

Matthew 8:18–22

The Dependence and Devotion of True Disciples

Saturday, May 18, 2024 • Read Matthew 8:18–22

Questions from the Scripture text: What did Jesus see in v18a? What command did He give (v18b)? Who came to Him in v19? What did he call Him? What did he say that he would do? What two things does Jesus mention to him first (v20)? What does Jesus call Himself? How does He compare to the foxes and birds? Who addresses Him in v21? What does he say that he will do, and when? What does Jesus tell him to do instead (v22)? Whom does He say to leave to bury their own?

What can get in the way of true discipleship? Matthew 8:18–22 prepares us for the morning sermon on the Lord's Day. In these five verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **pride and half-heartedness are two obstacles to true discipleship.**

Matthew reminds us again of the point about the many and the few by pointing out to us Jesus's response to the multitudes around Him (v18a). He does not lean into their enthusiasm, but rather increases the difficulty of following Him by commanding to depart to the other side of the lake. So rather than jumping to judgment of this scribe and this other follower/disciple, we should remember that they have put some effort into staying with Jesus. Thus, the Spirit encourages us to identify with these followers and take to heart our own susceptibility to the same spiritual dangers: pride and half-heartedness.

Pride, v19–20. The first disciple here is "a certain scribe." To his credit, he has not been repulsed by all that Jesus has had to say about the scribes and the Pharisees. But, he speaks with the hubris of Peter (and all the disciples! 26:35), when he says, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go" (v19b). The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. So, let us be measured in the weight to which we give our intentions and sincerity. Rather, let us watch and pray so that we might not enter into temptation (cf. 26:41). And even more than that, let us take our hope and encouragement from Jesus's own praying for us and sustaining us (cf. Lk 22:32).

Here, the lesson is to count the cost. Jesus's answer (v20) implies that the scribe has no idea what he's getting himself into, and that the cost is beyond what he would be willing to lay out. A recent list of membership vows from a South Asian congregation supposedly asks, in a series of questions, whether the new member is willing to leave his home, lose the blessing of his father, lose his job, forgive and evangelize those who persecute him, give what little he has, and maintain his faith even if he is beaten, imprisoned, or even killed.

I do not know the authenticity of the questionnaire, but I do know of the reality that it represents and that Jesus teaches us to humbly consider that we must lose everything in order to gain Him. Even that which is not providentially taken will not continue to be ours in the same way as before. Our very life will not continue to be ours! So, let us not hastily presume that our intentions or sincerity could ever keep us in the way of discipleship.

Half-heartedness, v21–22. Now, another disciple who has noticed the degree of following-difficulty increased, wishes to be excused from following Jesus (v21). Jesus, Who went to Bethany for the death of His friend Lazarus, is not here suggesting that only the spiritually dead bury those close to them—let alone one's father! Rather, He indicates that the one who thinks that following Him is something that can be turned on and turned off is still spiritually dead. A Christian must not have shifting priorities, where sometimes he is following Christ, and other times taking care of other business. Whether at a parent's funeral, carrying out a civic duty, at his place of employment, or the dinner table, he must do all as a disciple, doing all for the sake of Christ and following Him. If we approach our lives otherwise, we live like those who are spiritually dead!

What difficulty have you faced on account of following Christ? What difficulties may you likely face in this life? What difficulties have other Christians faced? What are you willing to face? How would you be able to do so? In what part of life are you tempted to be forgetful of following Christ or even treat it as "taking time off" from being a Christian?

Sample prayer: Lord, pray for us and help us, so that we would follow You even if it cost us prison and death. And, grant that we would do all things in Your Name and for Your sake, we ask in that Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP26 "LORD, Vindicate Me" or TPH533 "Have Thine Own Way, Lord!"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Matthew chapter 8, verses 18-22? And when Jesus saw a great multitudes about him, he gave a command To depart to the other side. Than a certain scribe came 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 his disciples said to him, Lord let me first go and bury my father. But Jesus said to him, follow me. And let the dad bury their own debt.

So, for the reading of, Inspired. And Aaron twerked.

The Lord Jesus is. Showing the difference between Many and the two. Sorry, the many ends of you. The Lord Jesus is still showing the difference between the many and the few multitudes. Gather about him. And again, he withdraws this, we saw him do this. when he went up the mountain which initiated The Sermon on the Mount, And here, there are great multitudes about him and he gives.

