

Bible Readings

Genesis 12:1-9

The Call of Abram

12 The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

2 "I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."

4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. **5** He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

6 Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. **7** The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So, he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

8 From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.

9 Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

Matthew 8:18-22

The Cost of Following Jesus

¹⁸ When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. ¹⁹ Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."

²⁰ Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

²¹ Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

²² But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

Sermon: The Cost of Following The King

04-Jul-21

G'Day Church Family

You have **Bibles in front of you** - and you should have received an **outline** in your bulletin - if you'd like to **take notes**.

Let me **ask God** to grant us **understanding** this morning

Let's pray...

Intro/Context

- Let me tell you about my mum
- At age 65 - a year after my Dad died
- Mum left her homeland of Ireland
- Left all her brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces -and left her lovely home - and left her Irish culture
- And moved 15,000 km to Australia
- Why? - Because her only son (that's me) and my wife, Heather, and Mum's only grandchildren were all living in Australia
- A huge ask at her age - a huge sacrifice- but she loved us so much - that's what she was prepared to do
- And she trusted that we would take care of her when she arrived in Australia
- It has always reminded me of the Book of Ruth - where Ruth said to her mother in-law, Naomi, in Ruth 1:16-17

Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried

It's that same sacrifice and commitment that my **Mum** had and that **Ruth** had; **that God wants** when we trust Him and have faith in Him

You see - **having faith in God will cost us something**

Which brings us to our **OT reading** from Genesis 12

[Please turn to Genesis 12]

The Cost of Abram's Faith (Genesis 12:1-9)

[PowerPoint 1-Abram]



- Look at v1
- God told Abram to leave his **homeland** - leave his **people** - leave his **father's household** - and **go to an unknown land**
- **Abram** didn't even know where he was going or why
- **Abram simply had faith** that God knew what He was doing

- **Abram just obeyed**
- **And we see in v4 - Abram was 75 years old when he left his homeland**
- **That's amazing faith**
- **But notice Abram's faith was accompanied with action - He trusted and obeyed**
- **But Abram's leap of faith also cost Abram something**
- He would never see his homeland again - never see most of his relatives again - never see his father's household again
- **It's the same when it comes to putting our faith in Jesus - it will cost us something - and that's what Jesus is talking about in our NT passage from **Matthew 8:18-22****

[Turn to Matthew 8:18-22]

Cost of Following Jesus (Matthew 8:18-22)

Context

[PowerPoint 2-Context]

Context

- *Matthew showing what it means to find and follow the Way of Jesus*
- *Jesus accepts us where we are (like the Leper)*
- *We must put ourselves in His hands (like the Roman centurion)*
- *As well as having faith in Jesus we must serve Him (like Peter's mother in-law)*
- *The 2 would-be disciples must make a decision*

- The **Context** is: -**Matthew** is carefully trying to **show people what it means** to find the **way** that **Jesus** has referred to in the **Sermon on the Mount** - **as the narrow way on the narrow road to Heaven**
- In **Matthew 8:1-4** - **Jesus accepted the one that no one else would** - **a leper** - **Jesus showed** that He is **not shocked by people's situation** **and He is willing to take us as we are** - and **do something about our need**
- Then in **Matthew 8:5-17** we found out **last week** we **have to trust Jesus and put ourselves in His hands** - **so that He can help us** - **as we saw with the centurion** who came and **asked Jesus to heal his servant** -
- **And we saw** it's **not just a matter of us having faith in Jesus and being forgiven** - and then **sitting in church saying I've found Jesus and read my Bible and say I found Him** - **we discovered last week** that **as well as having faith** - we **need to serve Him** (as **Peter's mother in-law did** - she got up after being healed by Jesus and served Jesus)
- You see - **everyone that Jesus calls** is **not only forgiven but called to be a servant and to pass on that forgiveness to others**
- **To be a servant of Jesus** - **requires a response**
- So, in our passage today from **Matt 8:18-22**
- **Matthew shows us** what **that response** actually looks like
- **Matthew gives us 2 quite different stories of 2 would-be disciples**
- What **stands out in both stories** is **a decision has to be made by the 2 would-be disciples**

- For all of us a decision has to be made when we follow Jesus
- Both would-be disciples are people that Jesus wants very much
- We shouldn't see Jesus as being prickly & proud here and trying to make the would-be disciples walk away and give up - rather Jesus wants these would-be disciples to think about their decision

The Teacher of the Law - Don't Rush (vv19-20)

[PowerPoint 3-v19]

Then A Teacher Of The
Law Came To Him And
Said, "Teacher, I Will
Follow You Wherever You
Go."

