of pigs.” <sup>32</sup>“Go!” he told them. So when they had come out, they entered the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the water. <sup>33</sup>Then the men who tended them fled. They went into the city and reported everything, especially what had happened to those who were demon-possessed. <sup>34</sup>At that, the whole town went out to meet Jesus. When they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.*

Once Jesus and the disciples reach the other side, they encounter a community that has been altered by demons. This man possessed by demons had changed the day to day lives of the whole community. Remember fishing was the primary source of food and commerce for the towns around the sea of Galilee. This community could no longer go down to the sea. The demons had been around so long that the people had gotten to the point of ignoring the evil and working around it. Why would people allow such evil to go unchecked? They were hopeless. The demons were too powerful for them to overcome.

Jesus arrives in this community and simply steps onto the shore and changes everything. His presence alone is enough to create fear in the demons. Here we have demons creating fear in everyone else by their wild actions, and they experience fear simply by Jesus’ presence. This shows the vastness between the “little” power the demons had and the infinite power Jesus had.

Immediately the demons approach Jesus and begged for mercy. Why did they respond immediately? Because they understood Jesus’ position and power. They didn’t even try to challenge, question or doubt His authority. Just like the sicknesses and storms, we see that even the demons obey immediately. Jesus didn’t conjure the “spirits”, pray for intervention or beg them to respond...He simply spoke and they obeyed immediately.

Interestingly the demons enter a herd of pigs and immediately run into the water and drowned. Why pigs? Or better yet, why did this Israelite community have a herd of pigs? Pigs were considered unclean and according to the Law of Moses, Israelites were not allowed to eat pigs. Either they were violating the law themselves or they were profiting off others violating the law. Either way, they were living in disobedience to God. Ultimately, they were calling something bad good. So, there were two evils in that community. The demons and outright disobedience to God.

Jesus addresses both evils in one simple action. This is the classic two birds with one stone moment. How did the community respond? Did they rejoice that evil had been eradicated? Did they rejoice that a man had been redeemed? Did they rejoice that they were given a fresh start? Did they rejoice that they had access to the sea back? No. They walked to together in unity, begging Jesus to leave. This shows us that they loved their sin. Sin had so captivated their lives that they would have preferred a man suffer and be tortured than to be free. And worst of, all they would rather live in rebellion to God.

#### Discussion Questions

- ❖ Evil comes in many shapes and sizes; how can we recognize when something is evil?
- ❖ How has sin altered your day to day life?
- ❖ How does the presence of Jesus change things?
- ❖ How do the demons respond to Jesus immediately point to Him being the Son of God?
- ❖ How easy is it to justify the sins in our lives?
- ❖ How do we let go of sins that have entangled us?