

The COST and the REWARD – December 17 2021

Matthew 8:18--27

Introduction — although he was not a trained theologian, Thomas Jefferson had strong opinions about the Savior. In his later years, he compiled a slim book that contained the ethical teaching of Jesus but deleted the miracles, and called it “The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth.”

Thomas Jefferson was the epitome of the “self-made man,” and although he had a deep respect for Jesus, he had little need for a personal God who was interested in every aspect of his life. He didn’t need God for that. Perhaps he wanted to do things his way.

Jesus never said it was easy to be a Christian— following Jesus means not having everything go your own way! That is what Jesus was explaining to two “tentative” disciples, who wanted to follow Jesus, but on their own terms. Yet— there are also great benefits to following Jesus! For you can see his power at work in your life, and in the lives of people around you!! That is what today's scripture lesson is about. This bible passage is about:

I. The cost of following the king

First, remember the “theme” of the gospel of Matthew. Each of the four gospels in the bible have a theme— Matthew was written to show that Jesus is the King of kings, the King of the Jews, and the Messiah (or savior). We see this by the many references to the Old Testament & Jesus’ fulfillment of the O.T. Prophecies, and by Jesus’ miraculous birth, his life & teaching, his miracles, and his triumph over death. So, when we look at Jesus in Matthew, we see that he is the king of God’s Heavenly Kingdom. So, how did the Heavenly King act on earth??

Also— I said we will look at the parables of Jesus. But the two events in matt. 8 are “parables in real time” — lessons from the conversations and actions in the life of Jesus. He taught the people around him first about:

— >> the cost of following Jesus

1. Jesus wanted to erase from anyone's mind the idea that following him could be done half-heartedly. The "teacher of the law" was placing himself in the typical role of a disciple to a rabbi— a learner who asked the teacher to define how to live.

2. Jesus wanted his disciples to literally be like Jesus was— not just to have a "diploma" on the wall that said "disciple," but to be of the same character and motivation as Jesus himself.

3. So Jesus tested the sincerity of the "teacher of the law" — to see if he really was willing to "give up earthly securities to know the greater inner security in the purpose of god." 5 the man did not answer Jesus' comment.

4. The request of the 2nd man seemed reasonable— "let me 1st go and bury my father." Doesn't the law of Moses insist on that? — "honor thy father and mother"?? However, there is no indication that: this man's father had died!! Perhaps he meant: "Jesus, I want to wait until my father dies & see what kind of inheritance I will get— then I will follow you."

5. But there is no waiting or making excuses with Jesus!! The call of Jesus has priority over any excuses for delay. I knew a man once who wanted to join the church of which I was the pastor, but he wanted to wait until his wife would join with him. His wife was a dear, lovely person— but she never was ready— and he never joined. 6

6. There is always some price to be paid in order to follow Jesus— it may be giving up something, some old habit or old activity that is not suited for a Christian; it may be giving up some old prejudice or grudge you've held for years. It could even be something more serious— holding money or possessions as more important than Jesus Christ. Whatever it is— it's not worth holding onto & missing out on a life with Jesus— and the eternal life he gives us!! We see this in the next section of Matthew ch. 8:

II The reward of following Jesus

1. Jesus and the disciples got on a boat & began to sail across the lake— the sea of galilee. Now several of the disciples were fishermen— they were accustomed to sailing on this lake & fishing there at night. They also knew how the surrounding mountains could channel a storm onto the lake with little warning. Normally, the fishermen would stay rather close to the shore, but Jesus evidently wanted to get across the lake quickly, so they were sailing straight across to save time.

2. When Matthew originally wrote this story, the word he used in the Greek meant “tremor” or “earthquake” — which tells us how quickly and violently the storm came up on the disciples and the boat. And they panicked!! “Lord, save us!! We’re going to drown!! We’re all gonna die!!”

3. Aren’t you like that sometimes?!? Aren’t all of us like that?!? When the storms of life come up on us suddenly & without warning, we panic & cry out, “save me, Lord! Save me!!” Maybe that is a normal reaction for every person.

4. Jesus responded to the disciples’ panic, as he does to ours with calm assurance— “why are you worried? Why are you afraid? Have you no faith??” He rebuked the storm just as he rebuked demons— and the storm obeyed, just as the demons did.

5. When the storms of life seem to be blowing all around you, and there seems to be nowhere to turn to, and you feel that you are about to drown— look to Jesus! Call on him— calm down, and place your trust in him, and look to him to guide you through the rough waters, and he will carry you through and silence the storm. Jesus will bring peace and tranquility to your life.

That brings us to:

III. The King and you!! In Christ:

A. You are given the strength of Jesus Christ to conquer any adversity, any “storm”, any trial in life. And, 2nd, you are blessed with:

B. The power of Jesus Christ — power to overcome the forces of this fallen, sinful world— power to defeat the forces of god’s enemies, the forces of darkness that might trouble you.

C. Do you know about: New England’s dark day — (19 may 1780) it was a date when an abnormal darkening of the day sky was observed over the New England states and parts of Canada. During the American revolutionary war. On that day, the Connecticut legislature was meeting. Abraham Davenport (1715 - 20 November 1789) was an American politician who served in the Connecticut legislature during the American Revolution, and as a colonel, in the Connecticut state militia. Many feared that the darkening sky was a sign that the last judgment was approaching. As the day darkened, about noon, when there was no storm, many members of the legislature petitioned for adjournment. Colonel Davenport responded: “I am against an adjournment. The day of Judgment is either approaching, or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause of an adjournment: if it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I wish therefore that candles may be brought.” [speculation exists that this was due to a combination of smoke from forest fires and a thick fog. The darkness was so complete that candles were required from noon until midnight, when it finally dispersed and the stars could be seen.] (Wikipedia, 3 / 19 / 11)

Conclusion— where do you stand today with Jesus Christ?? Are you hopeful of the benefits of knowing that Jesus is your Savior & Lord?? For the rewards of his strength to defeat the storms of life & the dark periods, & bring his peace & calm into your life?? To let the light of Christ shine in your life?? To see his power at work in your life— to heal you, to overcome the trials and troubles of this world and rescue you from things that your own resources cannot be enough help with??

