

Title: Follow Me

Text: Matthew 8:18-22

Today, we come in our Study of the Gospel of Matthew to 3A on your outline: THE POWER OF THE KING.

But, let me review for a few moments. Matthew is presenting Jesus as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. JESUS IS KING. That is the theme of this wonderful first Gospel.

*Now* this theme is divided into the following parts:

1A. The Presentation of the King - Chapter 1, verse 1 thru chapter 4, verse 11.

2A. The Proclamation of the King - chapter 4, verse 12 thru chapter 7, verse 29.

3A. The Power of the King - chapter 8, verse 1 thru the end of chapter ~~10, 6~~ *- oh yes we need this part*

Now, we are not going to follow verse by verse through these chapters, Instead we are going to look at various subjects.

(1B) And the first <sup>SUBJECT</sup> ~~thing~~ that I would like to look at: <sup>IS</sup> ~~THE~~ THE PRINCIPLES OF DISCIPLESHIP.

Principles that are often overlooked when one talks about the meaning of following Jesus. These are hard principles. This is not the milk of the gospel. This is what is often called the meat of the gospel. And I am sure that when I share the scripture with you, the thought might cross your mind----WOW! IS THIS REALLY THE TEACHING OF THE BIBLE? And if it is, then many of us really do not know what discipleship is all about.

You know, many Christians are like the fellow who wants to jump on the band wagon because everybody is doing it. We have come to Christ, perhaps, but our Christian life is largely summarized by going along with the crowd. Many of us know that there is something we should say or do, and yet, we don't because of the pressure of christians who are not walking as, perhaps, God wants them to walk.

Dear friends, Jesus never presented the Christian life as an easy road. We sang the hymn a few moments ago: AM I A SOLDIER OF THE CROSS, A FOLLOWER OF THE LAMB? A song which indicates that we must suffer hardship. And that it is not a flowery bed of roses to follow Jesus.

I know that this is not popular preaching. But, dear friends, it is the truth. And the truth will set you free to be the kind of servant that God wants you to be.

Now, when we come to basics, it is a simple matter from the standpoint of our responsibility to believe in the principles of salvation. All God ask of us is by faith to accept what He says. That is pretty simple. Jesus said that a little child could do this. A little child can come and receive Christ and believe what the Bible says *about salvation*.

But, my friends, when it comes to the matter of discipleship...of following Jesus... Jesus never presented it as an easy road.

So, today, I want to share with you 5 principles of discipleship as found in the Gospel of Matthew. There are other principles found in other parts of the Bible. But, here, in Matthew we find 5 basic principles.

BUT, FIRST, LET'S BEGIN WITH PRAYER

(1C) Now, Principle number one: Would you turn, please, to Matthew chapter 16. Matthew chapter 16 verse 24. We read: "THEN JESUS SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES, IF ANY ONE WISHES TO COME AFTER ME, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF, AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS, AND FOLLOW ME."

FIRST PRINCIPLE: DENY YOURSELF.....DENY YOURSELF

Wow! This is certainly controdicating everything our world is teaching us. In this world "self" is being emphaized. Christians are ascertaing themselves not knowing that the way of the cross, the way of our Lord, is the way of self-denial. It is not what I want that should be important. But, it is what Jesus wants that ought to rule and guide our behaviour.

But, I would like you to notice that in Vs 25 and Vs 26 there are two areas in which this principle of self-denial applies itself...Two areas.

(1D) First of all, in Vs 25, Jesus said: "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for mysake shall find it."

And here we learn that self-denial is a denial of selfish goals.

Let me ASK YOU A QUESTION: WHAT ARE YOU LIVING FOR? Now, be honest with yourself. If you are a Christian, and you know the Lord, just stop and ask yourself: WHAT AM I LIVING FOR? WHAT ARE MY GOALS IN LIFE?

*out* If you are not a Christian, but you are thinking about it. Ask yourself: WHAT AM I LIVING FOR? What are my goals?

You see, Jesus taught that if a person wanted to find himself, he would have to lose his own life.

That the person who is constantly trying to save his own life, will in the end lose it.

