

“What Kind of Man Is This?”

Introduction: Jesus has just finished a trio of healings – the healing of a leper, a paralyzed servant, and a woman with a severe fever – only to be followed up by meeting the needs of the many sick and suffering neighbors of Peter’s that were then brought to his house to be healed. So it shouldn’t surprise us that Jesus needed some time away from the crowds and took his followers over to a quieter side of the lake. In the process, he continued to progressively reveal various aspects of his character and authority. What he seems to want his would-be disciples to grasp is that following him will not be as easy, or comfortable, or straightforward as it might look. And yet, why would they not? Why would we not? There is no one like him who even the wind and the waves obey! [READ]

I. Case Studies in Following

A. Jesus begins with two case studies in following, brought on by statements made by two potential students who wanted to come along with Jesus and his people. The first declared, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” This man was a teacher of the law, or scribe, as they were sometimes known. In the ancient world, only a few people could read and write, and these fellows had skills that went far beyond just that to include teaching and interpreting the scriptures and its laws. This fellow had likely been a disciple of a rabbi until he had become a legal expert himself, and now wanted to join in with this guy Jesus, getting “another Masters,” whose power and authority must’ve been something to behold.

B. Jesus’ response is surprising: “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” In other words, “Friend, we are going to be roughing it, and not staying in four-star accommodations.” More to the point, Jesus wanted this fellow to know that following him would not be a matter of enjoying a show of one amazing healing after another. As Jesus had come to go to the places where the world was in deep pain and be there for those who were suffering, even suffering on their behalf, so would his followers need to go. Furthermore, Jesus didn’t have the status of this fellow’s rabbi. If he followed Jesus, it wouldn’t be to a corner office of one of the city’s prestigious law firms where he would try high profile cases; it would be more like working for a public defender helping needy immigrants find their place in a new land. “Are you ready for that?” was Jesus’ implied question. Since we aren’t given his answer, maybe the question needs to linger with us... What kind of life is this one who has no place to lay his head calling us to?

C. Then a second candidate steps up. He’s identified by Matthew as a disciple but is likely not one of the Twelve, the designation “disciple” often used by the gospel writers in a broader sense (cf. Lk. 6:12-20). In fact, he didn’t seem quite ready to follow Jesus as he said, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” I don’t know if he expected Jesus to change his entire itinerary just for him?! Or, as some suggest, was he really stalling, not able to make up his mind, especially as he had perhaps overheard the “no place to lay my head” answer Jesus had just given?! Another possibility is that, as “bury my father” can have more in mind than just a funeral, but can include “looking after and caring for my father until he dies,” was the man struggling with his commitment and responsibility to his family? After all, the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment instructs us to honor our fathers and mothers, which includes caring for and meeting their needs.

D. This responsibility to care for our family, and to follow Jesus, can sometimes be a challenge. Which one takes precedence? How do they relate? It’s not always easy. I know of children who are still hurting, or have left the church, because their pastor father all but ignored them as he carried out his role in the church while they were growing up. On the other hand, one of my friends is fond of using the phrase “cult of the family,” to describe the fact that we can also use our family as an excuse not to get involved in ministry, or in the church. Jesus seems to be saying here that there are times that the family does not take priority, and that the best way to care for them is to keep growing as his follower. The spiritually dead can take care of a funeral. Our business is to pursue what leads to life.

Again, the main point: there will be times when following Jesus is not as easy, comfortable, or straightforward as it may look.

## II. An Experience in Following

A. This truth was then experienced in big way by those who followed Jesus, into the boat and not to long thereafter, into a monumental storm. While the squalls could be sudden and violent on the Sea of Galilee, this one had these seasoned fishermen scared for their lives. Like our tropical weather of this past week, waves in this stormy lake could reach 7-ft. Not only that. The sea in ancient times represented evil, darkness, and chaos. It was out of control and something that God needed to “rebuke.” However, none of this seemed to bother Jesus. He was fast asleep in the stern! And when his followers woke him up with cries of “save us,” he not only rebuked the wind and the waves with a word, but before he did that, he rebuked them: “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?”

B. Such a rebuke hardly seems fair, we might think. The whole event was filled with fear! Their lives were in danger. Now, they did seem to have enough faith to call upon Jesus to act. But perhaps what still needed to grow was their trust in his care even when, and especially when, circumstances don’t look promising. Can we trust that Jesus is sovereign over all as we read through our daily news feeds, or watch a loved one suffer, or wonder about the future of the church, or hear about yet another disaster of some sort, or experience political turmoil worsening. The list goes on.

C. What they needed, and what we need, is our understanding of Jesus to expand. “What kind of man is this?” That’s the right question to ask. And the right observation to make is, “Even the wind and the waves obey him!” That seemed to be even more amazing to them than all of the physical healings he had brought about up to this point. Perhaps it’s because, as they pondered, it was becoming clearer that Jesus was doing what only God could do. In the OT, it was a mark of the sovereignty of God that the sea obeyed his orders. The psalmist, for instance, repeatedly observes how only the power of God can still a storm.

So, for instance, Psalm 89:9: “You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them.”

Or Psalm 107:29: “He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed.”

Or Psalm 65:6f: “Who formed the mountains by your power...who stilled the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the turmoil of the nations.”

In this last text, we can see how literal storms were linked to the storms of life, including the turmoil that we find in the nations of the world. Only God can rebuke the evil in the world. Only God can make the wind and waves calm. And if we can rest in that, only God can calm our spirits, even when the wind and waves continue to surge. As another psalm puts it, “When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm” (Ps. 75:3). This is the God, it was beginning to dawn on the disciples, who is revealed and present in Jesus.

Following him will not lead to a life that is storm free. It, in fact, will not be as easy, comfortable, or straightforward as we might have thought. But who else has the power we need over the wind and the waves?

Like those early disciples, how might your understanding of Jesus need to expand? In what circumstance might you need to trust him more? Where would he say to you, “Why are you so afraid?”