Command to depart to the other side when we see him. Doing that departing. In verse 23. he's gonna get into a boat and those who are gonna go with him, are going to be few enough that. Fit into that boat. And so he does something here that. The Lord often does in our lives.

He puts something in our lives. An obstacle of difficulty. in following him by which he Gives us an opportunity to grow. Independence upon him and Devotion to him. And, by which He gives us an opportunity to see. How much he has brought us to depend upon him to see?

How much she has brought us to be devoted? To him. In this case, there is the increased difficulty of going to the other side and this scribe in the first part. In verses 18-20. The Scribe recognizes. That the Lord Jesus is introducing a challenge. And he rightly desires to follow the Lord Jesus.

This is not wrong. In fact the second guy when he wants to go do something else. First Jesus gives him command follow me. The problem is that, that this man is confident in himself. He has Spiritual. He says teacher, I will follow you wherever you go. Later.

This gospel when Matthew recounts. Jesus's prediction of Peter's denial.

And, Peter says, I am willing to go to prison and even die with you. All of the disciples say the same thing. In Matthew, 26, and verse 35. And so we have that example there. And this example here, instructing us and warning us. That. Devotion to the Lord Jesus without dependence upon the Lord Jesus.

Is prideful. The way that the Lord Jesus answers. This, this guy,

Implies to us. That Jesus knew that this man hadn't counted. The cost this man was overestimating. his own devotion, his own ability. Jesus says to him, foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests. But the son of man has nowhere to lay his head. So here the foxes.

And the birds are so low. And yet, they know. Where they're going to go every night. When it's time to go to bed. Following the Lord Jesus. Yeah, as a recipe. for losing things in this world. There are Christians of course who have lost the place where they would lay their heads or Christians who have gone to prison.

There are Christians. who have who have died. And every Christian, Will be despised by the world and will be despised. Especially By those who want to call themselves, Christian but aren't And so, you will have sorrow and difficulty. Than various friendships and relationships. Maybe even with family and extended family.

Pray that the Lord preserves all of you. But you can imagine. One of you does not have genuine dealings. With God, day by day. In your heart. If the Lord does not give you life to believe in him and belong to him. And you guys grow up, and you're adults, and Some of you are devoted to Christ and find in him, your life and And there would could be that sad case in which there are others of you, who think that you finally grown up and no longer believe in immature religious stuff that you did when you were kids.

That, that would Create division. There's much that that one may lose. And fall in Christ. There's much. That is as far as man goes uncertain. Jesus. tells this fellow that. Following him. Is going to require a certain level of uncertainty. He is this Jesus is the son of, man.

He is that glorious one. About whom Daniel prophesied. He is Son of God, and Son of man. yes, son of man does. But mean, fully human. And yet this The Glorious son of man for whom it is a Marvel that he is fully human. Because before being fully human, he is fully God And so he is God himself in the flesh.

It's actually A title that highlights his Divine personhood. Even as it speaks of his human nature. And yet, God the Took the who was in the very form of God. Philippians 2 says, so being of the substance of God and having the nature of God, and there are not many gods.

So this is the one true and living God. He took the form of the slave, he added to himself the substance and nature of the slave. And therefore, having taken our substance in nature. Was found in appearance. As a man. And so, he humbled himself. A state of great dependence and this becomes a pattern for us.

Because we do not know. What the cost? Following Christ, may end up requiring of us. If we like having established property. Retirement investment accounts. if we like the stability, being able to Maintain our place in society or in various relationships, no matter what. if if we are not prepared To lose all those things for, Christ's sake.

We may come in for a great shock and we must not think then. That we are going to be able to do all those things from ourselves. When this man says, I will follow you wherever you go. He has some idea of difficulty or cost. But he thinks that he has in himself.

The ability to navigate those difficulties or pay those costs. That is not true. We do not have it. In ourselves Christ. Has it in him. And so, when Peter In particular. says something similar. On the night that the Lord Jesus was betrayed. You remember, what Luke tells us in in his account.

That Jesus in, you know, Luke fills us in that Jesus doesn't just Tell them that some of them are going to betray him or that they're all going to betray him. Rather. or deny him. Abandon him. That's the word. Luke doesn't. Just tell us that Jesus says that they're all going to abandon him.

Luke introduces it. By Jesus addressing Peter specifically. Telling him that Satan has. Asked to sift them like wheat, sift him like wheat? And that when Jesus and that Jesus said, but that Jesus had prayed for them. And that when Peter was restored, That he too should restore and minister to the other disciples.

