

# Matthew 8:18–27

*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: 05 March 2023

Preacher: Bing Nieh

[ 0 : 00 ] to 27. This is what the Bible says. Now, when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. And a scribe came up and said to him, teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.

And Jesus said to him, foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head. Another of the disciples said to him, Lord, let me first go and bury my father. And Jesus said to him, follow me and leave the dead to bury their own dead. And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him and behold, there arose a great storm on the sea so that the boat was being swamped by the waves, but he was asleep. And they went and woke him saying, save us, Lord, we are perishing. And he said to them, why are you afraid? Oh, you of little faith.

And he rose and rebuked the wind and the seas. And there was a great calm. And the men marveled saying, what sort of man is this that even winds and sea obey him? This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, it is a joy and a privilege to be here on this morning to worship the Lord with you. If you are visiting, welcome to Christ Church, Chicago.

Let me just pause and pray as we open the Bible together. Father, you do lift us up. May we hear his word. May we sense his presence. May we be strengthened for his service.

[ 2 : 15 ] We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. In 2011, a film was made called Hero Dreams of Sushi.

It's a documentary featuring arguably the greatest living sushi chef, Hero. His name is Jiro, J-I-R-O.

He had mastered the craft and all its elements over the course of his lifetime. He is now nearing the age of 90 and he owns a restaurant that seats only 10.

It's hosted many well-known figures from former presidents to important diplomats, famous figures. He has received the highest dining award known, namely three Michelin stars.

According to the Michelin rating last year, there are only 142 such known restaurants in the world. 14 are in the United States of America.

[ 3 : 25 ] One is in Chicago. It is a 45-day advance reservation. They don't take walk-ups and you need at least \$300 to eat.

The documentary certainly follows the main figure. But what was intriguing to me about the documentary were those who came alongside Hero.

In his passion, he had two sons who were involved in the restaurant and a handful of other help. And these apprentices spent years watching, observing, trying to glean wisdom and insight to master the craft of sushi making.

The documentary reveals that it had been 10 years for one apprentice before he was tasked to making the easiest sushi, egg sushi.

10 years. When it was his turn after 10 years, he said it took him four months, nearly 200 tries, before the master said it was ready.

[ 4 : 50 ] He cried when it happened. The resolve and the commitment to a craft is commendable. Some would even say it's ridiculous or absurd.

I watched the show and it was entertaining. But I would never set off for such an endeavor. It was great to watch and to witness. But I would never put myself through all that work or that effort.

I enjoyed it. But I certainly wouldn't pursue it. I appreciated it. But certainly I wouldn't want to follow him. And I open this way because that's the feeling we are to get from this morning's text.

There are many who appreciate Jesus. His ministry. His message. But don't want to follow him.

There is admiration. But no dedication. And here from the outset, I want to lay out this warning. It is possible to admire Jesus and not be devoted to him.

[ 6 : 00 ] It is possible to even meet Jesus. To marvel at Jesus. But in the end, be rejected and renounced by him.

It's not difficult to imagine the increasing popularity of Jesus. There you have it. In verse 16 of chapter 8.

That evening they brought to Jesus many who were oppressed by demons. And he cast out the spirits with the word. And healed all who were sick. A new kingdom had emerged.

And its enemies were being driven out. Sickness, suffering, evil, the demonic were all being dispelled. Jesus the king had now drawn a crowd.

And many spectators all wanted to see what he would do next. To watch the mighty miracle worker perform. Perhaps some would think Jesus is a form of entertainment.

[ 7 : 05 ] He's the mesmerizing movie. The next show to binge or the social media content to be consumed. And lest we think we can merely watch Jesus.

We come to this morning's passage and are confronted with this mistaken thinking that Jesus is some spectacle. He is not a performer. He is not an athlete.

He is not a musician or a magician to be watched. But he is God's son to be worshipped. Kings are not looking for spectators.

Kings are looking for subjects. Jesus is not looking for fans. Jesus is calling followers.

This morning, I want to show you that Jesus is calling radical followers of faith.

[ 8 : 05 ] Jesus is calling radical followers of faith. He is looking for disciples. I have tagged this morning's sermon.

I have decided to follow Jesus. I have decided to follow Jesus. And we'll take this passage in two parts this morning. Firstly, following Jesus will be radical.

