

Following to the Other Side

Matthew 8:18-34

Intro

In the Broadway hit ***Hamilton***, the penultimate song is titled “*The World Was Wide Enough*”...

- The song tells the story of the fateful duel between Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton...

In the song, Burr fires at Hamilton but shortly before the bullet finds its mark — time pauses — and Hamilton speaks the following words...

I catch a glimpse of the other side.

Laurens leads a soldiers' chorus on the other side.

My son is on the other side.

He's with my mother on the other side.

Washington is watching from the other side.

Teach me how to say goodbye.

Rise up, rise up, rise up...

Eliza, my love, take your time.

I'll see you on the other side.

Now, I was reminded of this song when I was reading over the passage that we will be studying this morning...

To show you why, please follow along as I read...

Matthew 8:18-34 (NKJV)

18 And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side.

19 Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go."

20 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."

21 Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."

22 But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

23 Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him.

24 And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.

25 Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"

26 But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

27 So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

28 When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way.

29 And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?"

30 Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding.

31 So the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine."

32 And He said to them, "Go." So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water.

33 Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men.

34 And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region.

Now, the main themes that struck me in this passage were the Lord Jesus' desire to ***go to the other side...***

- And the decision people had to make about whether or not they would ***follow Him to the other side...***

If we take time to think about it, we realize that we are in a similar position to both Hamilton and the people of this passage...

- We are like Hamilton in the sense that the bullet is in the air and is on its way toward us...

Now, that bullet may come in the form of a disease or an accident and that bullet may still be years away...

But no matter what we do, the day is coming when we will move from this life to ***the other side***...

- So, we are all on our way to *the other side* — but like the people in Matthew 8, we have a choice as to ***whether or not we will follow the Lord Jesus to the other side***...

Because that is the whole point of this life — following the Lord Jesus to the other side...

So, with this as our introduction, let's jump into our passage — but I want to back up a couple of verses to remind ourselves of the context...

16 When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick,

17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

**"He Himself took our infirmities
And bore our sicknesses."**

So, the Lord Jesus heals the sick and casts out demons from those who were demon-possessed — and once He does this, it is time to move forward...

18 And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side.

As we consider the gospels we realize that while *part* of Jesus' ministry was to heal and deliver — it wasn't the *whole* of His ministry...

- Jesus' primary ministry was to *teach us how to follow Him to the other side* — to teach us how to become His full-time disciples and He made this possible by dying on the cross for our sins...

And this is a vital truth that it is easy to miss...

The Lord Jesus did not come to earth to make our lives easier — He came to gather a people who would follow Him to the other side — no matter how difficult the way...

- Ultimately, this life is not about trying to get the Lord Jesus to give us *whatever we want*...

This life is about us *following Jesus wherever He might lead us*...

19 Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go."

scribe — *expert in the law of Moses*...

Now, the **scribe** asserts that he will *follow Jesus wherever He goes*...

And you and I might be excited by such a prospect — by someone being willing to follow us as a disciple — but the Lord Jesus has a more measured response...

20 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."

Here the Lord Jesus lets the scribe know that following Him will not be easy — the Lord Jesus had no home on this earth and those who followed Him on the road would have to rough it...[expand]

APPLICATION — Following the Lord Jesus as a disciple will involve differing degrees of self-denial...

Matthew 16:24 (NKJV)

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

Moving on in Matthew 8 to vs 21 we read...

21 Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."

The man is essentially saying, *"After my dad passes away, and things are settled, I will follow You"...*[expand]

22 But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

This is a hard saying but the Lord Jesus is making it clear that He is to be the priority — *no one must come before the Lord Jesus...*

For more on this subject, please turn to...

