

Followers of the Lamb

by Ed Miller

The sermon emphasizes the profound commitment required to follow Jesus, highlighting the spiritual realities and challenges of true discipleship.

Duration: 1:17:28

Scripture: Matthew 8:18-20, Matthew 8:22-27, Matthew 12:34, Mark 4:36-41, Luke 8:22-25, Luke 9:61-62

Topics: "Following The Lord"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the theme of following the Lord. He uses the story of Jesus and his disciples getting on a boat and encountering a storm as an example. The preacher highlights the importance of truly committing to following Jesus, even in difficult and challenging situations. He also emphasizes the need for reliance on the Holy Spirit in understanding and interpreting the Bible.

Transcript

Well, good afternoon, brothers and sisters. I'll ask you to open your Bibles, please, to Matthew, chapter 8, if you would. Matthew, chapter 8. As we come to the study of God's Word, I remind you of a principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable, a principle we can never take for granted, a principle we cannot live without, and that is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit.

Our Bible is like the Lord Jesus. It's human and divine. There's a human side, and for the human side we need academics.

We need to understand words and paragraphs. But on the divine side, only God can reveal God, and He delights to unveil His Son to our hearts. Before we pray together, I'd like to share, bring together two verses that have recently touched my heart.

One is from the book of Matthew, chapter 12, 34. Matthew 12, 34 says, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. The New American Standard says, the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

And I like to tie that together with Hebrews 1 and verse 2. God, in these last days, has spoken unto us in His Son. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

God has spoken. Doesn't He have an abundant heart? Isn't His heart full to speak in these last days unto us, Jesus? Everything He has to say to us is in His darling, in His dear Son, our Lord Jesus. I'm going to

read a prayer from the psalm, and then we'll add to that prayer.

It's from Psalm 43, verse 3 and 4. O send out your light and your truth. Let them lead me. Let them bring me into your holy hill and to your dwelling places.

Then I will go to the altar of my God, to God my exceeding joy. And upon the lyre shall I praise you, O God my God. Let's ask the Lord to send out His light and truth.

Our Father, we do thank You so much this afternoon that You have not left us on our own to understand this book, but You have put a resident Bible teacher in our heart, the dear Holy Spirit, the life of God. And we know that He searches the depths, the secrets of God and reveals them unto us. We ask, Lord, that You would unveil the Lord Jesus to our hearts and take the veil away from our heart, our eyes, and enable us to behold Him in a living way.

We thank You, Lord, that You delight to do this. It's Your pleasure to show us Your Son. And so we do not need to wrestle You for this, but we come as little children and we simply ask in the all-prevailing name of our Lord Jesus.

Amen. Last night our brother Lance closed with the words, followers of the Lamb. And I suppose if I were to title what I have on my heart, those would be the words I would use.

What does it mean to be followers of the Lamb? What does it mean to follow the Lord? The burden that I have to share with you is really found in three places in the Bible. We'll focus on one of those three places. It's in Matthew, it's in Mark, it's in Luke.

But I'm going to draw on Mark and Luke only to fill in the details. We're going to try to stay with the Matthew text. And so let's follow along together as I read from Matthew chapter 8 and beginning at verse 18.

Now, when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to depart to the other side of the sea. Then a scribe came and said to Him, Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go. Jesus said to Him, the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.

Another of the disciples said to Him, Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said to him, follow me, allow the dead to bury their own dead. And when He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him.

And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves. But Jesus Himself was asleep. And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, Save us, Lord, we are perishing.

And He said to them, Why, are you afraid, you men of little faith? Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm. The men were amazed and said, What kind of a man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him? In the Matthew account, there are these three stories put together. If you will just glance again at the references, verse 18 to 20 is the story of the scribe who volunteered to follow the Lord Jesus.

And then in verses 21 and 22, we have the story of the unnamed disciple. He didn't volunteer. He was called to follow Jesus.

And then in chapter 8, 23 to 27, the story of our Lord Jesus asleep in the boat on the stormy sea. Now Luke adds one other story, and I want to insert it. Luke adds a story and inserts it between story 2 and 3 of Matthew.

Luke 9, 61 and 62, another also said, I will follow you, Lord, but first permit me to say goodbye to those at home. But Jesus said to him, No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. And so, for our purposes this afternoon, there are these four little stories.

A scribe volunteers to follow Jesus. An unnamed disciple is called to follow Jesus. Another person volunteers to follow Jesus.

And then the story of our Lord Jesus asleep on the stormy sea. Since these stories are unusual in several ways, in order to get to the heart of God, I want to make a couple of simple observations right at the start, and then we'll get into the text. I think this will prepare us to look in a proper way.

