

The cost of following Jesus

¹⁸ When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. ¹⁹ Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.'

²⁰ Jesus replied, 'Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'

²¹ Another disciple said to him, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.'

²² But Jesus told him, 'Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.'

Intro: Notice Matthew's introduction here: v18-19. 'Hey, a river cruise, that sounds fun! Teacher, I will follow you!'

Before we get to that cruise, let's remind ourselves of what brought us to this point.

When Matthew introduced Jesus selecting some of his disciples, he records Jesus as saying 'come, follow me.'

I will follow you wherever you go,

There were two sets of brothers, Simon and Andrew, James and John. Matthew has both of them at the lake shore, giving up their fishing jobs straight away and following Jesus. As a matter of interest, John has Andrew as being one of John-the-Baptist disciples' who, when John points Jesus out, 'look the Lamb of God' (John3:36) moves to become one of Jesus' disciples but also goes to his brother Simon to bring him into the fold too.

At that early stage in Jesus' public ministry, he is quickly becoming well-known, but it remains both surprising and challenging to us that twelve people all gave up their means of income to follow Jesus.

Now we are introduced to two more people who want to follow. It is sometime later in Jesus' ministry where Jesus has been teaching in public spaces and synagogues and has been doing the works of the Father in healing and inviting many people to join the kingdom,

To the first, a teacher of the law, Jesus warns that it will be a nomadic life and to the second, described as 'another disciple', Jesus warns him that it will mean leaving his family.

Theologian Leon Morris, says it strongly, 'Jesus demanded whole-hearted loyalty.'ⁱ

Q: Are each of us prepared to give Jesus our full loyalty? First and Foremost!?

It seems in both cases, they wanted to follow but did not want to give up what they had. The Teacher had security and comforts in his position and the disciple wanted to stay with his dad until his dad died – for it is likely he was still living, and it was not a matter of, 'let me first go to the funeral, see you in a week, but a way of saying, 'I'll come and follow when I'm ready. For now, I'll stay at a distance.'

They had the thought of following Jesus but were not ready to put it into action. It is like saying, 'one day I'll be a great explorer' but never making any effort to learn about other cultures and to actually travel – the film 'The Secret Life of Walter Mitty' parodies that very well.

The Cost of Following Jesus, Matt.8:18-22
(for Sun 17/03)

In that film Walter Mitty dreams about adventure as he produces the photographs of a wildlife photographer but does not actually go on an adventure until he loses his job because he lost the planned cover photo, and the only way to get it back is to go find that photographer who took the picture.

Likewise, I have had conversations with people who say that would follow Jesus but are fearful of what that may look like; some are upset with God, 'he's let me down'; and others, like the 'other disciple' say they will follow Jesus but not yet because they don't want to change things in their life, even where some of those things are difficult or unpleasant.

A metaphorical question to ask yourself, and just to keep within yourself for the moment,

What about me? What am I fearful of losing to follow Jesus?

Gospel-Centred Faith

In Matthew's account, Jesus had recently spoken about wise and foolish builders, and I wonder if it was his talk about solid foundation that played a part to encourage both the Teacher & Other disciple to say they wanted to follow Jesus?

The parable is found in **Matt.7:24-25**

7²⁴ 'Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. **25** The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

'That's what we want. A solid foundation in our lives and to know without doubt that the Lord is at work. Just look at all the things you are doing!'

'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.'

But, immediately after Jesus challenges the two with the cost of following him notice what happens:

8²³ 'Then he got into the boat and the disciples followed him.'

Ah yes, that river cruise I mentioned from v 18&19. 'a river cruise with Jesus, now that sounds fun!'

Do you remember what happened next?

8²⁴ Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. **25** The disciples went and woke him, saying, 'Lord, save us! We're going to drown!'

Come to think of it, who on earth would get in a boat with Jesus when he also describes himself as the rock, a title he gives to Simon Peter for building the Church; don't boats have a bit of a problem with rocks!?

That is just a bit of humour, having brought two separate pictures of Jesus together - please don't be put off!

There are enough worries that hinder us from following Jesus already!

Will we Risk?

We know four of the disciples were fishermen, well used to the ways of wind and waves and they knew a bad storm when they saw it. Storms could come suddenly on the Sea of Galilee because of its geographical position, and it is likely that some fishermen had drowned as a result.

And yet the fishermen continued their trade. They needed to make a living, the people needed food and it was what they knew. It was a risk they took and one they sought to reduce by keeping a close eye on the weather.

And that is our 'touching point' with the challenge Jesus gave the two would-be followers; will you take the risk of following?

Everyone who has journeyed here this morning has already taken a risk; a risk of the journey being delayed for some reason, whether good or bad because of a problem or good because you met someone on the way who you hadn't seen for a while, and you stopped and chatted.

Everyone has to learn to take risks. We teach our children to walk, but they've already embarked on a journey of adventure by learning to crawl. They have no idea about dangers at that age, and it is their parents or guardians who are looking out for them.

Wait a minute! Didn't Jesus say we had to be like children?

Jesus taught us to think of the Lord God as our Heavenly Father, Jesus as Son and our Lord who made relationship with the Heavenly possible, and God's Spirit as the enabler and presence of God in our everyday lives.

He will look out for us. There will be problems along the way, hazards we don't find out are hazards until we've been hurt by them and things, we are fearful of at first but that turn out to be great fun.

This is how can we be encouraged to follow Jesus.

It is far better and much more fun to be a follower of Jesus than it is to try and remain his babe-in-arms. We do not grow in him unless we grow in our spiritual maturity, taking the risk of following him.

And that first step? Well, it turn out it is a measured risk – for the Father is already looking out for us, encouraging us to risk what we know to discover him. That is a daily decision that I have never regretted since the first day I made it.

How about you? Will you take the risk and follow Jesus whole-heartedly?

Prayer: Let's respond, 'Yes Lord, I will follow! It's a little scary but I know you are faithful and trustworthy and that you can calm the storms of life. I will follow you, learning to trust you for my myself each day and learning those skills in your community, the Church, who you have created as our Chrisitan family. Amen.

ⁱ Leon Morris, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p.199.