

**Matt 8:18-32**

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Main Point – Put your faith in and follow Jesus, the powerful One.

I know the Principal at a Theological Seminary in Pakistan, his name is Qaiser. In Sept 2013 two suicide bombers *detonated* their devices in the grounds of a church in Pakistan.-----

As worshippers were exiting their Church in Peshawar, after the morning service, the bombs went off, and 139 people were killed, dozens more injured (**SLIDE**).-----

This shocking attack traumatized the Christian community and Christians throughout the *country*, as fear and insecurity increased.

One of the coordinators at the Seminary, Naeem Nazir was among the dead, along with his wife, daughter and brother.

Only his 15 year old son survived; *Shaloom*.

How would you expect Shaloom to *respond*?-----

Suffering makes some questions God's existence, or God's love?-----

I'm sure some asked, *Is Jesus really* worth *following*?-----

Despite Shaloom's mother, father n' sister being killed, his faith remained strong.

He said, "*Although I have lost my father and mother, I know that God is always with me, and He will* never *leave me or forsake me.*"-----

Sometimes following Jesus is costly, but faith like that inspires me.-----

Today I pray we'll all be moved to put our faith in and follow the powerful Lord Jesus.-----

Last week we read how Jesus healed the leper, the Centurion's servant, then Peter's mother in-law.

And in the evening, v16, 'all the sick' & demon possessed who came to him.-----

I am sure Jesus was exhausted, from a long day of preaching and healing, and needed rest.

And before he can cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, two men say they want to follow him, but that won't be easy.-----

**Follow Him is our first of 3 points.**

A teacher of the law, so a scribe who knows the law of Moses and his Hebrew Bible well, he says to Jesus, "Teacher, I will follow you *wherever* you go."

Whether it was Jesus' impressive teaching or powerful healings, he thought, *This Jesus is* worth following.-----

Now Jesus had just said, let's go to the *other side* of the lake.

And remember that during Jesus' public ministry, in these last 3 years of his life on earth, he has no home – always on the move.

And so he says, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."-----

We'll see in Matthew's Gospel, being a follower, a disciple of Jesus, it involves sacrifice, self-denial, *submission*; service, and even *suffering*.

And so Jesus wants the man to be clear on what he's getting into, what he's committing to.--

In those last 3 years of Jesus' earthly life, following him, often involved following him

physically, going where *he went*.

Today, while it's different, it still requires sacrifice, self-denial, submission, service and even suffering.-----

I love Tim Chester's book, *The Ordinary Hero*, on this.(**SLIDE**)

And for all of us, Jesus must still come *before* and be more important than home, and stability, security and comfort.-----

Then another disciple says, v21 "Lord", I'll go *with you*, but 'first let me go and bury my father.'

At first glance Jesus' response can seem harsh: "Follow me (or 'keep following me'), and let the dead bury their own dead."-----

It seems Jesus *hasn't read* the book, 'How to win friends and influence people'; cos it sounds insensitive.-----

The issue is surely not that the man needed to get his father's body into a tomb.

Nor is Jesus *forbidding* the man attending his father's funeral.-----

It's possible his father wasn't *dead yet* but in his final months.

Or Jesus *might* have been asking the man to give up the 7 days of intense mourning that occurred after a Jewish family member died, or the 30 *days* beyond that.

Why?----

For following Jesus is costly.

Jesus is saying following me must come before personal comfort, and before family, and even obligations to parents.

Like he'll say in ch10 v37(**SLIDE**).-----

We need to love Jesus more than our father or mother, or son or daughter.

"Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me."

Yes normally following Jesus includes respecting and providing for our parents, but we must love Jesus more.

