



# *The King's Ransom*

Matthew 20:28

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Text

Matthew 8:18-27

Topic

Jesus and His disciples encounter a violent storm  
as they attempt to cross over the Sea of Galilee

Title

*"Riders on the Storm"*

Introduction

I've just recently discovered there are a few shops in America that are dedicated to what are being called 'extreme donuts.'

Forget toppings like sprinkles. Now there's Habanero pepper jelly with cream cheese (called the *Slow Burn* at Gour doughs in Austin) and peanut butter glaze with bacon and banana (called the *Elvis* at Ike & Jane in Atlanta).

Voodoo Doughnuts, in Portland, invited controversy after adding Nyquil and Pepto Bismol doughnuts to its menu. The potent pastries were immediately discontinued after a scolding by the FDA for putting medicine in food.

San Jose's *Pyscho Donuts* celebrated National Donut Day in 2012 by releasing two donuts that included edible insects:

- The *Chirp Derp* was a chocolate donut topped with bacon bits, bacon-cheddar crickets, and a drizzle of milk chocolate.
- The *Worm Hole* took a jalapêno and tequila donut and covered it with salted lime icing, a key lime drizzle, and a spiced moth larvae.

The word "extreme" is what comes to mind, at least to me, reading our text:

- Jesus makes extreme claims upon the lives of two of His followers, explaining to one that he will be homeless, and to the other that as a disciple he doesn't have the luxury of staying around to bury his own father.
- Then Jesus remains totally calm while He and His closest disciples are caught in an extreme storm at sea.

There may be a connection between His *claims* and His *calm*, i.e., if you will submit yourself to His claims upon your life you can experience His calm in your life.

I'll try to develop that theme by organizing my thoughts around two points: #1 When You Follow Jesus Expect Him To Make Extreme Claims Upon Your Life, and #2 When You Follow Jesus Expect Him To Instill Extreme Calm Into Your Life.

## #1 When You Follow Jesus Expect Him To Make Extreme Claims Upon Your Life

(v18-22)

Let's eavesdrop on both of these conversations before we begin to comment.

Mat 8:18 And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side.

Mat 8:19 Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go."

Mat 8:20 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

Mat 8:21 Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."

Mat 8:22 But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

If you are a sincere believer, you must be asking yourself, "Is Jesus calling me to homelessness and poverty? Is He demanding I abandon my responsibilities to my family?"

The answer to those questions is both "Yes" and "No." Let's start with the "No" first.

There are plenty of passage in the Bible that establish we are not called to homelessness and poverty. There are also abundant Scriptures on family roles and responsibilities.

So, "No," we are not all called to homelessness, poverty, and the abandonment of family responsibilities.

But, "Yes," Jesus said those words, and He meant them. Throughout the history of the church there have been disciples whose lives were either temporarily or totally touched by those extremes.

The solution is pretty simple, really. **Because of Who He is, and on account of what He has done for us, Jesus reserves the right to make extreme claims upon our lives.**

You should understand He is The Lord Who bought you with His blood and has the right to guide and direct your discipleship and service as He sees fit.

If your entire life isn't extreme in its discipleship and service, then moments in it will be. They have to be if you are really His.

Now we can go back and see the story unfold.

Mat 8:18 And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side.

Jesus was led perfectly by God the Holy Spirit. In this case He was led to leave the multitudes.

We can suggest at least one reason He was led away. In the verses immediately preceding these, Jesus had healed everyone in the region. He was needed elsewhere.

Too often when people feel 'called' to ministry, they don't go very far, and they don't go where there is really a need. They move a few blocks down the street and minister to folks who are already being ministered to. It's not really godly.

In fact, it has a name among church planters. It's called 'splanting,' a combination of the words *split* and *planting* because these guys are only establish a new church by splitting an existing one.

Make a mental note, if you would, that Jesus "gave a command to depart to the other side." It will be an important detail during the upcoming storm at sea.

Mat 8:19 Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go."

Mat 8:20 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

Today we might call this a buzz-kill. Here was a guy ready to totally sell-out for God, and Jesus immediately puts him on notice just how costly following Him might be.