My first observation is this, that these stories are gathered together logically, not chronologically. They're in a logical connection, a logical order. It looks like Matthew and Luke are describing the same event.

The same people that come to Jesus and talk about following the Lord. But we're not sure exactly when that happened. In Matthew's account, he places it as if it took place during the Galilean portion of the ministry of our Lord Jesus.

But Luke doesn't do that. Luke takes the same events, the same people, and puts it closer to the end, closer to the cross. He puts it right after the rejection of the Samaritans.

I call attention to that to point out that the context won't help you. You can't read the context and say, now, what was happening at this time? We don't know if all these three people came at the same time, or hours apart, or days apart, or weeks apart. We don't know.

But we know this, that the Holy Spirit guided Matthew to bring them together to tell us something. And the Holy Spirit guided Luke to bring those stories together to tell us something. And so I'm suggesting to you that there's a topical arrangement of these wonderful stories.

They illustrate a spiritual reality. The second observation of these stories is this. We come to a little bit of a problem if we try to interpret what our Lord Jesus said in a literal way.

It can't be 100% literal. Now, we don't want to spiritualize everything. We don't want to just come to the Bible and allegorize everything.

But when it's absolutely impossible to take it literally, then we know there must be something more, and something deeper, and something hidden, and something that God must reveal unto our hearts. For example, in verse 20, Jesus said, See, that's not 100% true. Not literally.

He probably had more pillows than anyone that ever lived. You know, He could have gone to Bethany. He had friends there.

He often went to the house of Lazarus, and Martha, and Mary. They would have given Him a pillow. He would have had a place to lay His head.

I have an idea. Anyone He had done any work or any ministry in their lives would have opened their homes. I can't imagine if He went to Jairus and said, You know, I'm really tired.

I'd like a place to lay my head. That Jairus would say, Oh, not in my house. Not after what the Lord had done for that family.

He would have had a pillow. And I know the centurion at one time said, I'm not worthy, Lord, for You to come under my roof. But if he heard that Jesus didn't have a place to rest, I have an idea he would say, Come under my roof.

And some look at Mark chapter 2, verse 1. Remember the story when they took the tiles off the roof? The Bible said when He was in His house, some think He had a home in Capernaum. His own home. I don't know about that.

That's all its own. But I know He had many places to lay His head. You can't take it 100% literally.

Matthew was wealthy. He would have opened his home. Zacchaeus, my salvation had come to his home.

Certainly the Savior could come to his home. Jesus had many, many places to lay His head. He must have meant something else.

And the same thing is true in the second story in verse 22. Let the dead bury the dead. That can't be literal.

Or you'd have a corpse burying a corpse. At least part of that has to be symbolic. There's something more here in this marvelous story beyond those words.

And so it is in Luke's account of the third story in chapter 9, verse 62. Once you put your hand to the plow, you can't let go. You can't look back.

That can't be literal. It has to be a plow. It can't be a literal plow.

When would you eat if you couldn't let go of the plow once you put your hand to it? When would you sleep and do other things? Jesus' comments to these people who expressed a desire to follow Him, these comments are little parables. They're invitations to look a little deeper, to get beyond the words. And then a third observation I'd make before we look at the text has to do with this seeking the heart of God.

On the surface, when you just read it in a cursory way, it seems awfully harsh. The words of our Lord Jesus seem awfully strong. In fact, some interpret His words to be exactly that.

They say, well, now He's talking about the cross. He's talking about discipleship. That's no easy road.

He has to use strong language. Are you serious about wanting to follow Him? Prepare to be homeless. You really want to follow Him? Prepare to offend your family.

Are you serious about following Him and go all the way and no turning back? See, some have that way of approaching and interpreting these wonderful words, as if our Lord Jesus was saying, you want to be My disciple? I only choose the best. I only choose the loyal. It's like He's gathering a delta force.

He just wants those who are going to be true and loyal and sacrificial and so on. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not suggesting that discipleship does not include total commitment to the Lord. I'm not suggesting that

there's not this unreserved dedication to Him and solemn resolve to the Lord and this unrelenting perseverance.

But is that what this text is about? Is that what He's saying here? If you follow Me, you must determine never to have a home. If you follow Me, you are not allowed to go to any unsaved funeral. You cannot say goodbye to your loved ones if you follow Me.

I'm suggesting that there's probably a more excellent way to interpret these precious words of our Lord Jesus. Sometime, approaching it like that sounds an awful lot like salvation by works. And may God deliver us from that.

Well, let's trust the Lord together to follow what I believe God has put together, His theme. Glance again, if you would, at Matthew 8. Let me underscore the recurring emphases. For here, I think you'll see why God used these men to group these stories together with no context.