Matthew 10:37-39 (NKJV)

37 “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”

*Now, as we turn back to Matthew 8 we must admit that when the Lord Jesus says **let the dead bury their own dead** — this is a very challenging statement...*

- *And I believe He means that the spiritually dead should be left to bury the spiritually dead...*

APPLICATION — We must always follow the Lord Jesus above the desires of our family — and realize that the Lord can reach our family members apart from us...[expand]

Now, as we consider how the Lord Jesus responded to these two men in vs 19-22 — we are confronted with the truth that there is a cost associated with following Jesus to the other side...

- [expand — D. Bonhoeffer “cost of discipleship” / D. Willard “cost of non-discipleship” ...]

So, the reality is that both ***discipleship*** and ***non-discipleship*** have a cost associated with them...

The question is: Which cost are you and I willing to pay?...

Let's move into vs 23 and enter a familiar section...

23 Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him.

This is a great move by the disciples — they are following Jesus — He got into a boat to go to the other side and they got into the boat to go with Him...

24 And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.

As the Lord Jesus and the disciples are crossing the Sea of Galilee, Matthew tells us that a storm **suddenly** arose on the sea...

Now, the word **suddenly** could be translated “**behold**” — so I believe that Matthew is encouraging the reader to *pay attention*...

- [expand — violent storm with waves crashing into the boat / *natural or supernatural* storm?..]

Whatever the source of the storm — in the midst of its violence, the Lord Jesus is sleeping...

And there are many things that can be drawn out of this situation but here are two that I want to focus on...

The first thing we see here is that the Lord Jesus didn't feel the need to be responsible for captaining the boat — He left that to others...

LESSON — You and I don't need to lead in every situation...

The second thing to see is that the Lord Jesus got tired like we get tired — He was a real human being and He was worn down physically...

LESSON — If you serve the Lord faithfully, you are going to get tired and worn down — so be willing to take a nap — God can keep the universe going without your direct intervention...

Moving on to vs 25 we read...

25 Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"

This must have been an exceptionally violent storm for the disciples — several of whom were fishermen — to be so fearful...

- And it would be one thing if the disciples were concerned about the Lord Jesus — if they had said, *"Lord, wake up — we are fearing for your safety — we don't want You to drown!"*...

But that is not what they say...

Instead, they are concerned about their *own* welfare — they say **"Lord, save us! We are perishing!"** ...

Now, I am not criticizing the disciples because I am certain that this is exactly what I would have done...

Countless times I have cried out some variation of “*Save me — I am perishing!*”...

- And in each of those circumstances I have forgotten that the Lord Jesus called me to Himself for the primary purpose of me following Him to the other side...

You see, this is what He wants for each of us — He wants us to follow Him to the other side — He wants us to *be with Him* and to *be like Him*...

- This is why He wants us to be His disciples — not because He couldn’t do the work Himself — but because He wants us to have the best possible relationship with Him...

And as we each become more like Him through discipleship, we draw nearer to Him — our relationship with Him will grow stronger — and in the process we will grow closer to fellow disciples...

As we move into vs 26, we read the response of the Lord Jesus to His disciples...

26 But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"

Jesus challenges His disciples because they are **fearful**...

- And their **fear** is the result of their **little faith** — their lack of trust...

We must not miss this vitally important point — *little faith results in great fear...*

But there is a remedy for this...

Romans 10:17 (NKJV)

...faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

- [expand — read the Word of God and you will grow in faith...]

1 John 4:18 (NKJV)

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

I believe that this verse reveals why we fear...

We fear because we do not trust that God loves us...

- And because we do not trust that He loves us we are afraid that He will not do what is best for us...

Tragically, this is where everything went wrong in Genesis 3 — Adam and Eve doubted that God had their best interests in mind — they doubted His love for them...

- They feared that they were missing out — so they took of the fruit of the tree and ate — and the rest is history...

APPLICATION — If we are fearful and of little faith — let's read the Word of God and take to heart the truth that God loves us...

Now, let's move on to the last part of Matthew 8:26...

Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

rebuked — *expression of strong disapproval of someone, reprove, censure; speak seriously, warn in order to bring an action to an end...*

- [expand — supernatural storm caused by the demonic?...]