He must matter more to us than our home or our family, and being willing to leave if we have to.-----

Is that true for you?-----

He demands total commitment, or *no* commitment.-----

So are you willing to commit to Christ?-----

Will you follow Jesus? Or keep-on following him?-----

And show your faith in action.-----

Also, if you're trying to convince someone *else* to become a Christian, do you only ever talk about the positives?-----

"*Trust in Jesus for forgiveness, eternal life, relationship with God, ultimate joy*"?-----

And they're all true.

But here we see Jesus asking people if they're willing to *first* pay the cost.

**Colin Buchanan** sings, '*Jesus is Number 1, right at the top where he belongs. Who he is and what he's done make Jesus number 1*'.

Is he number 1 in your life?-----

**Fiona** was a good girl from a church going family, who *went to church*, cos 'that's what you do'. She knew about God, she even became a youth leader and joined Bible studies, and Fiona says, I thought when you *do stuff for God* that makes you a Christian'.

Outwardly adult life looked great, with a successful career, wonderful husband and kids. But getting to church became less of a priority.

Fiona says, I had lots of head knowledge about God but I was spiritually dead from the neck down.-----

Then one day she went to a special church service, and she felt God saying, "*Are you going to be obedient? Are you going to listen to my voice?*"-----

And that was the turning point.

**Fiona** says, It became a heart transformation in me and I came *alive*.

I *could* accept the love Jesus was offering me, and I could trust him, knowing I could change my life, knowing it wasn't about me but had everything to do with God.-----

Fiona knew that even when it meant change, Jesus was worth following.-----

**In v23** Jesus gets into the boat with his disciples who chose to follow him, and unbeknownst to them, they will experience a trial that forces *them* to ask, Will I trust Jesus?

**Point 2 is, Faith in him?-----**(SLIDE)

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

'*Furious storm*' in the Greek is literally, a **great shaking**, and shaking is the word, seismos, from which we get seismic, used for earthquakes.-----

Picture a little boat being smashed by and swamped by waves in a great storm.

And amazingly, Jesus, presumably exhausted, and *also trusting* his Father, is sleeping in back.----

In absolute desperation and fearing for their lives they wake him up crying,

"Lord, save us! We're *gonna die!*"

And Jesus *replies*: "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?"-----

Then he tells off the wind and waves, and it goes completely calm.----(SLIDE)

Literally there was a *great calm*.-----

The great *storm*, became a great calm because of the Words of Jesus.

Despite their *lack of faith*, He calmed the storm, with mere *words*.-----

Like last week, it highlights Jesus' matchless power.-----

These miracles are signs showing he is the King of God's Kingdom.

He has power over disease and sickness, and nature.-----

But who has such power?-----

**Psalm 65** says God 'stilled the roaring seas'. [v5-6]

**Ps 107** says (SLIDE) the Lord makes the huge swell and waves.

Then when men cry out to him in their trouble, **v29**,(SLIDE) the Lord stills the storm to a whisper, and the waves of the sea were hushed, and grew calm.-----

Jesus does this.

Jesus has this power over the storm and the sea. The power of God himself.-----

So Matt 8 is saying, Jesus Christ has the power of God.---- He *is God*.-----

In **Matt 8.27**, the disciples are rightly amazed at Jesus' power, and ask, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

And that's just the point; Jesus is no mere man.-----

Back in **v20** Jesus described himself, for the *first time*, as 'the Son of Man'.

The background to this is in our first reading, **Daniel 7**.(SLIDE)

There one like a 'son of man' approaches the Ancient of Days and was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.(v14)

Jesus fulfils this prophecy. Jesus is the Son of Man who's been given power and authority.

He will rule forever and people everywhere will and do worship him.

And it's only right for them to do so because he is God, God the Son.-----

The all-powerful One.-----

Notice, when Jesus is woken up, and while the winds still roar and the waves are crashing over the boat, Jesus has this storm under control.

He wakes up and before he calms the storm, while the storm still rages **v26**, he wants them to trust him.

Why? Because he's in control.-----

Jesus is saying, with me here, Don't be afraid, don't fear. Trust me.-----

You don't even need to fear death – trust me!