It's these stories, because He wants to tell us what it means to follow the Lamb. He wants us to understand what it means to be a heart follower of our Lord Jesus Christ. Chapter 8.22, Jesus said, well, let's, 8.19 first, sorry.

A scribe came and said, Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go. Mark the word, I will follow. 8.22, Jesus said to him, follow Me.

Luke 9.61, I will follow you, Lord. And then chapter 8.23, the clincher of the whole section. And when He got into the boat, the disciples followed Him.

So important to understanding God's heart in this passage. I remember some years ago, I wanted to share the importance and the glory of following the Lord Jesus. And a brother called me on it.

He said, Brother, I hope you won't be offended, but, you know, you talk about following the Lord. We've gone beyond that here. That's a baby truth.

We don't talk about following the Lord. We don't talk about holding God's hand. We don't talk about sitting on God's lap.

We used to talk that way. We don't talk that way anymore. Because, he said, that puts the Lord out here, and we have discovered He's not out here, He's in here.

So, if you don't mind, talk to us about the indwelling Lord, and about the life of God, and about life hidden with Christ in God. That's where we are. Tell us about union.

Tell us about fellowship with God. But don't talk about following Him as if He's out here, and then we're behind Him, following Him. And the brother ended with these words.

Thank God He's my life, not my guide. Now, what about that, brothers and sisters in the Lord? And may I encourage you not to hold one precious truth of God at the expense of another precious truth of God. We are a needy people, and we need every word, picture that God can give us.

One doesn't contradict the other. Bless the Lord He lives inside of you. Bless the Lord as a weaned child, you can go on His lap as well.

Praise God He's in your heart. And praise God the Almighty holds your hand as well. We're called to be followers of the Lord.

The truth in Jesus is beautiful. Sometimes we make a caricature of the truth, and it loses its wonderful beauty. Don't let one truth of God rob you from another truth of God.

I'm talking about following the Lord as Caleb did. Remember that verse, Numbers 14, 24? He had a different spirit in Him. He has wholly followed the Lord.

Sometime after that brother called me on that, I was going through the wonderful book of Revelation. And I came to chapter 14, and I saw those redeemed saints, the 144,000 after they had seen the Lord in His glory and so on. And they were called followers of the Lamb.

Even in heaven, that's not a baby truth, even in heaven we'll be followers of the Lamb. It's my, the burden of my burden, does that make sense? I want to share this whole idea of following the Lord. But I really want to get to verses 23 to 27, story 4. That's what's on my heart.

That's what's burning in my spirit to share with you. But I want to say a few words about the first three stories to prepare our hearts for the revelation, the glorious revelation of our Lord Jesus in that final story. I think that will give us the background.

Glance again, if you would, Matthew 8, verses 18 to 20. The story of the scribe who volunteered to follow the Lord Jesus wherever He went. I think one thing that would be good to apply as just Christian charity when you come to a passage like this.

We can't be more biblical than the Bible is biblical. Can't go beyond Scripture. We don't know about this man's heart.

I'm amazed as I go through the commentaries who are explaining that this man was not sincere. He was impulsive when he came to the Lord. He had been watching the miracles Jesus did, and he got caught up in the emotion of it.

And in a subjective impulse, he said, I'll follow you wherever you go. Well, now, maybe that's true. But how do you know that? Some of these Bible saints have enough problems.

And we don't have to read in between the line and try to read their hearts. Now, I think to understand the record, we must assume that he came with a heart that really wanted to follow the Lord. He said, I'll follow you, Lord, wherever you go.

We don't know where he was in his life, what his motives were, what initiated that comment. We only know he made it, and our Lord Jesus responded in these words. Verse 20, the foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests.

The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Sometime our Lord Jesus gave some very mysterious answers. Sometimes it's comical when you go through the record and see how he responded.

People would ask him questions and he'd give these. Are you going to Jerusalem? Are there not twelve hours in the day? Of course. Why didn't I think of that? But underneath his marvelous statements was the heart, the revelation of the Lord.

And I believe Jesus was saying as he contrasted himself with the beast of the field and the fowl of the air, if you're serious, if that's your heart cry, if you are really saying, Lord, I'll follow you wherever you go, then you must give up all dreams, every idea, you must give up every hope of finding a pillow here because there is no pillow here. This is not your home. You were created for more than this, redeemed for more than this.

Animals, birds, beasts, this is their home. This is all they have. This is their destiny.

A bird to gather a few twigs and build a nest and lay some eggs and hatch the eggs and fly away and die. This is their world. This world is not my home.

I'm just a passing through. And the Lord is saying here, I think, my followers created in the image of God and redeemed for the purpose of God in Christ Jesus are pilgrims and strangers here. He's not saying, if you follow me, you'll be homeless.