Following Jesus will be radical. And secondly, I couldn't alliterate. I tried, but I couldn't. Following Jesus requires faith. Following Jesus will be radical.

Following Jesus requires faith. In verse 18, the crowd seemed to be overwhelming. And Jesus wanted to move away from the masses. And he gave the order to cross the Sea of Galilee.

At this point, we're not exactly sure how many disciples are with Jesus. We've been introduced up to this point to Andrew, Peter, James, and John.

[ 9 : 06 ] And maybe reading it, you presume it's the 12. We're not quite sure. But what we see is Jesus is getting ready to move from Capernaum.

And as he does so, others express the desire to go with him. In verses 8 to 22, you'll see, we'll see two prospective disciples who interrupt his travels and say, Jesus, I want to get in the boat.

I want to come too. And here it's worth pausing to define what a disciple is. It would be someone who is committed to learning from another.

Primarily through following, through living with, spending time with. In Jesus' day, it was largely in the religious context. Where an aspiring student would identify a particular teacher or rabbi to follow and learn from.

If you're pursuing an advanced degree, you know the importance of selecting the right doctoral advisor. The Dr. Vader or Dr. Mutter, who you study under, can often shape the trajectory of your professional life.

[ 10 : 21 ] It is an apprenticeship sitting under a master, learning a craft or a skill. It is hours and hours of watching, observing, inquiring, and figuring out how to do something well.

And in verse 19, we see a scribe approach Jesus, depicting this relationship of teacher and student. A scribe was an expert in the Old Testament law.

They were given to undistracted study and its preservation. They were teachers themselves and would often have their very own students.

Educated and accomplished, a scribe approaches Jesus and asserts that he is ready to follow Jesus. Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.

A bystander would have heard the remark and said, this is great. This authenticates the mark of Jesus' ministry. People want to join the movement. Particularly an individual with high social standing.

[ 11 : 22 ] It legitimizes Jesus' work. It adds credibility to the unfolding kingdom. But what we find here is quite striking.

Because Jesus responds to the enthusiastic scribe with a confusing remark. Foxes have holes. Birds of the air have nests.

But the Son of Man has no place to rest or lay his head. In other words, foxes have places to sleep. The birds of the air have places to sleep.

But the Son of Man, I, Jesus is using, I have no place to sleep. And we'll see that to be true because he will sleep on a boat shortly. Jesus is revealing to the scribe and the would-be follower that when he is self-enlisting, what the life he is self-enlisting himself into is not a life of permanence, lavish luxury, five-star hotels, or prominence.

No, it's actually an itinerant life. It's a temporal life. It's a homeless life. And if you're looking for comfort and stability, Jesus is saying, you need to know, it won't be found following me.

[ 12 : 51 ] If you're looking for personal gain or advancement, you won't find it following me. If you're looking for mansions and palaces, you won't find it following me.

To follow Jesus requires one to set their sights, not on earthly gain, actually on great loss. You see, home for you and I oftentimes represents safety and security and stability.

And what Jesus is doing is showing us it's going to be jettisoned somehow. Can you give that up? Would you follow Jesus if it meant that you would never feel at home?

Would you follow Jesus if you constantly felt displaced or didn't belong, never at ease, always uncomfortable?

It would be as if you were a permanent wanderer, enduring migrant, perpetual alien, never at home. Would you follow Jesus if you were a sojourner and an exile?

[ 14 : 11 ] You see, the Bible actually tells us we are passing through. Earth is just your layover. It is not the final destination.

And what we learn from this scribe or what we learn from Jesus' response to this scribe is discipleship will be radical. Why?

Because discipleship will demand all your earthly comforts. Jesus is calling us to set our eyes on the eternal.

We are those who acknowledge we're strangers and exiles on the earth, making clear that we have a homeland elsewhere, a better country, a heavenly one. See, the scribe is confronted by his apparent failure to count the cost of true discipleship.

It's an enthusiastic, certainly an enthusiastic commitment, a zealous commitment. But as one of my former seminary profs writes, he says, he promises too much and he cannot deliver.

[ 15 : 15 ] There is a reality that many may rush into the relationship with Jesus and they haven't measured and calculated it. And here we have a great caution that many will enthusiastically, even emotionally, rush into these things, having tasted the goodness of the Lord.

