

Have You Made Up Your Mind? (Matthew 8:18-34)

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[0 : 00] When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross at the other side of the lake. Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.

Jesus replied, Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head. Another disciple said to him, Lord, first let me go and bury my father.

But Jesus told him, follow me and let the dead bury their own dead. Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake so that the waves swept over the boat.

But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him saying, Lord, save us. We're going to drown. He replied, you of little faith.

Why are you so afraid? Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves and was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, what kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him.

[1 : 04] When he arrived at the other side in the region of Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way.

What do you want with us, Son of God? They shouted. Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time? Some distance from them, a large herd of pigs was feeding. The demons begged to Jesus, if you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.

He said to them, go. So they came out and went into the pigs and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men.

Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave the region. All right, welcome, Oxy. Thank you.

Okay. Thank you, Pastor William, for giving me this passage. I was really inspired when I was studying this passage. And I do believe that God has something to challenge us today, because I was challenged myself.

[2 : 16] Now, not with this, but it was this deep philosophical question with conversation between the two. Right? What does matter? So the answer was, never mind.

And he kept asking, what's mind? Doesn't matter. But do mind do matter? You know, mind matters very much.

In this book, the essential commandments that a few leaders were studying, in the chapter is that the mind is the most powerful, most powerful faculty in the human makeup.

It's the mind that determines how we feel and how we behave and ultimately what we live for. This is why Jesus said, love the Lord your God, not just with all your hearts, not just with all your soul, but with all your mind as well.

Because the book kept saying, we have been given minds that we can search out the highest and most important truth.

[3 : 34] It's the mind as a lifelong process of transformation in which we are to continuously adjusting our thinking so that, you know, godly ways to see the reality, what God wants us to see.

And that affects our whole being as a follower of Jesus. We were reading the passage just before. You know, I was struck when I was reading those, the wind and the storm and the demons.

I mean, they didn't have the mind to think about whether they should obey Jesus or not, you know. The wind said, oh, let's think about it. Hey, what about you? Wave, what do you think?

Should we, you know, he rebuilt us. Should we follow us? Well, they had to do what the Lord of the creation just commanded. And the demons, you know, even though they said, oh, can we go to the pigs?

I mean, he knew that the fate, they had no choice. But the thing is, our human, we have been given minds and we think about, do we want to follow him in this way?

[4 : 46] I have my own way. You know, I think we need to really, really, our minds need to make up, we need to make up our minds whether or how we're going to follow him.

Okay. So, okay, the passage we've read, I think, put this in the diagram. Actually, I didn't put this, actually, the book actually had that. But I kind of adjusted a little bit. So, he says that, you know, the Bible told us our minds to be transformed.

Okay. So that we understand the good and the perfect will of God. Okay. So, the mind is like a filter. It's like a pair of glasses, really, you know.

And it affects how do we see things, you know. You know, the things are happening that stimulates the world events. And actually, you know, what we see, how we perceive, it will have different outcomes.

So, we need to adjust our minds. We need to think where or how to follow Jesus. Okay. In our minds, what does it mean to follow Jesus?

[5 : 59] Just think a bit. You know, in a camp, there were many who came up and professed faith to Jesus. But what did it really mean?

There were some who actually came and said, oh, yeah, if Jesus calls me, I'll offer myself a full-time ministry. What did it mean? Was it because it was a nice camp night?

Everybody does that. Everybody, I mean, every year there are some people come up, oh, I think I should come up as well. What does it mean to follow Jesus in this passage we have just read?

I believe in that passage we have read, Jesus actually was seeking truthful and complete, 100% devotion for those who truly want to follow.

Because he is the Lord of the physical world. He calmed the wind and the storm. And as well, he was the ruler of the spiritual realm.

[7 : 04] So put it in today's term, it's for us, I think, it's Jesus demanded radical discipleship.

Because he is worthy. Because he is the Lord of all. Because he is the Lord of all.

So he can demand all of us. Everything. If it's anything less than that, well, we might be able to negotiate a bit.

But if he is the Lord of all, then there's nothing less we can. We are to offer him. Okay.

So in the context, I like what Pastor William has put in last time, last week. So we understand a bit about how Matthew presented the King of Kings.

