

The cost of following Jesus

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 February 2019

Preacher: Chris Fry

[0:00] The story of the calming of the storm and the waves.! It's a lot of healing and it's rather wonderful to see this healing of the storm.

The text is also found in a very parallel way in Luke chapter 9 verses 57 and 62.

Very similar words but there's an additional exchange between Jesus and another would-be disciple. But then the context is slightly different. Although it is utterly clear in both passages that this is about the essential characteristic of a true following of Jesus.

What it means to be a disciple. And the uninspired heading in the NIV, the cost of following Jesus, is actually spot on. These two passages.

As I say the context of Luke is different. And we won't be really making reference to that. But it's just interesting to note in the word that sometimes the same things are said by Jesus.

[1:28] And the gospel writers choose to pick up another context surrounding those words. But here we're looking at the context in Matthew. First sight and second sight, this passage is a bit of a letdown.

After the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, we have these undeniable and remarkable visual miracles. Which causes an enormous stir.

Jesus himself is astonished. That's the word. He is astonished when he sees the faith of the centurion. Jesus heard this in verse 10.

He was astonished and said to those following him, I tell you the truth, I've not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. And it's a reminder to him, a glorious reminder, that what he is doing now is not parochial.

It's not fixed in Israel. What is going to be done is going to be done throughout the whole world. All the Gentile nations will be responding to these words.

[2:40] And we are the blessed recipients of that, aren't we, tonight. Seems like everything has stepped up a gear and everyone's attention has been grabbed.

So, verse 16, or 18 rather, whilst not connected directly to the previous heading, in fact tells us what the effects of such healings were having.

When Jesus saw the crowd around him, there was a vast crowd gathering. Of course there would be. They loved his words, but they were even more intoxicated by the miracles.

They were astonished by those miracles. And so the crowd gathers. And for several reasons, it was time to take stock of what was happening.

And Jesus, rather than responding to the adulation of the crowd, actually says, we're going to get into a boat and we've got to go somewhere. And I'll give you three reasons why that is the case.

[3:43] If it's not the only case in the Gospels where this sort of effect occurs, Jesus himself knew it was not the time. It was not yet the time for him to be taken by force, as it were, and made an earthly Messiah.

And so, because he always knew God's time, he breaks at that point and says, we're going off. And I love that mastery of the situation that Jesus has.

That he knows exactly what his father's will is, and he will not be dissuaded by all the adulation of the crowd. For us, it would seem like this is the moment.

This is the moment to press the button, to go ahead. He's got the force of the people behind him. But he's not come to do that, has he? No, he's come to do something far more profound than just be carried triumphantly into Jerusalem and overthrow a puppet empire.

So Jesus needs to take himself off and he... So, so the boat. But the disciples need that as well, don't they?

[4:57] Because they could just be taken up by the general excitement and the hype. And we need to hear that as well tonight, so that we never forget that...

We never forget why Jesus came. And we're not confused and mixed up with earthly messiahs and the like.

Jesus knew his time hadn't come, but he says in John 17, on that last week, now the time has come. Now the time has come for the Son to be glorified.

And he will not have any premature expression of that glorification, because that would defeat God's perfect purpose. If he were to act now, everything else that should take place before the trial of the cross would be lost, and that would be a disaster.

He will not be deflected from the way he's going. Before they were able to set sail, people are still clamoring to join themselves more intimately with him.

[6:26] And we have two cases here. The first is in verse 19, that a teacher of the law came to him and said, teacher, I will follow you wherever you go. I want you to notice firstly it was a teacher of the law, otherwise called scribes.

Jesus has much to say about teachers of the law. They're bad news. Generally speaking, they're bad news. They had their agenda, and Jesus was a threat to their agenda.

And here is this man who's a teacher of the law. And it's clear he's a teacher of the law. People knew that. You know, they wore their profession on their sleeve, as it were. And it wasn't a hidden thing.