So, The principle of discipleship is clear: whatever I am doing, whatever I am living for, it is to be as Vs 25 says: FOR HIS SAKE. Jesus said: FOR MY SAKE. <sup>And that involve</sup> ~~It is~~ a denial of all selfish goals.

I don't know what God has for you. But I know one thing. That the christians of the N.T. <sup>Tim<sup>2</sup></sup> were always going. They weren't staying. And Many of us assume that because we have been in a certain job for 10, 20 years, that this is all that God has for us. It is to get to the place of retirement, to settle down with a house and family and car. And this is all that God has for us. Maybe we want to be a success where we are. And that is fine. But the discipleship that Jesus is talking about is a denial of all selfish goals. Everything is now brought into the concept of doing it for ~~His~~ <sup>God's</sup> sake. And his sake along. The Christian recognizes that everything he is living for which is not for christ, is only a selfish interest. Discipleship is a hard road. <sup>because</sup> It is a denial of all selfish goals.

2D) But there is something else here. It is, also, a denial of all selfish gain and profit. We read in Vs 26: "For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Business terms are used here. What can a man do by going to a market and seeing the scales set up. And his soul is on one ~~side~~ side. What will you give in exchange for that soul? There is nothing as valuable as your life. There is nothing of more worth in the eyes of Jesus Christ than one soul.

And yet, many of us are <sup>Living</sup> ~~living~~ for profit alone. We are living for gain. And it is common practice that even christians walk all over others in order to get where they want to go. They cut behind your back in order to get ahead...This is the world we live in....BUT, JESUS SAID: WHAT WILL A MAN PROFIT IF HE GAINS THE WHOLE WORLD AND LOSES HIS SOUL?

It is a question of values. And the <sup>so</sup> ~~principle~~ first principle of discipleship in following Jesus is SELF-DENIAL. It is a denial of selfish goals. ~~An~~ And it is a denial of selfish gain....

When you are following Jesus everything is brought under the motive of doing it for His sake and His sake alone.

(2000) Now, let turn to Matthew chapter 8 and look at the second principle of discipleship. This second principle involves sacrifice. We don't like to talk about sacrific. But Jesust talked about it. He talked about it often. And in Matthew chapter 8 He deals with this question of sacrifice.

And you will notice <sup>MATT 8</sup> Vs 19 and 20 that a certain scribe came <sup>to</sup> Jesus and said to him: "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."

This man, I believe, was sincer. He had <sup>of</sup> seen the life <sup>of</sup> christ. And he said: "Jesus, you have what I want. I will follow you wherever you go."

Many <sup>people</sup> ~~of us~~ have never even come to that point. <sup>But this</sup> A scribe did: "Jeus, I will go wherever you want me to go."

→ Noticed what Jesus said. <sup>Vs 20</sup> "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his <sup>head</sup> ~~hand~~."

(1B) Discipleship involves sacrifice. And it may <sup>involve</sup> ~~require~~ your whole pattern of living. Here is a man, and we know this from history, a man who was ~~accustodum~~ <sup>accustomed</sup> to good living. We might say that he lived <sup>UP on First Street</sup> ~~on~~ PARK AVEN. He was well known in his community. A prominent man. But Jesus said: "Listen, fellow, you don't know what you are saying. You say, that you will follow me wherever I will go. But that may involve the sacrific of your whole pattern of life. It may require a complete change in your goals and plans. You may have to give it all up."

We don't know what happened to this scribe. We don't know if he took Jesus at his word. But, Jesus told him that he would have to sacrific. He would have no guarantee of worldly security.

And yet, many of us can not bring ourselves to this place, largely, <sup>due</sup> to the fact that we live in a world that teaches us that if we have money in the bank, that ~~if~~ we have some investment in a home, some sort of future security, then we are all right. We are ~~safe~~ safe. We are protected...

*Nothing wrong at that - we are talking about attitudes - motives*  
And dear friends, this is what we must come to understand about discipleship. <sup>Our</sup> Security is not in the world's gain. <sup>Our</sup> Security is in trust ~~in~~ the Lord Jesus Christ. He will meet all of our needs.