I think as I look out in these seats and I see you beautiful children of God and some of you, the Lord has worked wonderful things in your life. Anybody here not have an address? Do you all live someplace? He wasn't saying, if you follow me, you can't live anyplace. There's no home.

He wasn't saying that. What He was saying is this, there's nothing here in this world to satisfy. It's the very point our brother Lance made on Monday evening when he called attention to the verse in Ecclesiastes, God has planted eternity in their hearts.

And there's nothing here to answer. There's nothing here to satisfy, to fulfill. Now, because the Old Testament gives the truth in seed form and the Gospels give the truth in bud form and it's only the epistles and what comes later that gives the truth in fully developed form.

This truth is not developed yet. Jesus doesn't turn the coin over. He doesn't fill us in on the other side.

He leaves that for the day when the Holy Spirit will come and lead His people into all the truth. He only says there's no pillow here. There's no satisfaction here.

There's no fulfillment here. But He doesn't unfold the reality. Where then is my fulfillment? And where is my satisfaction and my dwelling place? We find as it unfolds that the Lord Jesus is saying, no pillow here.

If you're going to follow me, I must be your portion. I must be the spring, the fountain, the well, the alpha, omega, the everything. It's not a baby truth to follow our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so He tells this first one who volunteers to follow Him, I'll follow you. Jesus said, understand this, there's nothing here. There's no pillow here.

No place to call home. No place to lay your head. Not literally.

I must be your portion. Verse 21-22 is the same kind of thing. When this disciple said, Lord, permit me first to go bury my father.

We can't read his motives either. So many love this idea because he said, me first. He was proud.

Let me first. Ah, there's his problem. Me first.

Maybe not. We don't know if his father was already dead and he wanted to go to the funeral. If his father was sick and dying.

If his father was just old and he wanted to spend his last day. We don't know the record. We can't say this man was delaying his following of the Lord Jesus because he considered his honorable responsibility more important than the Lord's work.

We don't have enough facts. What do we have? The amazing words of our Lord Jesus. That's what we have.

Verse 22, follow me and let the dead bury the dead. Or as Luke 9, 60 words it, allow the dead to bury their own dead. As for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.

What grand principle of following the Lord is illustrated in these words? I don't think the Lord Jesus was saying, I don't like it that you want to respect your family. He wasn't saying that. He wasn't removing responsibility from this man.

I don't think he was saying, let unsaved people take care of funerals. That's not for Christians to do. Or don't go to a funeral.

Don't go to an unsaved funeral. I don't think he's saying that. I don't even think he was saying, my ministry is more important than your family.

I don't believe that was on his heart at that time. I think he was touching on a reality of following Him in blood form. It's not developed, but I think he was saying, not only if you follow me, must you understand that there's nothing in this world, there's no pillow here.

I must be your portion. But I think he was also saying, if you follow me, really follow me. Increasingly, you will be detached from that which is passing away.

Everything's passing away. You'll be identified with life and not identified with death. And no matter how precious and how important those things are, if they're just coming to pass and to find their grave in this world, increasingly you'll be detached from that.

Living people do living things. And they're associated with life. Dead people do dead things.

You don't have to have the full explanation. You've set your heart to know the Lord. And already you've probably left dead friends and dead associations and dead habits and dead churches.

We know what it means to not associate with death. The world is passing away. But there are things unshakable and things spiritual and things eternal.

I think Jesus even caught them on the Word. I'll follow you. Let me first bury my father.

He wasn't even using living words. Bury? Christians don't bury Christians. They plant them.

They're sown. They're perishable. They're sown in dishonor.

They're sown in weakness. They're sown a natural body, but they're raised in incorruption. And He's saying we must associate with life.

The spiritually dead are all wrapped up in things that are passing away. They bury the dead. We sow the dead.

Life. Once again, the full picture is not given. There's no pillow here yet to be revealed.

I will be your portion. We can't associate with death yet to be revealed. I will be your life.

Association with Christ Himself. Luke 9, verse 61-62, this man who wanted to say goodbye to his family. Was Jesus refusing to let him say goodbye? Does the desire to say goodbye suggest some inordinate desire maybe to go back and get caught and stay and not really follow the Lord? Sort of like Lot's wife when she looked back with a desire to go back.

Is that what he had in mind? Many have related this passage to 1 Kings 19 when Elijah called Elisha. Elisha said, let me please go back and kiss my family. Is that what this is all about? I think what he's saying is deeper than don't say goodbye to your loved ones.

Don't say goodbye to your boss. Don't say goodbye to your friends. I think he's saying when you put your hand to the plow, that's the work.

That's the ministry. That's the will. That's the purpose of God.

