

A Study of the Book of Matthew: Chapter 8 v. 18-22

- **“And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side.” (v. 18)**
 - In the introduction to the gospel, it was pointed out how following is a KEY theme.
 - Now, Matthew is going to help us see the significance (and difficulty) of being a follower.
 - Why do you think he decided to leave?

- **“Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, ‘Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.’” (v. 19)**
 - Scribes
 - What was a Scribe?
 - Scribes were experts of the Law. They studied it continuously. Scribes knew God’s Word in great detail. They were the lawyers of the Old Testament. Scribes were often associated with the Pharisees throughout the Gospel (**Matthew 5:20, 12:38, 15:1, 23:2, 23:29, Mark 2:16, 7:5, Luke 5:30, 11:53, John 8:3**).
 - At times scribes plotted with the chief priests, the party of the Sadducees, as to how they might kill Jesus (**Mark 15:1, Luke 22:2, 23:10**) and mocked Him at His death (**Matthew 27:41, Mark 15:31**).
 - Follow.
 - What sounds like a powerful statement - “I will follow You wherever You go.”
 - Scribe had some power in the Jewish society.
 - We might be impressed with the scribe’s willingness to follow Jesus wherever He goes.
 - Yet, it is clear from Jesus’ response that the scribe had a different concept of what “wherever” meant; what it would actually entail.
 - Are we prepared to follow Jesus “wherever He goes?”

- **“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.’” (v. 20)**
 - To be a follower of Jesus a person must do two things.
 - Count the cost of being a follower. “Teacher, I will follow You wherever you go.”
 - This seems like a desire to be truly committed but...
 - Jesus asks, “Have you thought about this?”
 - Foxes and birds were better off than he was.
 - He did not even have a place to lay His head.
 - Was the scribe thinking about a kingdom where he might have a position of power/luxury/wealth?
 - Maybe.
 - Jesus says to count the cost.
 - **Luke 14:25-33**
 - Prioritize - Jesus must come first.

- **And another of the disciples said to Him, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” (v. 21)**
 - It is interesting that Matthew calls him a disciple (follower).
 - The word disciple just means “follower,” but there is a difference between a follower and a true disciple.
 - That is what Jesus is talking about.
 - Ensuring your father had a proper burial was among the highest duties of a Jewish eldest son.
 - A couple ways to look at this:
 - Our American thinking - This verse could simply mean that the man’s father has passed away and that he needs to literally bury his father.
 - Jewish Tradition - In Israel, families would bury their loved one and then go back up to a year later or so and collect the bones of their loved one. They would then put those bones in a box called an ossuary. The box would then be kept in a cave or tomb with the other ossuaries from the family. So...this man has to finish the burial process for his father. He could be saying that he needs to wait a while to finish the burial process for his father.
 - Regardless of the exact interpretation we are to take here, it doesn’t really matter which one it is, the meaning is the same - this man was placing a priority over Jesus.

- **“But Jesus said to him, ‘Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.’” (v. 22)**
 - Note **Matthew 6:33** - **“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”**
 - The disciple has to prioritize.
 - This man is going to have to do this.
 - Seek first the kingdom of God.
 - Some might think Jesus is being uncharacteristically cruel here to not give the man time to go back to bury his dead father.
 - There is no waiting until “this” happens or “that” happens.
 - It has to be now!
 - Now is the time to be a disciple!
 - And Jesus’ point isn’t that we aren’t to honor our fathers and mothers, as the Law commands—but rather a matter of ordering principles:
 - Which is the higher call?
 - Which is the higher duty?
 - Application of this for us today.
 - Everyone who wishes to follow Jesus is going to have to count the cost.
 - He/She is going to have to prioritize.
 - Is there anything more important than Jesus?
 - If so, then our priorities are not in proper order.
 - If you must give up anything to follow Christ, you give it up.

- **Summary**
 - The first man was eager to follow Jesus but Jesus cautioned him to consider the cost. He wanted to jump in too quickly.
 - The second man was too slow to follow Jesus because earthly matters took priority in his life.
 - Conclusion - Jesus requires total devotion. He does not want to take second place in your life.