And so here's a remarkable man. He's breaking ranks with his peer group. And he's coming to Jesus, and publicly coming to Jesus, and saying aloud, I will follow you wherever you go.

Well, changing sides. Well, doing so publicly. Not like Nicodemus at night. Providing himself in that crowd and saying, without any qualification, I will follow you wherever you go.

[7:51] And I think immediately, what would our reaction be? Shake his hand. Put my arm around him. Great.

Fantastic. Work of God. How extraordinary. Can't think of any other instance in the Gospel record of a man like this, who seems so wholehearted, so willing to go public.

Getting baptised. But Jesus' reply, doesn't seem so, so encouraging, does it?

Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests. A sort of man has nowhere to lay his head. Are you really wanting to follow me wherever I go? Ah, why is this?

Because Jesus knows the hearts of all. Knows the hearts of all men. He sees beyond your words and mine, and he reads the heart.

[8:59] In John chapter 2, verse 24, please turn to that.

John chapter 2, verse 24, I read from verse 23, while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name.

They believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men.

He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man. He didn't need other people to tell him, he's a great guy, because he knew what was in a man.

He knows what's in your heart. He sees and reads your heart, doesn't he? That's a very awesome thing. We present ourselves well to one another as followers of the Lord Jesus, but the Lord knows our heart, and he knows exactly what we're like.

[10:28] He knows us better than ourselves. He sees past the confusion of our own understandings and the fickleness of our ways, and he reads the heart. And in many cases, he's discouraged and disappointed by what he reads there.

But wonderfully, he does find in the hearts of some, people who are of his own heart, like David, and may God, by God's grace, you and me.

He read this man's heart and he found something that wasn't quite right. And so he gives this rather dismissive and disappointing response to the man.

Unlike any of us, he can read every heart precisely. and he can do so because he's God.

And he assures the world that he will understand understand each person.

[11:55] Jesus replied, foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests. The son of man has no place to lay his head. how true this was of Jesus and it would always remain the case until the end of his life.

William Hendrickson very helpfully says in his commentary on Matthew, Judea rejects him in John 5, Galilee casts him out in John 6, Gadara begs him to leave its district in Matthew 8.

Samaria refuses him lodgings in Luke 9. Earth will not have it in Matthew 27 and finally even heaven forsakes him. Apparently so.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He's got nowhere to lay his head. In one of the Apostles John writes with solemn astonishment in John 1, verse 10, he was in the world and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.

He came to that which was his own but his own did not receive him. Despised and rejected of men. Nowhere to lay his head.

[13:19] This is the path that Jesus trod and now and for the first time in the Gospel record he says he's treading it as the Son of Man.

You see that? But the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. He doesn't say I've got nowhere to lay my head. He says the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. You know the connection?

The Son of Man? Where do you find that connection? Daniel. Book of Daniel chapter 7 verse 13. 600 years before Christ the prophesied Christ comes to the earth.

Daniel has a vision and it's found in Daniel 7 and 13. Would you like to turn to that? So page 892.

In my vision at night I looked and there before me was one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the ancient of days and was led into his presence.

[14:38] He was given authority, glory and sovereign power. All peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

this is the true destiny of Jesus who had nowhere to lay his head although he had rights over every inch of the earth that he had made.

this is the true destiny of Jesus which is now being fulfilled in heavenly places. He has been given authority and he is Lord of lords and King of kings.

This is the Jesus who is with us tonight. This is the one who has been exalted on high and given a name above every name so that every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father.

This is the one to whom the nations will bring their ransom. This is the one to whom every knee will bow. You and I willingly or unwillingly will bow the knee to this one because he is the Lord and this is his true destiny.

[16:08] And so he very poignantly says the Son of Man this Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head on the very earth that he's made. That's going to be transformed.

But he willingly embraced the road to his destiny because he's also the man of sorrows. And where do we find that?

man of sorrows and equated with grief. Isaiah 53 So his life on earth is to be characterized by he was despised and rejected by men.