When you put your hand to the plow, you have said goodbye. He's not saying don't say goodbye. He's telling you how to say goodbye.

And you say goodbye by laying hold of Him and His purposes. Now, let me illustrate it for you. I won't call the name of this group because I think there are some good things connected with the group.

And you may know the group, so I don't want to sour you on it. But I was invited, not as a speaker, but as a listener to a particular conference in my early Christian life. And the issue of the conference was being filled.

And the theme was, you can't be full until you're empty. And so how to empty yourself in order that God might fill you. That was the theme of the whole conference.

And they used ping-pong balls. I hate ping-pong balls. I'll tell you why I hate them.

Because for seven years, ping-pong balls were a great burden to me because of their illustration. They gave me, in the illustration, this big pit. And there's no way you could take a ping-pong ball and throw it out.

It was too deep. And there was a little bit of water. And the idea was, we want to fill this with the fullness of God.

But God won't begin to rain on you until you get rid of the ping-pong balls. And then they went on, the ping-pong balls are sin. And you've got pride.

And you've got unbelief. And you've got envy and jealousy and hate and so on. And the man actually had a rifle behind the pulpit.

He took the rifle. He said, I'll tell you how you got to do it. You aim at one ping-pong ball at a time.

Since you can't get it out, you got to sink it. So you shoot pride until it's gone. Boom.

I hate ping-pong balls. For seven years, I was shooting that ping-pong ball. They go down here and come up here and then they change forms.

I found a new way. Somebody hand me the hose. You fill that thing and watch where the ping-pong balls go.

You don't have to be empty to be full. You have to be full in order to be empty. It's not the same thing.

It's a different direction. And God has called us unto Him. And it's by putting our hand to the plow.

It's by identifying with Him and His purpose and His will. That is our goodbye. When you really lay hold of the purpose of God, you don't have to tell your boss goodbye.

He knows it. You don't have to tell your friends goodbye. They know it.

You don't have to tell your family goodbye. They know it. And I believe our Lord Jesus was just picturing these wonderful, wonderful principles on what it means to follow Him.

Once again, He doesn't develop the truth. He leaves that for the New Testament writers, for the epistles to do that. All we see is not separation from, but separation unto.

And we see a plow. He has yet to reveal that that plow is God's heart, God's plan, God's will, God's purpose, missions. You want to follow the Lord? There's no pillow here.

He must be your portion. You want to follow the Lord? Identification with life. Everything's passing away.

It's passing away. We're not connected with that anymore. You want to follow the Lord? Separation unto Him.

That's our introduction. Now, I'll ask you to turn to Matthew chapter 8, verse 23 to 27. I think it would be extremely helpful if we read this portion again.

Begin at verse 23, please. When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. And behold, there arose a great storm in the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves.

Jesus Himself was asleep. And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, Save us, Lord, we're perishing. He said to them, Why are you afraid, you men of little faith? And He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea.

And it became perfectly calm. The men were amazed and said, What kind of a man is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him? That portion of the story is also found in Mark 4 and in Luke 8. Mark 4, 36 to 41. And Luke 8, 22 to 25.

I love this because our Lord Jesus now turns the conversation into a living object lesson. I'll follow you, Lord. Really? No pillow here.

I'll follow you, Lord. Really? You've got to identify with life. I'll follow you, Lord.

Really? You've got to lay hold of the purpose of God. And then the Bible says that He turned around and started to walk. And His disciples followed Him.

Verse 23, His disciples followed Him. And I could see Him walking down the hill and they'd follow Him. And I could see Him climbing up the gangplank to the boat and they'd follow Him up.

And I could see Him getting on the boat and they'd follow Him on the boat. And then He went down and went to sleep and they didn't follow Him. The theme of following the Lord continues with this marvelous story.

This is the clincher. He brings it to a climax in this marvelous story. Are you serious about following Me? Let's test it.

And He leads them right into the storm. Brothers and sisters in Christ, here we are. This is the evidence.

This is the proof. This is the manifestation. It's easy to say, I am a follower of the Lamb.

Let's test it. As you know, some Christians think the opposite of that is true. The more spiritual you are, the more light God gives you.

The further you go on in the Lord, the more you're exempt from storm. Some think if you follow the Lord, it's pretty smooth sailing all the way to heaven. They don't know about the car wash, do they? The true follower of the Lord Jesus is instructed to expect storms and to expect storms with Jesus in the boat.

All three of these accounts climax in the same truth. They climax in the truth of faith. I'll show you that as we come to the end.

I call attention to that because following the Lord Jesus must climax with trusting Him. Trusting in the Lord, depending upon Him. Glance again at chapter 8. Let me describe the scene and then we'll press on to the heart of the Lord.