I think what The Lord was trying to get across was that following Him required an absolute commitment to whatever He had in store and wherever He might lead. As we said earlier, not everyone is called to homelessness and poverty. But if you follow Jesus, it is a distinct possibility. Throughout history following Jesus has come at great cost to multitudes of disciples. In most of the world, certainly the Third World, it is a reality today.

Jesus may keep you on the same path you were on - in the same job or in the same city. He may not. It's now up to Him whether you will prosper or know poverty, whether you will build a home or become homeless.

He has every right to make extreme claims upon you. In First Corinthians 6:20 it says, "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

You were "bought" and belong to God. The "price" He paid was that of His blood shed on the Cross for your sins.

Almost everyone assumes that this Scribe refused to follow Jesus once presented with this information. Where does it say he refused to follow Jesus?

**It doesn't - so I choose to think that he did follow Jesus.** I choose to think of him as a Nicodemus or a Joseph of Arimathea. Someone who understood the cost of discipleship and chose to follow anyway.

Mat 8:21 Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."

Mat 8:22 But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

The Scribe was not yet a disciple when he first approached Jesus. We could say his encounter with Jesus was a call to discipleship.

This second individual was already a "disciple." Jesus had given the command to leave the region and he was letting The Lord know he had other pressing business and, therefore, couldn't participate.

He had to bury his father. It's almost certain that his father was not yet dead; probably not even sick. For one thing, in Jewish culture in the first century, the dead were buried within hours of dying.

The expression "bury my father" was a common one used to indicate that a person had obligations to fulfill in his family. He was letting The Lord know that his priorities were to his family and he wanted to therefore postpone following The Lord.

If we are not careful, we can develop an attitude of postponement. It seems there are always pressing issues that compete with serving The Lord. Many of them involve family responsibilities - or at least family activities. We like to prioritize by saying, "God first, family second, then job." In actual practice we can think we are putting God first by putting family and job first. Pretty soon we've talked ourselves out of serving God entirely.

And by "serving God," I'm not talking about being a missionary to unreached cannibals. I'm talking about attending church and serving once or twice a month.

What this disciple said was commendable... But not to The Lord and not at that moment.

"Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead." How can the dead bury the dead? He meant that they were *spiritually* dead, not physically dead. No one was physically dead or even dying.

This disciple's spiritual work at home was done. At least for now. It was time to take the Gospel elsewhere so that others who were spiritually dead could be made alive by its power.

Notice something interesting. The disciple said, "let *me first*..." **Me first** isn't a good philosophy for serving Jesus, and it certainly is antagonistic to His command "seek ye first the kingdom of God..."

You may never be called upon to leave home and family to serve The Lord. *Or you may be called to do exactly that.* Jesus has the right to make those claims.

Ask yourself, "Am I postponing serving God on account of a 'me first' attitude?"

Again we are left to wonder as to this disciple's response. Again I choose to think he received Jesus' words, left home, and went with The Lord on His mission.

Another thing we might say about the fact that we do not know how either of these guys answered is that by leaving it open-ended, it causes us to consider how we might answer. **You and I could be told these same things by The Lord, at any time.**

When was the last time you seriously thought God could shake-up your life in a way that would promote a deeper discipleship and a more serious service?

To me, that is the impact of these verses. They are a challenge to us as average, everyday Christians who definitely love Jesus, and who live in relative comfort, to recognize His right to make extreme claims upon our lives.



## #2 When You Follow Jesus Expect Him To Instill Extreme Calm Into Your Life

(v23-27)

We can assume that the disciples on the boat with Jesus, crossing over to the other side, were OK with the extreme claims The Lord was making. They had made the full commitment He required and were going with Him on the journey.

The Lord would now use the journey to develop their faith, to grow them, to mature them.

This boat ride would show them where they were in their spiritual growth and show them where The Lord could take them over time.

Mat 8:23 Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him.

Mat 8:24 And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.

The word "followed" ties this story together with the verses on discipleship we've just read. The boat ride is a parable to illustrate what it is like for a disciple to follow Jesus.

There arose "a great tempest... on the sea." It was an unusually violent storm - perhaps even satanic in its empowering. For one thing, think of the timing of the storm. Is it really a coincidence it came just when Jesus and His boys were crossing over?

"Waves" were swamping the boat. All hands would be on deck bailing water and fighting the storm.