As believers we will most assuredly be assaulted by demonically-propelled storms — whether they are physical (ex. Job) or spiritual (ex. Peter denying Jesus)...

Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV)

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Now, another thing that we see in Matthew 8 is the uncomfortable truth that following Jesus will take us directly into storms...

The Lord Jesus made it clear that believers are in for stormy weather in...

John 16:33 (NKJV)

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

- [expand — consistent testimony of believers throughout the ages — following Jesus will be challenging...]

As we move on in Matthew 8 to vs 27, we see how the disciples react to the Lord Jesus calming the storm...

27 So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

Understandably, the disciples are taken aback by the power of the Lord Jesus...

Interestingly, we find what may be taken as a prophecy of this very event as we turn to...

Psalms 107:28-30 (NKJV)

**28 Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble,
And He brings them out of their distresses.**

**29 He calms the storm,
So that its waves are still.**

**30 Then they are glad because they are quiet;
So He guides them to their desired haven.**

And I would argue that this is a prophecy for the life of every believer...

Because every storm will end once we reach the other side...

REMEMBER — For the believer, no pain is permanent...

The day of our final deliverance from evil is coming — and on that day there will be no more pain, no more tears, no more death for the former things will have passed away...

Let's turn back to Matthew 8 as we move into vs...

28 When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way.

This is a very scary situation...[expand]

29 And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?"

The demons speak through these men and the demons know that their judgment is coming...

- [expand — the NT makes it clear that Satan and his demons will one day suffer the final judgment of God...]

Revelation 20:10 (NKJV)

The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Moving on in Matthew 8 to vs...

30 Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding.

31 So the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine."

- [expand — pigs in a Jewish area?...]

Continuing on in Matthew 8 to vs...

32 And He said to them, "Go." So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water.

What was the Lord Jesus doing by casting the demons into these pigs? — three possibilities...

- 1) *Showing His power over the demonic...*
- 2) *Showing that the men were now free...*
- 3) *Showing that the demonic wishes to destroy...*

33 Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men.

Now, you would think the people of the city would be excited that these two demon-possessed men had been set free...

But that is not the case...

34 And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region.

This is an incredibly sad turn of events...

- Jesus comes to town and demonstrates His power over the demonic and is willing to set people free...

But because some people lose pigs (that they were not supposed to have) they beg Him to go away...

- These people do not want to follow Jesus to the other side — and there is no greater tragedy than that...[expand]

Now, before we move into our conclusion, I do want us to look at a part of the story that Matthew leaves out but Luke includes — so please turn to...

Luke 8:38-39 (NKJV)

38 Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him.

Luke only focuses on one of the demon-possessed men in his account — and the one that Luke focuses on *wants to follow Jesus to the other side...*

But the Lord Jesus does something quite unexpected...

But Jesus sent him away, saying,

39 “Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you.”

Instead of physically following the Lord Jesus to the other side — this man is instructed to go home and be a witness — to let people know what God has done for him...

And this has great application for our own lives...

Because when life gets really difficult we may pray for God to take us home to heaven — to wrap this thing up because we are tired of the storms...

- But as long as the Lord keeps us on this earth we are to take the opportunity to tell others of the great things that God has done for us...

In that way, we are still following Him to the other side...

Let's look at the last part of Luke 8:39...

And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

The formerly demon-possessed man does just what the Lord Jesus tells him to do — and by obeying in this way, the man chooses to follow Jesus to the other side...

Conclusion

We will stop here for today, but before we move into our time of communion I want to leave you with a few closing applications from our study...

1) Both discipleship and non-discipleship cost something — which cost are we willing to pay?...

2) If we are fearful and of little faith — let's read the Word of God and take to heart the truth that God loves us...

3) Though following the Lord Jesus to the other side will be painful at times — remember that for the believer, no pain is permanent...

Let's pray...