In life or in death, Jesus calls us to trust him.

**A pastor was on a long flight**, and the first warning of the approaching problems came when the sign on the aeroplane flashed on: *Fasten Your Seat Belts!*

After a while, a calm voice said, "We will not be serving beverages at this time as we are expecting some turbulence. Please remain seated and be sure your seat belt is fastened."

As the pastor looked around the aircraft, it became obvious that many of the passengers were becoming apprehensive.

And then the storm broke.

Ominous cracks of thunder could be heard, Lightning lit up the darkening skies and within moments that great plane was like a cork being tossed around on a celestial ocean.

One moment the plane was lifted upward; the next, it dropped like a rock, as though it were about to crash.

The pastor confessed that he *shared* the discomfort and fear of those around him.

He said, "As I looked around the plane, I could see that nearly all the passengers were upset and alarmed. Some were praying. The future seemed ominous and many were wondering if they would make it through the storm."

"Then suddenly, I noticed a little girl.

Apparently the storm meant nothing to her at all.

She had tucked her feet beneath her as she sat on her seat, calmly reading her book.

Everything within her small world was calm and orderly.

When the plane was being buffeted by the terrible storm, as it rose and fell with frightening severity, when all the adults were scared half-to-death, that marvelous child was completely composed, and unafraid."

The pastor could *hardly believe it*.-----

So when the plane finally reached its destination and all the passengers hurried off, the pastor lingered to speak to the girl whom he had watched for such a long time.

Having commented about the storm and the plane, he asked why she had not been afraid. The child replied,

"Because my Daddy's the pilot, and he's taking me home."-----

Faith drives out fear.

Faith in our good heavenly Father, and our mighty Lord Jesus, drives our fear.-----

Because our Saviour Jesus is powerful, we have no need to be afraid of *anything*.----

When something bad comes our Lord will either, protect us from it, sustain us in it, or bring us home to himself.-----

Protect us from it, sustain us in it, or bring us Home.-----

There are many kinds of storms that buffet us: Physical, mental, financial, domestic; and many *other storms* that can easily and quickly darken our skies and throw our plane into severe turbulence. We have all known such times.

Let's be honest and admit that it is much easier to be at rest when our feet are on the ground, than when we are being tossed about in a darkened, turbulent sky or sea.

**We must remind ourselves who's powerfully in control.**-----

So many of God's children are floundering on the waves of normal daily life, unaware that He, the Rock Eternal, is not only immediately beneath any size wave, He is the Master of sea and storm.

Trust Jesus in the storms of your life.-----

**For he is The Powerful One, Our final point.(SLIDE)**-----

We've seen Jesus's power over sickness, and his power over nature.

Now we see he's powerful over evil.-----

Jesus has arrived on the other side of the lake, or Sea of Galilee.

You'll see that marked on the **map(SLIDE)**.

It's in the Gentile area called the Decapolis.-----

Mark 5 and Luke 8 have this same account yet they record only *one man*.

Not that there's a contradiction. Maybe one man was more violent, or the demons in one man did most of the speaking.-----

In **v29** the demon-possessed men come to Jesus.

And the demons speaking *through* the men *shouted*,

"*What do you want with us, Son of God?*"-----

After Jesus calmed the storm the disciples were asking, *Who is this man?*----

Well they now get the correct answer, from some demons.

He *is the* Son of God.-----

Amazingly these demons know their time before judgement day is limited.

And it seems they know they will suffer at the judgement, and that the Son of God will bring that judgement.

But it seems they don't realise that the powers of darkness are already broken with the arrival of the King of God's Kingdom.

Jesus now has authority over evil.-----

In **v31** they beg Jesus to be allowed to go into the nearby **pigs**.

Did they desire a bodily home?----- We can't be sure.-----

But **why did Jesus allow** them to enter the pigs?-----

We don't know.