Matthew 8-19

- The first would-be disciple is a **teacher of the law** -a very influential person
- A teacher of the law was a man **very learned in the Mosaic law** and in the sacred writings, an interpreter and a teacher. Such teachers examined the more difficult and subtle questions of the law. They examined the scriptures for solutions to difficult questions, they were **part of the Jewish Council, the Sanhedrin**; and were **often mentioned in the Bible in connection with the priests and elders of the people**.

- The teacher of the law - He is so enthusiastic which is a great thing- he gives a huge compliment by calling Jesus, teacher (master, pastor, Rabbi) - v19 - recognizing Jesus' superior knowledge - even though the teacher of the law - is also an apparent expert of scripture himself
- And the teacher of the law gives Jesus another huge compliment still in v19
- He promises he will follow Jesus wherever He goes
- But the teacher of the law is too quick in promising to follow Jesus
- Jesus famously replies in v20 - **Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests - but the Son of Man has no place to lay His Head**

[PowerPoint 4-v20]



- Jesus is no false-recruiter
- Jesus didn't glamorise what it meant to be one of His disciples
- Jesus always told the truth
- Jesus wanted the would-be disciple to know exactly what it means to be one of His disciples
- We should clarify though - that in the immediate context of Jesus' ministry, His saying does not mean that Jesus was penniless but that He was

homeless; because the **nature of His mission** kept him on the move and would keep his followers on the move - they would not have **permanent dwelling place** (Carson)

- Jesus is warning the teacher of law to count the cost of following Him
- Jesus is aware of the crowd in v18 - and aware of mass psychology -
- Because Jesus - has an enthusiastic teacher of the law in front of Him - He wants those listening to understand - His disciples need to be more than just enthusiastic
- Enthusiastic disciples need to understand what it means in the long run to follow Jesus
- Jesus is saying - do you realize - how often I have nowhere to sleep - do you realize how difficult it is sometimes hanging around with Me - have you thought about that?
- Jesus is saying - I know you're enthusiastic - I know you're knowledgeable - I know you can do great things - but to follow me there will be no rest until your work for Me is finished - there will be no place to lay down your head - [used in John 19:30 when Jesus died]
- What might it cost us to be a disciple and follower of Jesus?
 - By definition - a disciple learns from the teacher and does everything the teacher does
 - When we look at Jesus' life - it involved **suffering, persecution, rejection, injustice and many trials** - **even a cruel death** - are we prepared to cop that?

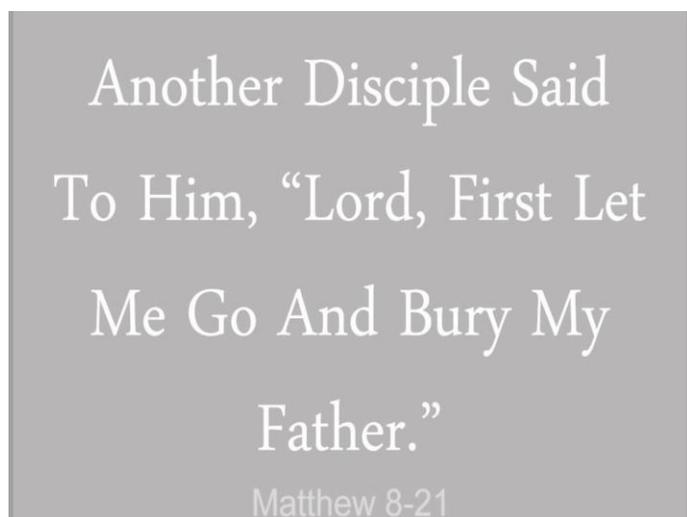
- We may have to **give up a lot** - give up our dreams of **wealth** - give up our dreams of **possessions** - give up our **love of things in the world** - sometimes **give up our rights** - give up our **pride** - give up our **comfortable life** - give up our **old sinful ways** - give up our **self-righteousness** - so that Jesus comes first in our lives- are we prepared to do that? (Luke 9:23)
- It will mean putting Jesus first even ahead of our family - As Jesus says in Mark 10: 37:
 Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me
- We will have to **give up our time** for Jesus and sharing His good news - we will have to **give of our talents** to serve Jesus and others - and to **give of our wealth** for the service of Jesus and the service of God's people - are we prepared to do that?
- As Jesus has already reminded us in the Sermon on the Mount - **we can't serve two masters** - we can't serve God and our possessions (Matt 6:34)
- Jesus mentions and even more dramatic cost in Luke 14:26:
 If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.
- What He's saying - in comparison to how much we love Jesus - it will seem like we hate our families and even hate ourselves