A man of sorrows and familiar with suffering like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised and we esteemed him not. And that was typically a response that Jesus Christ had upon earth.

Completely misunderstood. There was not a trace of the Son of Man about him in people's eyes. They couldn't see Daniel 7 being fulfilled in him at all.

[17:43] But it was God the Father's deliberate will that his son should tread the path of sorrow and being despised and rejected. And that was the road he deliberately took each day of his life.

He chose to embrace that road. This is the way I'm going. Amen. Amen. Amen. He's acquainted with grief and he will carry the burden of rejection in an awful way right to the cross and even to the apparent forsaking by his own Father.

To fulfill to the uttermost and drink to the bottom of that cup. the forsakenness that belongs to all of us because of our sin.

We should be forsaken by God. That hell should be our portion but he takes it. And his life is a picture of that, picture language day by day of that forsakenness that will someday reach an awful climax at three hours on Calvary's Hill when the night comes darkness covers there's no light and the Father's felt presence is removed from him and he will do that for us.

And here's the connection back to chapter 8 verse 17 of Matthew where the healings are quite suddenly transported into something very significant.

[19:36] This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah. He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases. So the key to this is the cross and the key to Jesus' life is the pathway to the cross.

And in a way he's taking up his cross each day and one day he'll take up a real cross and die upon it. And so he says in John 15 verse 20 no servant is greater than his master.

And the apostles were very keen to tell the early Christians what kind of life the disciple would need to live. Acts 14 verses 21 and 22 Acts 14 verses 21 and 22 Paul and Barnabas preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples and they returned to Lystra Iconium and Antioch strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith.

We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God they said. It's inevitable. It's the only way.

We have to take up our cross daily and follow him. We will not find the real cross for ourselves because only one person has been good enough to lie upon that cross to pay the price for our sin.

[21:34] But we are followers of Jesus and it's the way of the cross. A follower has to follow.

there's no shortcut to glory. We fix our eyes on Jesus and the only way of doing that is to follow him and to see where he trod and to hold fast to him with our eyes and our hands in his and follow him. The way he went is the way we have to go. where he heads we go on. The cross before the crown. this is surely the story of the people of faith in Hebrews 11, isn't it?

You don't find any of them dancing into heavenly places. They went through much tribulation, trusting into the better world that was lying ahead. They suffered persecution, rejection, opposition.

[22:48] It's the story of the people of God. Nothing new. It's the path that the Old Testament saints took. It's the path New Testament saints took. It's the path that Calvary saints have to take.

We have to follow the way of the cross. And it's sorrowful and there's rejection. And that's why it says in Hebrews 12, consider him who endures such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

We look at him and we see he went to the extent of shedding his blood. We might have to do that. Consider him who for the joy set before him endured the cross despising its shame and is now set down at the right hand of God.

Consider him so you won't get discouraged. Jesus says to every one who would follow, count the cost.

It's the first thing before you make the step. You count the cost. It's the thing you have to do every day. If you claim you're a follower of Christ, you have to count the cost.

[24:07] are you seriously willing for this sort of Jesus following?

Because this is the only one that matters, the only one that has significance, the only one that will endure. And Jesus was not impressed or hoodwinked by the emotional commitment because he knew that this man hadn't begun to count the cost.

Remember, Jesus is God and he reads the hearts of all. So when this man says to him, Lord, teacher, I'll follow you wherever you go, Jesus saw his heart.

I'm afraid he saw that there was a very real emotional response there that man hadn't counted the cost. Do you really realize what this is going to mean?

Are you willing to pay that price? willing to pay that price? to actually go anywhere where Jesus wants you to go and be wherever Jesus wants you to be and become whoever Jesus wants you to become.

[25:52] What a solemn warning this is for all of us today. we want the crown to bask in the reflected glory of the risen Christ, to see his mighty works and to be present with him in glory.

Isn't that where the disciples got it wrong, wasn't it? John and James. we want to be on your right hand. Give us a place next to the throne. You don't know what you're asking.