And the Bible teaches, over and over again, that the christian life is one of cruification. Let me illustrate.....Turn over in your N.T. to the ~~book~~ book of Galations. Galations chapter 2....And notice the last two verses of that chapter....A principle of ~~disciplehsip~~ discipleship involves sacrifice. And this concerns our very life. Galations chapter 2 verse 20.....(READ 2:20-21)

Now, what is Paul teaching us?....He says "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who lives, but Christ lives in me."

The Bible teaches that when you come to receive Christ into your life, it is like going to the cross and dieing. The Bible teaches that the old man has been crucified with Christ. That now the life of God, a new life, a life entirely apart from you, a life that God has implanted in you, a miracle of his power, I don't understand it, but God makes us new creatures and he puts new life in us in the person of His Holy Spirit. God accuturally comes to live in a human life.

And the Bible teaches that the old man goes to the cross and dies. Now, spiritually that is a fact, whether you know it or not. But, in every day Christian living in this matter of discipleship, the christian must recognize that he is dead indeed to that old man and that sin; and he is alive unto ~~Christ~~ Christ. Discipleship involves taking up the cross daily. Daily I recognize that it is not I, but it is Christ that lives in me. And I say to you that the ~~one~~ one thing that causes more misunderstanding and confusion in Christians' minds is simple this: ~~THE NATURE OF THE LIFE OF GOD THAT GOD HAS PUT IN ME?~~ THE NATURE OF THE LIFE OF GOD THAT GOD HAS PUT IN ME? We don't understand it. So, we go on our own way. We are trying to live our own lives, working out our own problems and hoping that some how God will show us what he wants.

Beloved, God says, "I want you to go to the cross and I want you to die." And whether you know it or not, this has already happened. Spiritually, it has happened. You were crucified with Christ.

Now, particulg, every day, I must take up the cross. I must recognize that I am dead indeed unto sin; and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our lord. The life of Christ must literally take over. And we must understand that discipleship is a sacrifice of the old man.

That, if the Son of Man has no where to lay his head, then it might come to that in my life.

Let's be honest. Isn't it difficult for us in America in 1981 to every dream that we could suffer as Christians suffered in the past? I find it hard to even realize that possibility. And yet, I know it is ~~imminent~~ <sup>a</sup> possibility. I know that it could happen.

Dr. A. W. Toesure once wrote that if the persecution of the ~~early~~ <sup>early</sup> days of the Apostles were laid upon the 20th century church we would be wiped out. People would fall away like ~~rats~~ <sup>rats</sup> leaving a sinking ship.

Many of us say that we are following Jesus Christ, but when it involves sacrific, then we draw the line. And Jesus said that it may involve the sacrific of your whole pattern of life. ~~I know to be true w/o. Nominaly, etc~~

(2B) But, there is a <sup>something else</sup> ~~third~~ principle. Turn over to chapter 10. Chapter 10. And please notice, Verse 38. Chapter 10:38. Jesus said: "he who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me."

Now, keep your fingue there and compare it with 16:24...Chapter 16:24. In this verse Jesus said: "If any one whishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Now, I am interested in that phrase: "TAKE UP THE CROSS..."You know, I have heard many people quote that verse in relationship to some burden that you may be bearing. To say, "I have a cross to bear". Maybe a ~~the~~ physcail sickness. Maybe a particular problem in your life. That this is taking up your cross daily.

Friends, that is not what is meant. If you lived in the days of our Lord, in the days of Rome, there would be no question in your minds as to the meaning of taking up your cross. Taking up the cross meant that you were going to death. You were going to die. You were goigg to be crucified.

And a great principle of the christian life is this: OUR SACRIFICE IN DISCIPLESHIP INVOLVES OUR VERY LIFE.

Take ~~up~~ up your corsss means: DEATH...I am going to die to all my interest, my ambitions, my plans, my dreams, my hopes. I am going to die.