Mat 8:25 Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"

At some point the disciples, some of them experienced boatmen, realized they were going to perish. This tells us we, as disciples, can expect that at some point or points along our journey with Jesus we will be in situations that have no natural resolution. There will be nothing we can do, no one who can help us. Without The Lord, we will perish.

Jesus was asleep. He must have been exhausted from the previous days ministry. There are going to be times when serving The Lord makes extreme physical demands upon you. There's nothing wrong becoming exhausted serving God.

On the one hand we can commend the disciples for going to Jesus and also for believing He could do something to save them. At the same time, their faith was mingled with fear because they thought they were perishing.

They could have believed they would not perish because Jesus had clearly indicated they were going to the other side. As Bible teachers like to say, they were going *over*, not *under*.

What should they have done? Hard to say, but maybe they, too, should have gone to sleep. It's the example Jesus set for them.

They could have rested in the storm - gotten caught up on their sleep.

It's so hard to rest in the storm. I want to do something; I want to bail out the boat. I want The Lord to do something. All the while He is trying to get me to rest in the very midst of it.

Mat 8:26 But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

It is instructive that Jesus took time to address the disciples first. At least, that's the order Matthew chose to emphasize that the storm was of secondary importance.

If I'm on the boat, I want the storm stopped, THEN the lesson. The storm often is the lesson - or, at least, it is the context for the lesson.

We suggested earlier that the storm was of satanic origin because of the way it was described. In a very real sense, all storms are satanic in that they speak of God's original creation having been tainted by sin in the Garden of Eden.

God isn't the source of them, but He is your resource in them.

The over-arching lesson is that faith conquers fear. There is a sense in which, as a Christian, you need never be afraid.

Realize, however, that fearlessness is something that you grow into as you walk with The Lord. The heroes of the faith grew in fearlessness.

- In the Old Testament, the father of our faith, Abraham, was told by God to "fear not" after he'd been walking with The Lord for some time.
- In the New Testament, the veteran apostle Paul - thought of as the greatest biblical example of what it means to follow Jesus - had to be visited by Jesus in a vision in Corinth to be told "fear not."

This episode on the sea, this great tempest, was to show the disciples where they were at and where Jesus was taking them. He was taking them to the place of spiritual rest in Him. Even in the most extreme storms of life they could know the most extreme calm of heart.

They weren't there yet; they hadn't arrived. It would take many days, many years, of walking with Jesus and seeing Him care for them. But they could grow and mature in their faith.

Jesus "rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm." Not a ripple; immediately the sea was glass. It was a miracle.

Stopping the storm is easy for The Lord. Developing your faith so that you no longer fear, so that you know His extreme calm - that is what is really difficult. So He uses the storms of life; He takes advantage of them.

I've told you the story about a friend of mine who I was visiting in San Clemente. One stormy Saturday morning his phone rang and he grabbed a go-bag of gear and headed out. I asked him where he was going. He had enrolled in a sailing class and one of the units was foul-weather sailing.

They needed a storm in order to learn the techniques to survive a storm at sea. They took advantage of the storm.

Here's a thought. If this terrible, violent storm *was* satanic in origin, which do you think would defeat the devil more - Jesus ordering it to cease or the disciples remaining calm in it, trusting in The Lord by faith?

Mat 8:27 So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

Who were these random "men?" The Gospel of Mark says "other little boats followed" Jesus.

Think of the effect of the disciples on these other men. Frantically bailing water, they seemed no better off than nonbelievers. Ah, but then they went to The Lord for help - and that was indeed a great example. I mean, if you were a nonbeliever you'd think, "What can Jesus do in this situation?"

Even the little faith of the disciples was a witness. Let's not discount that too fast.

Had they been sleeping as Jesus was - well, that would have been a great witness. But they weren't quite there yet. They were still growing.

What I'm saying, by way of encouragement, is that while Jesus is growing you, He is still using you along the way. Don't beat yourself up too much when situations reveal fears instead of faith. You're right there with Abraham and Paul.

One final observation. It was the disciples who submitted themselves to Jesus' extreme claims who experienced His extreme calm.

He has the right to make those claims - either upon your entire life or at certain key moments in it.

You seem to have a certain right of refusal. The Scribe and the son could have stayed behind.

But then you'll always be a Christian who wants Jesus to calm the storm when He wants to calm you.