But when confronted with challenges and difficulty, the initial intrigue fades and so does their desire to follow. I haven't lived long. I haven't lived long.

But I have seen it in the lives of young men and women. Great professions are made in moments of fervor, emotional fervor.

One meets Jesus. One's impacted by the spirit. One's impacted by the spirit.

One's impacted by the spirit. In all these areas, we will feel an expense or a cost. J.C. Ryle, in his classic book entitled Holiness, it's an incredible book.

[ 16 : 47 ] He writes the costs of being a true Christian and he identifies four. He says it will cost you your self-righteousness. you have to cast away your pride and your high thoughts and your conceit of your own goodness it will cost you your love of sin must be willing to give up every habit and practice that is wrong in god's sight it will cost one your love of ease it will cost one favor the favor of the world he writes one must therefore daily watch and stand on their guard like a soldier on enemy's ground one must take heed to their behavior every hour of every day in every company in every place in public as well as in private among strangers as well as at home one must be careful over one's time one's tongue one's temper one's thoughts one's imaginations one's motive one's conduct in every relation of life following jesus comes at a great cost secondly what we see here is another disciple would-be disciple comes in verse 21 and he interjects and expresses his desire but he also presents an obligation that he has jesus i want to follow you as well but let me first go and bury my father there is a family responsibility a filial duty even an upholding of the fifth commandment to honor father and mother it could be that his father had recently passed away and a burial was required or that his father was advancing in age older and his request actually revealed his desire to delay following jesus until his father had passed jesus's response is dismissive even insensitive leave the dead to bury their own dead it likely means something like let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead jesus's response is forceful confrontational challenging the disciple to consider what is truly important even surpassing blood relations and family commitment to jesus commitment to jesus will transcend even the most important earthly obligations following jesus would become the priority to which all other priorities would come under there would be nothing that demanded more than following jesus see the text conveys the sense of urgency if we are to read the father to be in old age the second request is actually one of delay jesus i want to follow you but let me just stall for a little bit let me straighten out my life and then i'll follow you let these things transpire and then i'll follow you wait until i'm a little bit more established and then i'll follow you when i graduate wait i will follow you when i secure a job i will follow you when i have a home i will follow you and the excuses go on and on and on but here following jesus is the urgent priority if discipleship if discipleship will demand all your earthly comfort then here we find that discipleship will demand all of your attention all of your attention all of your attention

it will be your utmost it must be your utmost and supreme concern there are no matters that precede it in importance there are no matters that displace it in significance there is no bigger question in your life that you have to answer then what shall i do with jesus or how do i follow jesus better see the scribe was one who hastily promised discipleship and did not understand its demands the second individual delayed discipleship because he could not meet its demands the first presumed discipleship oh it's easy anyone can do it the second presumed discipleship was secondary and unimportant see in reflecting upon these five verses you have this radical nature of discipleship jesus arguably takes the most two distinctive facets of human life and subjects them to his lordship what is the most valuable relationship you have in your life for this man arguably the second man it's arguably his father and i can't help but think of this that we have this desire to be at home i'm not speaking of real estate or material goods but speaking of this deeper sense of belonging rootedness resting settling security it's this idea that somehow i need to feel at home in this world i want to make myself comfortable here but that's not the call to discipleship that jesus lays out the second individual is this takes what is most valuable in terms of family and blood relations i have duties to loved ones parents spouse and children and yet jesus lays claim over them as well our sense of belonging permanence home our loved ones relationships that which is most dear jesus grabs both of them and says i'm more than both following jesus will be radical secondly following jesus will require faith jesus gets into the boat and his disciples followed him that's the word that links these two passages the one who has no place to lay his head now lays down his head on a boat bound across the sea sea of galilee sits about 600 feet below sea level it's surrounded by hills and mountainous regions and one can imagine that if the wind kicks up over this the sea or the lake and they get caught between the mountains great storms can certainly emerge discipleship would be radical but the next lesson that matthew wants us to learn is discipleship requires faith it is no accident that jesus leads his disciples into a storm the scene gives us these two pictures one of tranquility and one of turmoil so if you had one camera you would let it rest upon jesus who is very tranquil he's at sleep undeterred by everything around him he's at peace calm and still at rest the second camera would pan into the disciples it's one of picture