And so our hope is not in. The intensity or sincerity of our resolve to follow the Lord Jesus. Our Hope even for following the Lord Jesus. Is in Jesus whom we follow. So that's one thing to watch against. Is probably the second thing to watch against is. half-heartedness.

Another of his disciples said to him, Lord. Let me first go and bury my father. But Jesus said to him, follow me and let the dead. Bury their own debt. And so, we don't know if This man's dad. actually. Just died. Or if this man's dad was ill.

And might be dying soon, or Or just if this man's dad was. dependent to some extent. Or what? But we can tell from Jesus's answer. In verse 22. That this was indicating some reluctance to follow the Lord Jesus. Now, the Lord Jesus teaches us to honor our father and our mother.

Of the Lord. Jesus was Furious with the Pharisees who set aside the fifth commandment in order to designate. to permit, someone to designate his wealth. Core Bomb the brontnier thing, the offering

And so the Lord is not here. Forbidding the honoring of father and mother. But we must remember that. in our honoring, our father and mother, it needs to be a function of following the Lord Jesus. Not something by which we put off following the Lord Jesus. And so there are many things that that people will use to put off devotion of the life to Christ.

some of them, not necessarily things that are in and of themselves wrong. Well, starting a family getting married, maybe getting some education or training. Pursuing. some measure of financial stability. But these things that are not in themselves. Wrong become very wrong. If there are goals that we have or things that we want to check off, Before we are willing.

To give ourselves fully. To following the Lord Jesus Christ. If we start a family we must be starting the family for Christ. If we are getting education, we must be getting education for Christ. We must never put our hope. The money your house or property that we have but whatever we do those things.

It must be for Christ and when we honor our parents, It must be for Christ. Even when we Commit, their body to the ground and ask. the Lord. receive them. say goodbye to To them particularly to their soul, which departs. And, We hope that it departs even unto the Lord, but all of this must be done.

Under. And as a follower of Christ, someone who sees What he does for his family. And what he does for Jesus as two separate things. Is still dead. Is still spiritually dead. And that's what Jesus is saying when he says, follow me and let the dead Bury their own debt.

So, so long as you view your life as yours, Rather than belonging to the Lord and your relations, or your relationship with your father, for instance as belonging to you. Rather than belonging to the Lord. Or anything else that you do as belonging to you. Rather than belonging to the Lord.

You are spiritually dead. The one who is spiritually Alive, the one who belongs, who by that spiritual life comes to Faith in Jesus Christ? Does not see himself or herself. Or anything that belongs to him or any part of his life or her life. As belonging to themselves apart from Christ.

The spiritually alive one, who by that life comes to Faith in Jesus Christ. Views. All of himself, all of herself. All of what is his all of what he does. All of what is hers all of what

she does. As belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we must not Be half-hearted or have half measures.

About following Christ or belonging to him. Half-Hearted is all dead. Spiritually. And so Jesus tells this man who makes it first, what sounds like a reasonable request but does not realize How following Christ relates to the rest of he tells this man, follow me. And let the dead bury their own dead.

Don't be. Like those who are spiritually dead. And, Consider any part of your life or do anything. As apart from following Christ,

Well, may God the Holy Spirit. Give us to How great is, what is demanded? Both, so that we will first of all depend upon the Lord Jesus for it and not be proud of ourselves thinking that we have in ourselves. Ability to follow him. And so that we will be devoted to him.

Entirely. That we would. Lose our whole life, as far as it is ours. So that we may gain everything. Having our whole life and everything. In it belonging to him. Let's pray. Our gracious Godner heavenly father. We thank you. Forgiving your son. God, the son to be even the son of man.

That he who is this? Glorious one. That even with his human nature is, Just the one Divine person. Would be humbled to the point where he did not have a place to rest his head. And so we pray that you would make Christ Our home and Christ our rest.

And Christ our everything. And then, especially when we Face difficulty, your spirit would stir up. Our faith in him that we would have faith from him. To have faith in him. So that we might depend upon him and do Lord. Forgive us. How there are things that we wish to be able to do that Make us halting, and reserved and half-hearted In our devotion to you.

We could come up with quite a list if we did, if we tried. And so we pray that your spirit would help us. To see Christ rightly so that we would be devoted to him. Fully And, We pray that. As you do this, you would give us pleasure in Jesus and ability power from Jesus.

For we ask it in his name, amen.