But it does prove to all the onlookers that the demons *had* truly left the men?

And it shows the true values of human beings.-----

Much ink has been spilled thinking about the death of the pigs, by scholars who no doubt love their bacon for breakfast, *pork* for dinner, or the movie *Babe*.

But the main point is not about the *pigs*.

And as a friend said to me, If you're so concerned for the pigs which die and more worried for them than the men, then you're just like the people of that town.-----

Clearly to Jesus, people mattered much more than pigs.

And people should matter more to us too.-----

**With a word Jesus** commands these violent demons to leave.

It shows Jesus' absolute power and confronting authority over the destructive forces of evil.--

You might still have questions about this but don't fail to see the main points:

Jesus' power over evil, and the value he places on these two men's *lives*.-----

And Jesus is still the powerful One who rules over evil.-----

**My brother** in his late teens was depressed and suicidal.

Nothing helped, until some Christians in Sth Australia prayed for him.

And he got healed of his depression, he was saved, and he said, he felt physical things leaving his body.-----

I'm not saying all depression has demonic causes, but Jesus is still powerful over evil.-----

Let me tell you another true story:

**One day a man named Tazeem** was listening to the radio and heard a Christian talking about the Gospel. He'd never heard about Jesus before.

The message spoke about forgiveness in Jesus' sacrifice, about the salvation of souls and of God's love, and the power of prayer.

He wanted to know more, and in his Muslim village he tracked down a woman who was known to sing praise songs to God.

She helped him come to Jesus, and became like his mother.

One day the mother of the sheikh in the town began to manifest demonic spirits.

She was taken to witchdoctors, then to Muslims leaders who read the Quran to her. The sheikh tried *everything he could think of* to set his mother free from the demons gripping her body and soul, but he could find no answers.

Suddenly one afternoon the mother, in a brief moment of clarity, she just announced, "I must go to the home of Old Mother and her boy, and she ran from the sheikh's home to the Christian woman's house. But once she crossed the doorway of the home her body froze, she collapsed helpless on the floor.

For 8 days she lay on a mat, unable to move, speak or eat.

But for 8 days Tazeem and the Old mother prayed. Then suddenly on the 8<sup>th</sup> day the evil spirit's left her, she stood up and spoke, and ate.

Word spread through the village immediately: The sheikh's mother is healed, the spirits are defeated.

The sheikh heard and came running and saw his mother in her *right mind*, and he fell to his knees and begged Tazeem to teach him about his God.

That day the sheikh and his mother became followers of Jesus.

Others came to faith too, yet other Muslims rejected the message and the messengers.-----  
(*Miraculous Movements*, J.Trousdale)

We see such rejection in Matthew 8 *don't we?*-----

When the pig farmers run off to tell everyone what happened, what's the *response?*----

**V34**, the whole town comes out and they beg Jesus to, leave.-----

Remember how the centurion begged for Jesus' *help*; well these men and women beg Jesus to leave.-----

*Amazing*, isn't it?-----

Yes, maybe they're angry that their income and property have been decimated.

But, two men's lives have been turned around and healed.

To them *pigs* were more important than people.-----

The locals didn't care about the tortured men, and they don't value Jesus.-----

*Did they* resent his, righteousness that exposed their sin?

His power that exposed their weakness?

Or his *compassion* that exposed their hard hearts?-----

*Either way* they had no interest in Jesus.

They didn't care if he was good *or* from God, they just wanted him to go away.

They don't want him as their Lord and Saviour.-----

As with many today.-----

Most people *today* don't want the real Jesus.-----

People don't want a powerful Jesus who rules, and is Lord; who they should listen to and follow.-----

So we come back to where we started. Do you want to follow Jesus?-----

Will you make him and keep him Number 1 in your life?-----

Will you trust him in the storm?-----

He's worth trusting because he is the powerful Son of God.

He can be trusted, and is worth following, to the end.-----

Let's pray.