a picture of turmoil and chaos a great storm that has emerged the boat was swamped and being engulfed by the wind it was being engulfed by the winds and the waves the great storm is actually a great shaking the sea was quaking there was a commotion in the heart of the earth the disciples are frantic and desperate and it's heard in their cry lord save us save us lord we are perishing and jesus arises and rebukes the wind and the sea and what was a great storm is now met by a great calm panic is met by peace and those who are perishing in an instant are preserved and what jesus says is what we need to latch on to like the previous episode with the would-be disciples what jesus says is instructive regarding discipleship and following jesus why are you afraid why are you scared why are you fearful oh you of little faith it should be read as a corrective remark he's not putting them down rather he is giving them a portrait of discipleship discipleship demands faith following jesus will require faith when things get really really really difficult you must demonstrate faith following jesus one writer writes doesn't lead us into safe havens it leads us into danger though you and i may walk through the valley of the shadow of death we are not to fear for he is with us that kind of faith what is faith forsaking all i trust him that's the acronym um forsaking all i trust him faith means confidence in jesus in all circumstances it means courage it's the opposite of panic faith is not um something that arises out of self-confidence but it's something that arises courage that rises out of the confidence that jesus is with us and that he is equal to every circumstance and danger see what's immensely encouraging is that all they had was a little faith isn't that encouraging just a little faith they at least knew who to turn to it wasn't volumes of faith it wasn't a sure faith it didn't even appear like a solid faith but it was faith demonstrated in going to the only one they knew who could help you and i would be helped to remember that there are at least four fishermen on this boat peter james peter andrew james and john by now they had probably survived every possible storm they had probably suffered through many storm soaked ship rides they were all aware of the strategies and tactics of survival through storms but they had never encountered this survival strategy they may have jettisoned cargo they may have taken down sails they may have lowered anchors and held on for dear life but never never did they encounter a man who could speak to the storm the result is recorded for us in verse 27 and the men marveled saying what sort of man is this even the winds

and the sea obey him matthew the writer wants us to know that in the boat is the ruler of all nature he is the lord over the wind and the waves and even as the earthquakes or groans or rages it will be jesus who puts it to rest in the bible only god has the prerogative to control nature it's seen in various places in job the psalms most relevantly probably psalm 107 it speaks of various people who experience god's deliverance and here in psalm 107 verse 23 i'm just going to read a few of the verses that are ascribed only to god when some went down this psalm 107 23 some went down in the to the sea and ships doing business on the great waters they saw the deeds of the lord his wondrous works in the deep for he commanded and raised the stormy wind which lifted up the waves of the sea they mounted up to heaven they went down to the depths their courage melted away they reeled on the depths staggered like drunken men they were at their wit's end and then they cried cried out to the lord in their trouble he delivered them from their distress he made the storm be still and the waves of the sea were hushed then they were glad that the waters were quiet and he god brought them to their desired haven matthew is connecting dots for you and i the reader the statement in verse 27 has this rhetorical effect what sort of man is this the answer is it's actually we are to understand that the man in the boat is actually god in the boat the man in the boat is god in the boat jesus had put himself in the boat and in demonstrating his ability to command nature he was attesting to the fact that he was god himself and here is the heart of discipleship you must believe that jesus is in the boat with you we must continually remind ourselves who is in the boat the disciple latches on to the reality and the promise that jesus will make later that he is surely with us to the very end of the age what sort of man is this he is a man that commands the winds and the seas what sort of man is this he is the man who accompanies you and i in all dangers and provides peace what sort of man is this he is the man that hears the cries of the perishing and is determined to save what sort of man is this he is the man that supersedes the value of family and calls you to follow what sort of man is this he is the man who has no earthly home but is preparing for you and i a heavenly home what sort of man is this he is a man who with a single word casts out demons and heals the sick what sort of man is this well he is king jesus calling out this morning to invite followers to enter his kingdom he is that man the call to follow jesus is radical the call to follow jesus requires faith

may he grant faith to us this morning may he remind us of the radical nature of following him father we're thankful for this morning we're thankful that you are ruler of all nature we thank you that you rescue and you hear the cries of the perishing and you're determined to save and so would you continue to remind us of the great cost which you paid the radical price for our salvation we pray these things in jesus name amen oh oh oh