You've got it wrong. It's the cross before the crown. There's no shortcut to heaven and glory. The followers have to follow Jesus in his pathway.

Jesus says we have to follow him outside the camp. Hebrews 13 says let us go to him outside the camp. You remember that symbolism?

The camp. The camp is the place of the security of God's people. The camp is the place of togetherness, of unity, solidarity.

[27:07] The camp is the place where God's presence was known. And it seems the obvious place to be, but Jesus went outside the camp and we had to go outside the camp and bear rejection and opposition.

It was a place where people were cast out who had misbehaved in certain ways, oblivion almost, outside the camp. well, that's a calling.

We do it one by one, but praise God we do it as a family of God. The cross before the crown is the pathway for every Christian to follow, and are you willing for that?

Yes. Well, wouldn't it be wonderful tonight if we would be able to say, by God's grace and power, that's the way I want to go.

And I do that because he gave up everything for me. So it's my right response, it's my necessary response, in the words of Romans 12 verse 1, in view of God's mercies, offer yourselves, your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

[28:35] Offer your bodies, what does that mean? It means the whole of our lives, our physical lives here, are to be offered to him. That's a reasonable response, it's a reasonable worship, it's the right thing to do, it's the appropriate thing to do, anything other is inappropriate.

what a blessing it is to hear the words of Jesus saying, come unto me all who are weary and heavy laden, I'll give you rest.

What a blessed thing it is to hear him say, my yoke is easy and my burden is light. There is a cross, but we're going to go forward on the cross road with Jesus.

Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, I am humble and meek of heart. We will be deeply encouraged, we will be strengthened. By God's grace, we will be given grace to follow every day in this way.

Jesus is not playing games with us. He's not setting us an impossible pathway, he's setting for us a delightful pathway, because we are going to trade it with him.

[29:53] And where he's trod, we will tread, and with his strength we will go, and by his grace and sweet power and his sufficiency, we will be carried forward.

And Jesus wants to say that to every disciple, every potential disciple and every present disciple, follow that way. And you and I need to take that moment now to say in our hearts, yes Lord, that's what I want to do.

Because it's the only way. The world is full of people who make easy professions. We don't want to be amongst that crowd, do we?

you and I have seen far too many people who've made responses but have drifted far far from the Lord because they didn't start right.

Their hearts weren't really in it. They didn't count the cost. make sure you counted the cost.

[31:12] It's the thing to do. You will never regret that moment. But what of the second man?

He seems rather different. He says, Lord, first let me go and bury my father. Go back to Matthew chapter eight. Lord, first let me go and bury my father.

It's a very reasonable request, isn't it? Especially in Jewish society where it was the strict requirement of the son to have responsibility for everything to do with the death of the father.

But Jesus knows this man as well. He's God. John 2.24 has told us already he didn't commit himself to people. He knew what was in men's hearts. So something is going on here.

So our reaction would be, of course, that's your right thing to do. Off you go. Some people have found Jesus' response here to be so harsh and brutal that they thought it must be meaning something different.

[32:35] Perhaps he's saying, perhaps the man is saying, metaphorically, my father's dying. He's not long to go. I just need to be there. I need to be in the family home. I need to take charge of matters.

I need to make sure that transition is good. So that would be an okay thing, wouldn't it, in a way. Just let me deal with that. Maybe that betrays something else. Maybe that just suggests that he's not really ready to follow Jesus now.

There's a not yet. There's a not yet. Jesus told him, follow me, let the dead bury their own dead. I'm inclined to the literal interpretation, actually.

[33:44] perhaps the father had died suddenly and he's just received, the son has just received the information whilst in the crowd. And Jewish burials have to happen within a day or two.

And he says, I need to be off. Jesus reads his heart. And sees that there's more.

God's And is exposed in those simple words. And I believe he sees in this man that something will just keep on cropping up in his life that will always have a not yet about it.