Verse 24, There arose a great storm. The Holy Spirit wouldn't use the word great in a meaningless way. You say, what's a great storm? A great storm is a great storm.

And it was a great storm. Mark 4, 37 calls it a fierce gale of wind. The waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up with water.

That's a great storm. Luke 8, 23 describes it as a fierce gale of wind descending on the sea. And that word descending is very graphic because the Sea of Galilee was a natural target for the sudden storm.

The way the mountains were around them, the wind would get caught like a funnel in those mountains. And the temperature changed from the top of the mountain to the sea. One commentator said that a glassy sea would become a boiling cauldron in five minutes.

The Expositor's Greek New Testament, in describing this, uses the Greek word or calls attention to the Greek word seismos. That's what we measure earthquakes with. That's the storm.

There was an earthquake in the sea. It was a great storm. You've got to remember that these men were not novices.

They were seamen. They were used to stormy sea. And these men were terrified of this storm.

They wouldn't be afraid of a shadow of danger. It was a real danger. Luke 8, 23 says, They began to be swamped and were in danger.

Luke calls it surging waves. I don't know if you've ever been in surging waves. I have been one time in surging waves.

I spent my time leaning over the edge of my boat in surging waves. And my wife enjoyed every minute of the surging waves. But it was a great storm.

If you follow the responses of the disciples, you can see how desperate they were in their hearts over this storm. Matthew, Mark, and Luke each give a record of the account in slightly different words. The account is so different that some think Matthew was saying they said this, and then somebody else said this, and somebody else said this.

And another commentator says, no, no, no. They all came expressing the same emotion, but they came one time and they left and he didn't wake up. And so they went back a second time and they said this, and he still didn't wake up.

And they went back a third time. I'll leave that up to you to decide. I incline to think they went three times.

There's only one way it could be different than what I'm saying. I could be wrong. Matthew 8, 25.

Save us, Lord. We are perishing. Can you picture? You need Dana up here for this or Lance to describe this idea of him waking up and saying, all right, all right, you know.

It's not like it's time for dinner. We're dying. We're perishing.

And they come, save us, Lord, we're perishing. And I can just hear those brothers describing this as he rolls over and just goes back to sleep. Mark 4, 38.

They come again. Teacher, don't you care that we're perishing? And then they go off and do whatever they do when their boat is sinking. And then they come back again.

Luke 8, 24. And you can see the frustration. Master, Master, we are perishing.

And I think that's how it went. It was an emergency for them. Don't try to explain it away.

Don't try to make them less than human. If you take away their panic, you're going to miss the point of the Lord. I actually read one account that said these disciples weren't afraid at all.

They were trying to inform the Lord Jesus about a point of theophagy. When they said in Mark 4, 38, Lord, save us, we are perishing. They didn't mean we, fellow disciples.

They meant we, you too. We are perishing. Don't you know, Lord, that your plan's in danger? Don't you know that your mission's at stake here? You know what happens if you go down? You can't save the world.

I'll tell you, they weren't trying to rescue the Lord Jesus and His program. They were trying to be rescued by the Lord Jesus. These boys were shaking in their boots.

They were afraid. So much so, one of the brothers said something about if we ever dare to hold our God, His love, His wisdom in suspicion. They had come that far, suspecting.

Don't you care? Don't you see what's going on? You've got to read this in the light of their anxiety and their fear and their panic and the emergency of the situation. Now, brothers and sisters, I'm going to set the story aside for just a moment in order to give you a little parenthesis that I think will shed light on the text. Since this final story, following Jesus into the boat, into the storm, climaxes with the truth of faith.

And since our brother said some of these Bible words can only be described and can't be defined, certainly faith is one of those words. So, brothers, let me give you a description, a generally accepted description of the indispensable characteristics of true faith. I'll give you three of them.

This is as viewed by most Christians. Number one, coming to the end of self. By the way, don't write it down unless you have an eraser on your pencil.

Coming to the end of self. Healthy faith comes to the end of human resources. I'm at my wit's end.

I come to the place where we say, I have tried everything. I can't. I quit.

There's nothing else I can do. I'm exhausted. I've used every bit of wisdom, every bit of power, all the resources, all my ingenuity.

I can't do anything. The end of self. Number two, the second indispensable characteristic of healthy faith.

Not only coming to the end of self, but coming to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only solution to the problem. Dumping everything on Jesus. Coming to Him, committing the situation into His hand, rolling the burden on the Lord.

Let go. Let God. Third characteristic of healthy faith.

After you've come to the end of yourself, after you've given it all to Jesus, get out of the way and watch Him work. Don't try to help Him. Don't try to assist Him.

Get out of the way and let God do His thing. All right, let's go back to Matthew 8. Let me ask this question. Did the disciples come to the end of themselves? In this story.