[8 : 05] Okay. So it was narrative, it was discourses, narrative, discourses. Okay. So you understand? Do we still remember? Remember? Don't look too doubtful.

Pastor William would be heartbreaking. What? I just told you last week, you know? All right? So I think, believe that. One to four is about the narrative about Jesus. Little baby. All right?

And then the five to seven is just... Even I did not, I was not here, I could understand. Hey? So five to seven is the Sermon on the Mount.

All right? And today is the discourse and the narrative, discourse, narrative, discourse, until Jesus was nailing on the cross.

Okay? So that's the first narrative that was recorded by Matthew. Okay? So I believe that God is going to challenge us today.

[9 : 07] Are we making up our minds? Have we... Have we been really thinking? Are we ready to make up our minds to follow Jesus, the Lord of all?

In 23 to 27... I don't know what happened to the words. It kind of went all funny. It should be same size, you know, same font. Same font. Okay? Okay?

So 23 to 27, it described that Jesus was the Lord of the physical world. And 28 to 33, Jesus told us that he is ruler of the spiritual realm.

That means he is the Lord of all. Okay? It just happened that those two incidents, but really carry on from last week. Okay? About what Jesus did.

And so he was just to try to illustrate, try to let his readers know Jesus is Lord of everything. Okay? So firstly, this is 26 to 27.

[10 : 15] He calmed the storm. Okay? He was sleeping in a boat. He would be tired after some talking to people. And he was in the midst of the Sea of Galilee.

And the Sea of Galilee was known for sudden storms, big, huge waves. Okay? But you can imagine how tired Jesus was. He was actually sleeping fast asleep.

Okay? In a boat. And the disciples just was actually complaining. Jesus, how could you sleep? Wouldn't you help us?

Now, literally, I believe that he wasn't saying that he did not, they did not expect Jesus to calm the storm at the first moment. Because they was kind of trying to, you know, empty the water and trying to, you know, get the boat steady.

And Jesus, why couldn't you do anything? Because they were like, you know, I don't know. But out of their expectation, Jesus got up and rebuked the winds and the waves.

[11:20] And Jesus actually had to rebuked them as well before he rebuked the wave and the wind. You men of little faith.

And this incident, that really amazed his disciples. What kind of man is this?

Even the winds and the waves obey him. Okay? I think after the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew deliberately recorded these narratives.

Okay? You see the miracles that Matthew was recording. The difficulty of the miracles of each one, the impact and the difficulty escalated each time.

It was harder. I mean, it's healing of leprosy or the paralysis was one thing. But calming the nature as another.

[12:26] Okay? He was not just a good teacher. Not just a godly man. But he is something. Something that's out of their expectation.

He is the supreme one. And in 28 to 33, Matthew described he's the ruler of the spiritual realm.

In verse 29, when the demons saw Jesus, what do you want from us? Son of God. They knew.

They immediately knew. And they shouted, have you come here to torture us before the appointed time? Now, even that little response from the demons, it said something.

You know, Son of God. They immediately could recognize. It's just us. We do not recognize Jesus as Son of God.

[13:25] They did. Right? And they knew that their fate, their destiny is in his hand. Okay? And I think for his followers at the time, it would be absurd for a rabbi, a teacher, to go anywhere near the cemetery.

Near the dead. You know, if you're a religious teacher, you keep yourself away from that. Because there's ceremony unclean. But Jesus went.

Even though he knew there were demons there. People knew that. And Jesus went there with a purpose.

And these two things, these two incidents, actually, has shown, when Matthew put them in there, has shown that he is, Jesus, is the Lord of the physical world.

And he's also the ruler of the spiritual realm. So, let us think. Who is this Jesus that we believe?

[14:46] If he's just an ordinary good man, someone who loves us, who's willing to give his life for us, if he's anything less than God himself, you know, it really, really affects how we should follow him.

But if he is the supreme God, he is the Lord of all, then we can follow, we can serve him without any reservations.

And he does demand the best, the all from us. And that's what he demanded. In verses 19 to 20, he demanded complete surrender.

And in 21 to 22, he demanded absolute loyalty. Okay. Interesting to read those two people, those two men that came and asked Jesus.

