

Lesson 8: Review of Matthew 8:18-27: "The Challenge of Following Jesus"

Matthew 8:18-27 can be easily divided into two sections. The first section we could entitle "Security and Sifting" (8:18-22) and the second section, "Storms and Saving". In both sections we see people who are in process of following Jesus, and in the process we see Jesus placing demands on those who follow Him. In my mind that is a key principle in this lesson: Jesus has authority to place demands on His followers. Because of this we can say with certainty that following Jesus is frequently hard, risky, and uncomfortable, but filled with joy and reward as we learn to trust Him.

Let's look at the first section where Jesus sifts a few followers. What is interesting in this first scene it is actually the two disciples who sift themselves. Their dependence on worldly or earthly security becomes the mechanism of sifting. Their love of comfort and of family revealed their fragile devotion to Jesus. Did Jesus say they couldn't have a home? No. Did Jesus say they couldn't bury their dead? No. He implied that following Him would have its difficulties and that value judgments would have to be made but He didn't place a ban on home and family.

It should interest you to note in regard to Jesus' statement, "Let the dead bury their own dead," that the man brought to Jesus a hypothetical situation; something that would occur in the future but was not a present case in point! But, for these men, the potential risks were of greater value than following Jesus.

How is this true for you? How are you attempting to finagle and cajole Jesus over priorities in your life, hoping that He will waive His call on your life to "follow Him? As I write this I think of relationships in my life that, as one great leader confessed of himself, which have become my greatest vulnerability: my family—my wife Theresa, my daughter Zoe and my son Bennett. I tell you, they are such a blessing to me, but at the same time I am more tempted to yield to their needs before I take risks for Jesus. O Jesus, may we trust that your call and your path is best!

Should we be alarmed at the fact that these two followers of Jesus turned away? No. But we may be shocked. In John 6:66 Jesus observes the departure of many disciples. A large group followed Jesus but the more He revealed about Himself, in particular about His life-giving death through the cross, they followed Him no more. But in John 6:64 John notes that "Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray Him." Is this not shocking? But He will not have those whose hearts are the furthest from Him be close friends of His.

Jesus never offered any of His disciples worldly ease or comfort. That assertion cuts against our desire for ease and comfort, but it is nevertheless true. We are prone to look after our own needs and interests first and then those of Jesus. But He calls us to trust Him even when we are not comfortable with our current circumstances. In fact, as we learned in Matthew 16:24-26 He demands that those who follow Him "take up" their "cross and follow" Him. This means a death of sorts. A death to our love of ease and comfort in exchange for a close relationship with God, the happiest being in the universe! But we have to trust Him! Easier said than done, but that is where faith comes in to play!

Now about the second section, Matthew 8:23-27. Jesus brings His disciples into a storm and saves them. I'd rather have Jesus in a storm, than to be at ease in a palace without Him! However, if we look at the text we see His closest disciples undone by the magnitude of the storm on the Sea of Galilee. These seasoned fishermen came unwound when the storm swept upon them. Two things should be noticed: First, Jesus was asleep. And, second, Jesus was on their side! How do we know this? Because they were not swept away! This brings my mind back to Psalm 124. I combine 124:1 and 5, "If the Lord had not been on our side we would have been swept away!" That is a promise!

But here the storm came upon them like an earthquake. The Greek word for storm indicates a "shaking of the sea." Jesus is asleep, at ease in the storm and the disciples who actually did follow Him are themselves are being shaken. But! But the sifting, the tumult of the storm doesn't drive them from Him, but rather to Him! The storm drew them to Him. But, within moments of their "cry" to Him, He speaks the word and the wind and waves became silent! Silent! The Sovereign God spoke and the wind and waves obeyed Him.

This brings us to our application at this point. If wind and waves obey Him, why don't you and I? Would He call our faith "little"? Probably. But do you understand that though their faith was "little" He saved them! He doesn't wait for our faith to be "great big" because "little" will do! Isn't that good news? You may be worried about your career today—"Lord save me!" You may be worried about your marriage—"Lord save me!" You may be worried about your kids, your parents, your life or any of a million other things—do you believe He will save you? "Lord save me!"

You probably are being sifted right now through circumstances. What will you cry out? Will you say, "I can't follow you because my wants and desires are most important to me."? Or, will you cry out while you are being sifted, "Lord save me!"

Questions for Matthew 8:28-9:8: "Jesus Came to Save Sinners"

A theme running through all four gospels is that Jesus came to seek and save sinners. Here in Matthew 8:28-9:8 this is illustrated in the two amazing events which took place on the shores of the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel! In Matthew 8:29-34 Jesus crossed the Sea to seek and save two hopeless demoniacs. Then in 9:1-8, Jesus once again crossed the Sea to seek and save a helpless paralytic. Plainly stated, Jesus seeks and saves the hopeless and helpless. Jesus saves sinners! Let's get to work!

1. From the notes on page 1, **A)** what impressed and/or helped you? **B)** Explain "A".

2. Read Matthew 8:28-34. **A)** Were the demoniacs looking for Jesus? **B)** If nothing happened to help them what hope for a good future did these men have? How is their lack of hope illustrated in verses 28-29? **C)** Read Ephesians 2:1-3. What hope apart from Jesus does anyone have? Why? **D)** Do you think Jesus came seeking out these men? Why or why not? (see 8:29) **E)** What did they know about Jesus? How is this reflected in their request in 8:30-31?

3. Read Matthew 9:1-8. Jesus returned to Capernaum. Isn't it interesting that he left Capernaum (8:18) to go to the "Gadarenes" to save demoniacs, only to return to Capernaum. **A)** Thinking about the crossing over the Sea only to return, what does this teach you about Jesus' purpose to seek and save the lost? **B)** What two or three things stand out to you in 9:2? **C)** How do you think "sinners" share the paralytic's inability to come to Jesus on his own strength? **D)** Given Jesus' first words to the paralytic what was the paralytic's most pressing issue? **E)** Did Jesus really "blaspheme" God? Why or why not?

4. Reread Matthew 8:28-9:8. **A)** The demoniacs were hopeless. Jesus saved them. Is there any sin that you feel hopeless to overcome? Will you pray to the Lord Jesus asking Him to save you from that sin? **B)** If Jesus came to purposely to seek and save the demoniacs and, indeed, did save them, what do you think He will do for you? Why? **C)** In 9:1-8 the paralytic had true friends. How can you be a true friend to someone you know? **D)** If Jesus' main concern was to "forgive sins" over healing, how does this help you regarding your own sins? What is keeping you from bringing any unconfessed sin to Him to be forgiven?