I believe they did. I think they exhausted every one of their bailing and sailing skills. I think they had come to the end.

They came crying as helpless men who had nothing else that they could do except drown, except perish. They were at the end of themselves. The storm was great.

They were not great. And they came to the end of themselves. Did the disciples in this story give it all to Jesus? Was He the only possible solution? Was He the only Savior? Indeed, they came to Him.

Lord, save us, we beg. There's no one else. We can't turn to anyone else.

Did the disciples get out of the way and watch Him do what only God can do? Indeed, they did. 8.24 says there was a great storm. 8.26 says there was a great calm.

The calm was every bit as great as the storm was great. The disciples would never forget this scene until their dying day. When the Lord Jesus aroused from His slumber, came up on the deck, and stood there with His arms outstretched, the wind and the wave blowing in His face, and He said from the Greek, He muzzled, He muzzled the storm.

When it was over, the disciples stood on the deck with their eyes opened wide in amazement, and their mouths opened wide in amazement, and they said, What kind of a man is this that even the wind and the seas obey Him? They came to the end themselves. They dumped it on the Lord. They got out of the way and watched Him do what only God can do.

Here is my second question. Since they had come to the end of themselves and given it all to Jesus and gotten out of the way so that God could do what only God can do, why didn't Jesus give them an attaboy? Why didn't He say, Well done, good and faithful servants? Why didn't He say, You blessed My heart. You have the indispensable characteristics of healthy faith.

You have come to the end of yourselves. You've given it to Me. You've gotten out of the way so I can do My thing.

You have satisfied My heart. But instead of saying that, He rebuked them. Matthew 8, 26, Why are you timid, you men of little faith? Little faith? I thought that was healthy faith.

I thought that's the right way. Come to the end of yourself. Give it to Jesus.

Get out of the way. And He said, Oh, you men of little faith. Matthew, or rather Mark 4, 40.

Little stronger. Why are you so timid? How is it you have no faith? No faith. I thought that was pretty good.

You come to the end of yourself. Dump it on the Lord. Get out of the way.

Watch Him do a miracle. And His great heart says, No faith. Luke words it this way.

Chapter 8, 25. Where is your faith? Little faith. No faith.

Misplaced faith. Oh, friends, dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, it looked, it appeared, it seemed so spiritual, so right, so good. But in the eyes of our Lord Jesus Christ, who wanted to instruct them in what it really means to follow the Lord, it was not good.

It was not satisfying. It hurt Him. So much of our Christian life seems to be so often the repetition of this process.

God brings a storm into our life. We come to the end of ourselves. We give it to Jesus.

We get out of the way. And we're all set for a little while until another storm comes. We come to the end of ourselves.

We give it to Jesus. We get out of the way. God rescues us again.

And we think that's the Christian life. That's not the Christian life. May God deliver us from that.

There's something more. There's something better. There's something higher.

It's not that He strikes those things out. It's not that He's saying, Don't come to the end of yourself. And don't give it to the Lord.

And don't get out of the way. He's not saying, Get rid of that. What He's saying is those realities are swallowed up in Christ Jesus.

That's why He gave the first three stories first. Because if God has written in your heart that there is no pillow here, there is no satisfaction here, there's no fulfillment here, there's no portion here, and you've turned to Him and He has become your portion, if that has happened in your life, you have come to the end of yourself. And if God has delivered you from those things that are passing away and opened your eyes to the spiritual world, and you embrace Christ and He's become your life, you have dumped it on the Lord.

And if God, even this week in this conference, has risen you above this experience and began to show you His will and His purpose and His pleasure, and you've laid your hand on that plow, you have gotten out of the way so that He can do His thing. Laying hold of the Lord Jesus as your portion, as your life, as your purpose, that's healthy faith. Laying hold of Him.

We've been hearing that all week. It's Him. It's the person.

It's God's darling. It's His Son. It's Jesus.

Unfortunately, that experience coming to the end of self, dumping it on Jesus, getting out of the way, we can do that and miss the Lord. You can do that and not know that He is your portion. You can do that and not know that He's your life.

You can do that without having laid hold of the great purpose of God, the everlasting purpose in Christ Jesus. May God deliver us from a Christianity that is just this. You have already, by embracing Christ, come to the end of self.

It's a one-time act, but it's an everlasting attitude. Embracing Christ as your life. Embracing His purpose for your life.

When the disciples followed the Lord Jesus into the boat into the storm, it's so graphic. They followed a sleeping Savior. That's just a wonderful illustration of a resting Savior.

Of a Savior that was at peace about everything. A Savior who was in control without anxiety, without fear, without fretting, without any panic or care, completely at rest. You say, what should the disciples have done? Followed Him.