Am

A sacrific of all my selfish interest and ambitions. It is a coming to an end of myself. It is just as though I could take that old man part of me and I could somehow by way of a symbol put him up on a cross and nail him there. And then I could take him down and put him in a coffin. And I could bury him in the ground. That, spiritually, is what God did for you the moment you accepted Christ. But, daily the christian must recognize the death principle. That the old man, as long as he ~~ascetics~~ <sup>left</sup> his <sup>eye</sup> head, as long as we run our own way, as long as self controls the life, the power of God cannot be seen. The power of the living Christ in us is just as real as you are in that body seating there today. But, many of us cann't see it because we cann't understand it through the 5 senses. So, we must take it by faith. By faith we recognize that we have died, our selfish nature is cruified, and we are alive unto God. SACRIFICE IS A PRINCIPLE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

3A Now, <sup>put</sup> third, come back to chapter 8 of Matthew again. The third principle of discipleship is a hard one indeed. Many christians have read these verses and have become quite confussed as to what the meaning is. Often, if you have been like me, I have read these verses and I have wanted to pass over them. ~~Because I wasn't sure what the meaning was.~~ It is a hard saying. It is very difficult. <sup>But</sup> and the principle of discipleship that ~~is~~ <sup>Matt 8 Verse 21-22 is</sup> talking about is the principle of separation....Separation....

*Come to Follow*

And the thing that amazes most people is that <sup>Jesus</sup> taught that if you want to Him you must be separated from the ones you love. <sup>maybe</sup> From the care of your own family. It is a very hard teaching from our standpoint. <sup>BUT Follow careful</sup>

(Read Matthew 8:21-22)

Now, isn't that strange? WHAT IS JESUS TEACHING? <sup>IT seems that</sup> He is teaching that if you are to follow Him, you are going to have to separate yourself from the care, the common worldly cares and needs of your family. Now, that seems strange doesn't it? But let's <sup>notice</sup> ~~notice~~ it carefully, <sup>what He is really saying</sup>

1B ~~First~~ First of all, when Jesus said: "let the dead bury the dead" he is talking about two kinds of dead people. He <sup>is saying</sup> ~~said~~: "let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead". That is the point of what he is saying.

Certainly physically dead people can not bury physically dead people. But, those who are spiritually dead...those that have no interest in Christ... let them take care of it. The Spiritually dead will always bury the physically dead.

*So, please understand*  
But, ~~really~~, what ~~did~~ this man ask? ~~That is the question.~~ Certainly Jesus isn't being inconsiderate of the man's own father who has passed away. That isn't the point. Most people who have studied this passage of scripture in relation to the times of the Bible indicate that one of the things that the man of that day wanted to do, and felt that it was his responsibility to do, was when and if his family died, he wanted the responsibility of burying them. And there was nothing wrong with that desire.

But, what this man is really saying is this: I don't know when my father is going to die, but whenever he does, I want to bury him. Then, I will be able to follow you.

The point is: Jesus said that if you want to follow me, IT IS NOW. Maybe, your father will live for 10 or 20 more years. *So,* If you are going to follow me, it must be now. And the full filling of this responsibility should wait until your father actually dies. In the mean time: follow me.

Turn over to chapter 10, please. I would like you to notice Vs 35 to 37.

(Read 10:35-37)

This is a very hard saying. Jesus teaches that in discipleship we must separate ourselves from the concern of our immediate family. if it is above that of Jesus Christ. That is the point.

Why do so many homes have problems? Why are there problems between parents and children?..Husbands and wives? Why is there so much strife in the home? You could give many reasons. But, I wonder, if this isn't a reason, right here. Because one or two or three or all members of the family are putting themselves above Jesus Christ. Only when Christ is pre-eminent in the home...only when Christ is first in *your* ~~your~~ life..will even that home operate successfully. ~~This is a hard lesson to learn.~~



But, Jesus said that if you love Father, Mother, Son or daughter more than me, ~~you~~ <sup>you</sup> are not worthy of me. Dear friends, these are not my words. These are the words of Jesus. He is teaching, here, about an attitude that should be in our lives. And every time I read these verses I ask myself: "Oh, God, do I love you more than my family? I love my wife. And I thank God for her. I love my children.