There'll be something that will trump the call of God. Something will always just be a bit stronger as a compelling argument in his life.

love. And the wholehearted and radical response that Jesus demands. Please don't take either of these stories as sort of a kind of a crass literalism.

[34:57] I remember that Jesus on the cross committed his dear mother to John to look after in his own home. Nothing wrong in homes.

But it's the heart that Jesus looks at. Whether it's a home or it's a son's duty or responsibility. In the end the most important thing is are we listening to the voice of God?

Are we wanting to hear his will and to do what he says? And for this second man there's just something that Jesus sees that we don't see but I'm sure he does see it and he sees that something's going to keep cropping up in this man's life.

But it won't end with the burial. But then there'll be family responsibilities for the son to pick up. Situations to be sorted.

New opportunities in life to be explored. And how many people there are who put off coming to Jesus Christ because they're full of studies, they've got to get their exams done, they've got to pass.

[36:16] relationships, oh relationships, how they get in the way don't they? How people are not prepared to sacrifice a relationship for the sake of following Christ.

And then family life is so busy I've got no time to be dedicating myself to be serious with Jesus. sickness. And then it's sickness.

And then it's muddly worries. And how quickly the years go by. So we find ourselves at the end of a life where we've just kept putting off the most important decision that we should ever make.

there's never a convenient time to come to Christ to suit our time frames and plans.

Can I repeat that? There is never a convenient time to come to Christ which suits our time frames and plans. Jesus Christ call is very inconvenient.

[37:31] Because he only gives you now. Now is the day of salvation. Now is the day of grace. Today if you hear his voice do not harden your heart.

There's only one moment and it's now. And now means now. It means tonight. It means that's the call is tonight.

Most of you I think I look around and most of you have all the information you need about Jesus and how wonderful he is. And what a great Lord and saviour he is to follow. You're not lacking information.

If you're lacking anything it's a serious will to follow him. To obey. And do that now. And I ask you to do that now.

In your heart. So most seriously commit yourself to him now. Now in your heart giving all to Christ.

[38:41] Christ. And what I think we learn from all of this whole story here which is a message for all of us because please don't bypass this to someone else you're thinking of in this room tonight is the importance of whole heartedness as Christians.

as Christian followers whole heartedness. I preached some months ago about that wonderful passage in Proverbs.

You're not on your own understanding but in all your ways acknowledge him. In all your ways acknowledge him. But you and I know that we all have ways where we don't acknowledge him. There are parts of our lives which are not given to him which we just say you can have this but you're not having all of me. You can even have 99% but I must have this 1% for myself.

And what a trap and a danger that is because that's not whole heartedness. I'm not talking about sin and failure. David was a man after God's own heart but he sinned and failed.

[40:00] But he was still whole hearted. He knew he done wrong. He went to the fountain and got cleansed by the blood of Jesus. He received God's mercy and God lifted him up again.

His heart was whole. And that's what Jesus delighted to see in people and delights to see in us tonight. Whole heartedness. That's not about emotion when I talk about the heart.

I don't mean the emotion. emotion. You can be emotionally moved tonight but that won't move you a jot closer to Christ unless you've made a serious move in your will.

And you have determined and looked him face to face and said the whole of me is with you. And you can truly say I will follow you wherever you go.

not in my own strength but by God's grace. That's the great thing isn't it? I've got no confidence in my ability to follow Christ.

[41:10] I've absolute confidence that I can put my hand in the hand of Christ and he will hold me every day. Do you believe that? Do you know that?

And dear friends this is the way we have to tread one by one in our family homes and in the crises of life and in the situations we're going through as a church just now we're going to be wholehearted aren't we?

We're not going to depend upon human resources we're certainly not going to depend upon our own abilities we're going to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and we're going to follow him wherever he leads and wherever he says and by God's grace we will obey and that's our calling tonight and that's the message of God to us tonight from his own word so may God help us to please him and to receive that wonderful welcome well done good and faithful servant enter into the joy of your Lord amen let's sing again Transcription by CastingWords Transcription by CastingWords