So, in verse 19, the teacher of the law came to him and said, Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go. And Jesus replied, Foxes have dens and birds have nits, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.

[16:09] What did he mean? Now, imagine, he was the teacher of the law. He was subscribed. I mean, he was a teacher himself. Just look how he addressed Jesus.

I mean, if you are the senior professor in the Auckland, in certain faculty, okay, he is the most esteemed professor.

Okay. And suddenly he comes to another and he said, teacher. You know, this guy, he's got to know that he is higher than him.

All right. And he came with a very sincere heart. Okay. Okay. I will follow you wherever you go. But Jesus wanted to remind him, but not on your turn. Okay. You might have something in mind following me. But Jesus really wanted to tell him that, you know, I have no place to lay my head.

[17 : 15] What did he mean? Now, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus already told his followers that God, our Father, will provide all our needs.

Like the birds in the fields, the birds in the air, the lily in the fields. I mean, he feeds them, he clothes them. All right. And that's very true.

God feeds us and clothes us. But this challenge was security. You know, you think you want to have a place to stay.

No, I don't have any places to stay. If you want to follow me, there is no places, no secure places to stay. Now, that's something that really challenged this teacher.

He might have something in mind. But Jesus said, no, not on your turn, but on my turn. I'm not saying that, you know, we don't need to buy houses. Well, we can't afford anyway.

[18 : 17] But it's about the security. All right. So when Jesus didn't say that we don't need to, you know, to save money and to have a normal kind of way of living.

No, but if he does challenge us in a special way, you know, we need to follow with a full surrender. And, you know, if some, for some, if he challenges you, you just want, I just want you to quit your job and go to seminary like Pastor William.

That was a challenge, wasn't it? Pastor William, right? With four kids, or three kids at a time, at that time, you know, quit your job and go to seminary. What next? It's the complete surrender.

And maybe for most of us, he wants us to just to remain where we are. You know, the job.

It's not a job. I always say it's not a job. Not even a career. It's vocation. Vocation is God calling in the places where he placed us in the secular world, in the corporate world, to be his witnesses, to be his servants.

[19 : 38] To testify. If he calls you there, and if I say, no, I just want to go to seminary, that could be a copped out.

That could be a disobedient. And you know that. Okay, you know where and how God is going to place you. So, not on my term, but on his term.

And the next one, another disciple came to him. Lord, first let me go and bury my father. But Jesus told him, follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.

When you first read this, you think Jesus was very inconsiderate, and Jesus was very unreasonable. You know, my dad is dying.

Jesus said, no, don't worry about the funeral. You can't follow me. Now, if we understand the context at the time, okay, it's not what we think.

[20 : 40] His dad was not dying. Okay. He's just, in the oriental world, I think we are Chinese, we understand a bit better than the Kiwis.

Okay. We have our obligation as sons and daughters. His dad was not dying. Maybe he's still very healthy. But he said, oh, I need to, I have my responsibility to bury him when he died.

You know, just, you know, when you preach the gospel to Chinese people, and, oh, do you want to come to believe in Jesus? Yeah, yeah, yeah. But what about, you know, my parents, they're not Christians.

They buy sons, you know. You know, they worship their ancestors. You know, I am the eldest son. You know, I need to, I need to burn the incense. I need to burn all these things for him when they die, you know.

Because it may say, that could be an excuse. And Jesus knew that was an excuse. If you don't do it now, you'll never follow me.

[21 : 54] And then Luke, actually, Luke gave another, another guy, you know. He said, Luke described that, they said, oh, Jesus, I want to follow you. And actually, in Luke 9, he said, another, still another said, I will follow you, Lord.

But first, let me go back and say goodbye to my family. Okay. And Jesus replied, no one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.

What did it mean? You know, imagine, you know, was, was, the plow was, you know, the, the, the, the ox was pushed, pulling the plow and you were kind of at the back.

And, and you, and you were following, you should be going straight, but your head's looking back.

How are you going to concentrate? Okay. I think put it in today's term, just like, like you're having lunch with your girlfriend or your, or your wife, but keep looking at your mobile phone all the time.

Okay. You're not fit to have a relationship. This is what, similar to what Jesus said. If you really want to follow Jesus, concentrate, respect, have heart.