Not literal sleeping, I'm not saying that, but followed Him into rest to be sure. You say, what's faith? Faith after He has become your portion. After He has become your life.

After God has enabled you to lay hold of the everlasting purpose of God and you put your hand to the plow. Faith is letting Jesus sleep. Letting Jesus sleep.

It's not the heart followers of Jesus who continually wake Him up. It's not the heart followers of Jesus who continually hold His love and suspicion and need to see an active God. We need signs.

We need miracles. We need wonders. It's because we have not learned to be heart followers of the Lamb that we wake Him up.

Those who have come to see Him, who have embraced Christ, they know that it's only, it looks like He's unconscious. It looks like He's not doing anything. It looks like He's in a state where He sees nothing, feels nothing, knows nothing, is concerned about nothing, is aware of nothing, doesn't care about us or the storm.

But those who have embraced the Lord, they know that He's in control even when He's not active, visibly active. He's at rest and He calls us to be at rest as well. Wasn't it just beautiful the way Brother Lance brought us last night into the Lord's presence? And he opened up that revelation where the Lamb of God went to God and took the will out of His hand.

And when He took the will out of His hand, He was holding as our Redeemer kinsman the will of God. Do you know, Lance then said, how safe is the will of God in the hand of the Lamb? Do you know why Jesus can sleep? Because everything's under control. He has the will of God in His hand.

No desperation. He's called us to follow Him into His rest. Now, not a rest He gives.

I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about a rest He has. He's at rest about everything.

Now, how concerned is Jesus over the storm that's in your life right now? Think He's worried about that? Think He's concerned about that? Is it possible this afternoon for me and for you to be as completely free from care as God is completely free from care over everything that's going on in your life? Exactly so, brother and sister in Christ. If you have laid hold of the Lord Jesus as your portion, if Christ has dawned upon you as your life, if God has enabled you to see the high purpose of God in Christ Jesus, and you've laid hold of His purpose and His will, you can let Him sleep. Everything's alright in my Father's house.

Everything is alright. Jesus said, Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. He didn't say, Be of good cheer, you shall overcome the world.

It's His victory. He's overcome the world. Paul was continually always led about in his triumph.

Not a triumph God gave Paul or any believer. God's not going to give you His Son and something else called rest. He's only going to give you His Son.

And if you have His Son, you have rest. I love that Jesus was sleeping in the boat. Now, let me wrap this up on a hopeful note.

So, brothers and sisters in Christ, you belong to Him. You don't need to wake Him up. But if you do, and you will, He is so patient and so merciful and so good.

I loved Dana's words this morning. He said, It's at the moment of failure that we become captured by His love. He will never quit on you.

He will never quit on me. And in that moment when that storm comes and you run to the Lord Jesus, I'll confess to you, I don't know anybody that wakes the Lord Jesus more than I do. You know, you can read these glorious things and know the reality that it's Him, and you can let Him sleep.

But then the storm comes, you get panicky, and you run to the Lord Jesus, and you just wake Him up. Now, what will happen if you wake Him up? Well, He'll give you a gentle rebuke, and then He will probably do some wonderful thing for you out of which testimonies are made. He may rise from His sleep, work some mighty miracle before your eyes, change a great storm to a great calm.

But be careful. Don't say, Whoa, look what God did because I had great faith. No, look what God did because you were weak and you failed.

That's when He rises up and does His great thing. And He may rise up and move and heal and deliver and provide and restore and revive and quicken and transform and do these great things. And then at night, someone will say, Any testimony? Let me tell you.

Oh, you won't believe it. What God did for me. I woke Him up, and He got up, and He did this great miracle.

Yes, He did, and He'll continue to do it because He loves you. But He doesn't want you to live on that level. There's higher ground.

That's not the Christian life. Continually coming to the end, giving Him the problem, getting out of the way, looking at a miracle and then waiting for the next one. He wants to lift us above all that where He is our portion.

And He is our life. And His purpose is our plow. And then we can follow the Lamb into rest.

We can let Him sleep. We can move with the purposes of God. May the Lord work these things in our heart.

Let's pray together. Our Father, we thank You so much for Your precious Word. Not what we think it might mean, but all You inspired it to mean.

We ask You now to work that in our lives. Lift us up, we pray, to where the Lord Jesus is in the heavenly places. Thank You for Your patience and Your mercy and Your grace.

Thank You that You don't get angry when we wake You, when we come in the family storm, when we come in the church storm, when we come in the financial storm, when we come in the physical storm. You don't get angry, but You rise and do marvelous things. We worship You, Lord.

You're so good, so merciful. But teach us what it means to be true followers of the Lamb, that we might rest where You rest. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

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