But, beloved, the principle is clear. It is talking about our attitude. And if we don't love Jesus more than our family, we are not worthy of Him. That is what it says. You see, one day, we are going to be in heaven with Jesus. We are going to share an eternity with Him. But now, we must put first things first. We must love Jesus. He must be first in our life.

Now, in 35 years of marriage, I have discovered something about this principle of discipleship. I have discovered that when Jesus is first in my life, my relationship with others is far greater. My love for my wife and my family is much greater. If you really want to love your wife, or your husband, or your children, love Jesus with all your heart. Put Him first in your life. (4C) O.K. This brings us to the fourth principle of discipleship. This fourth principle is found in chapter 10. It is the principle of SERVICE.

Over and over again Jesus taught that the servant is not greater than His Lord. Jesus said "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Jesus was the servant of servants. And He asks us to be servants.

Now, I notice something about our service, Matthew chapter 10 verse 40 says, "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives Him who sent me."

WHAT IS JESUS SAYING? He is drawing attention to the fact that our reception by others is a reception of Himself. That we are servants of the Lord, not of ourselves. And later on Jesus taught that if someone rejects us they are rejecting the Lord.

You know, many people are confused on this matter. Some one turns us down. We try to share Christ with them and they turn us down. And we think they are upset with us. We are servants of the King. They are upset with Jesus, not us.

You see, those who receive us are really receiving Jesus. In other words, the whole principle, here, is being lost in the service of the King. We must remember that whoever receives us or rejects us is receiving or rejecting Christ. And this principle carries over into all areas of life. In fact, Jesus says that the person who understands this kind of reception, who is really the true servant, is the one who will be rewarded.

Look at Verse 42..."And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

Do we really understand that no act is too small on the road of discipleship? A cup of cold water <sup>given</sup> ~~give~~ to a little child in the name of Jesus will receive a reward. It is wonderful. The principle of servant.

And yet, some of us will not do certain things. We will not do them because we have to do this or do that. <sup>Whatever the excuse</sup> But Jesus said, just a cup of cold <sup>water</sup> ~~water~~ given to one of these little ones in my name will be rewarded.

The Bible teaches in Matthew chapter 16 that one day when Jesus returns He will reward every person according to his or her works. So, on this road of discipleship God is evaluating our service. And God will reward our service some day for what we have done in the name of Jesus.

(5C) The final principle of discipleship is the principle of submission.

Turn over to chapter 9 verse 9. Here we find a wonderful illustration of submission.....(Read 9:9)

This is tremendous. Matthew was saying good-bye to all of his means of support. Matthew was saying good-bye to the only life he knew. Matthew was even faced with the problem of trying to explain this to the Roman authorities. He left his job as a tax collector. He arose and followed Jesus because he heard the words of the Master: FOLLOW ME.

I wonder if Jesus would, physically come into this audience, today, and go throughout the pews to each of us...and look into all of our eyes and say: "FOLLOW ME"....I wonder what we would do?

Oh, I believe it would be hard to turn down His look of love if He said to us, personally, FOLLOW ME. But, friends, isn't that what He is trying to say to us in His Word? FOLLOW ME...Matthew arose and followed Him.

Dear friends, the Bible teaches that submission to the will of God is the place to find complete and lasting happiness. Submission is the place of fulfillment. The very need of <sup>your</sup> ~~y~~our life to find satisfaction..to find rest... to find the joy that this world can never give. That very need in ~~y~~our life is meet by submission to <sup>Jesus</sup> God...FOLLOW ME..

<sup>your</sup> God will fill your life so much with Himself that you will be tired of the kind of life filled with "self." <sup>Jesus</sup> God is calling you to follow Him.

My friend, if you have never come to open your heart <sup>to</sup> Jesus, if you are <sup>not</sup> ~~not~~ sure of where you are going to spend eternity when you die, may I say that you can know, you can have full assurance that you will be in heaven someday. Just invite Jesus to come into your life. You see, He died for you. The supreme example of discipleship is Jesus. He is calling you. Will you follow him? Will you invite him into your life? And then follow him where ever he may lead <sup>and to serve Him all the rest of your life</sup>

Let us close with a word of prayer.