[23 : 15] There's a phrase when Hudson Taylor said, Christ is either the Lord of all, or he is not Lord at all.

So what is, what's this thing challenge us today to this passage of the Bible challenges? He does want us to have 100% devotion to him.

Now that's a serious call. And in, at the end of the, at the end of the, of the passage in verse 44, 34, he said, the whole town went out to meet Jesus.

Okay. After the two incidents, after that incident, when Jesus expelled the demons, okay. And, and the, and the pigs went, you know, and they all went and died and drowned.

And, you know, Jesus, when he come to town, he can't go unnoticed. Okay. And these people heard about all these things and the whole town came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, interesting, they pleaded with him to leave the region.

[24 : 25] What? On earth? You know, Jesus does just this amazing thing. He just expelled these demons from these two men that they knew. And they came out and just said, oh, Jesus, okay, it's good.

Now it's good what you have done, but please go, go, go, go. Why? Why? Why would they do that? Why would they do that? I think, I think, there was a bit, I think Jesus came and they felt that they were disturbed.

What? These two people, two men, they were possessed. Okay, now, okay, these demons have gone. What if the bigger demons came? How are we going to handle them?

You know, and this Jesus, you know, is, is always a kind of controversial. You know, what happens if the Romans heard about this guy came over in town? And what are they going to do to us?

Whenever Jesus come to town, he will disturb the whole thing. So, if Jesus come to our lives, he will disturb our lives.

[25 : 42] How are we going to react? Are we like those people in this little town?

Jesus is so good at what you have done, but now go, please go, go, go. I'm going to get on with our own life. Or do we, do we accept Jesus into our lives?

And have we made up our minds to follow him 100%? I like what Nick said during the camp, you know. Jesus is not like an app.

An app. Jesus app. You know, I just want to download my phone, you know. And whenever I push that app, Jesus said, oh yeah, what do you want today? You know, oh, I have this and this, this, this.

And then you don't need Jesus. You just hide him somewhere in the phone. And we carry on our own ways. Jesus is not like that. Jesus wants our lives.

[26 : 46] Jesus wants our whole being to commit to full surrender to him. Are we ready? Have we made up our mind to follow him?

About 150 years ago, when there was a great revival in Wales, and that kind of influenced many other Western countries, and there was an influx of missionaries.

It was, at that time, there was a lot of missionaries went to the northeast India to spread the gospel. And this region called Asam. Asam, A-S-S-A-M.

There was, at that time, still hundreds of primitive tribes. They were aggressive headhunters. And naturally, the message of the gospel was not welcome at that time.

But there was, after a period of time, there was a family, a man, his wife, and two children. They have converted and believe in Jesus. And their faith and their lives actually impacted the village in a very great way.

[27 : 53] And that really enraged the chief of the village. And he called all the villages together. And he called that converted family to stand in front of, in the middle of all these villages.

And he said, I'll give you a chance to renounce your faith. Renounce your faith. Just say, I don't want to believe in Jesus.

Then, I'll let you go. And this man, moved by the Holy Spirit, he said, I have decided to follow Jesus. Very well, he said. And he ordered his archers to shoot down his two children. Right in front of him. Now, I'll give you another chance. Deny your faith, or you'll lose your wife as well. The man said, Though no one joins me, still, I will follow.

[28 : 52] And the chief ordered his wife to be shut down. I'll give you one last chance to deny your faith and live.

In the face of death, the man said the final memorable lines. The cross before me. The world behind me.

No turning back. And he was shot. When the whole family died, suddenly a miracle happened. The chief was so moved. He couldn't understand why this man, this family, would die for someone who lived far away 2,000 years ago.

It must be, there must be some remarkable power behind this family's faith. I want to search. I want to taste.

[30 : 00] And right there, he declared himself to be a Christian. And this song, we'll be singing later, is the last words of this guy called, Not Sing.

A man from this Assam village in India, today, they still sing this song. I have decided to follow Jesus.

Have we made up our minds to follow him? Not just, not just, not just, something, oh, because others do that, I'll do that as well.

But Jesus demanded full surrender and complete loyalty. Do we mean what we believe? that? It's quite so good!

[31 : 11] But I feel like you now have an valuable advantage of helping you because of success is a maximum and we tell you what we're