- So, the bottom line is - being a disciple of Jesus means being prepared to give up our whole life and hand control of our life over to Jesus
- As Apostle Paul says in Gal 2:20 - it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;
- Jesus wants us to **not rush** into being one of His disciples but to weigh up what it will cost us

Another Disciple - Don't Dither (vv21-22)

- The 2nd would-be disciple is described as **another** disciple in v21
- This other disciple was **too slow** [too cautious] in following Jesus - he was a ditherer
- See v21 - The other disciple wants to follow Jesus but says: "Lord, first let me go and bury my father"

[PowerPoint 5-v21]



- There are **two interpretations** of what this man means:

- Either - **His father has died** and the disciple has to carry out the proper sacred burial rites for his father - which might even include hearing and actioning the will - this will delay the would-be disciple following Jesus - and he might even get side tracked in to **managing his father's estate** and never quite get around to following Jesus
- Or - 2nd **interpretation** is - his father is not dead - and **the would-be disciple wants to wait** for his father to pass away before following Jesus - this could be some time -and **this will delay the would-be disciple indefinitely from following Jesus**
- **Jesus warns against such a delay** - and famously says: **Follow me and let the dead bury their own dead**

[PowerPoint 6-v22]

But Jesus Told Him,
 “Follow Me, And Let
 The Dead Bury Their
 Own Dead.”

Matthew 8-22

- What does Jesus mean by let the dead bury the dead? It **seems a bit harsh?**
- What Jesus is referring to really is “Let the spiritually dead bury the physical dead” - Jesus was not asking the man to be disrespectful to his father (who was not yet dead), but to have the right priorities in life. It is

better to preach the Gospel and give life to the spiritually dead, as a disciple of Jesus, than to wait for your father to die and bury him; who knows how long that might be; and all that time could have been spent spreading the Gospel.

- Charles Spurgeon puts it this way: *"Much of the concerns of politics, political party tactics, committee meetings, social reforms, innocent amusements, and so forth, may be very fitly described as burying the dead. Much of this is very needful, proper, and commendable work; but still only such a form of business that non-Christians can do as well as disciples of Jesus. Let non-Christians do it; but if we are called to share the Gospel, let us give ourselves wholly to our sacred calling."* (Spurgeon)
- Jesus is warning the would-be disciple - not to get bogged down in something that will delay him following Jesus
- The would-be disciples' loyalty to his family was getting in the way of following Jesus - and causing him to delay
- What might delay us from following Jesus and delay us from serving Him
 - If we're single - we might say - we'll wait until we married - then we'll give time to Jesus
 - If we're married - we might say - we'll wait until we have children - then we'll bring them to church
 - If we're at Uni - we might say - once I've got all those Uni assignments out of the way - I'll give time to Jesus

- If we have children - we might say - **we'll wait until they start school**
- or wait until they're at HS - or wait until they leave school
- If we're working - we might say - **I can't give You my Sunday - Jesus**
- that's my only day off - **I'll wait until I retire?**
- Or we might think we're not good enough - so **we delay in committing to Jesus** - until we've sorted our life out?
- Or maybe we're reluctant to let Jesus take control of all our lives - we might consider our business affairs or financial affairs - are off limits to Jesus - or that **we must get the mortgage paid off before allowing Jesus fully into our lives**
- Jesus is saying - it's always going to be easy to find an excuse not to fully commit to Him - but Jesus wants us to commit to Him now
- And so, Jesus steps in to our excuses - and says let the dead bury the dead - **it's a shock tactic** - to wake people up to the importance of following Jesus
- So, what's getting in our way and stopping us from being fully committed to Jesus?
- What's getting in our way and stopping us from serving Jesus and sharing the Good News that Jesus gives us forgiveness and eternal life?
- Jesus is saying follow Him NOW
- Tomorrow might be too late
- What does Jesus mean when He says "Follow Me"?

- In the original Greek language - **Follow means** - *to be in the same way or on the same road with someone*
- Remember in the Sermon on the Mount - **Jesus said go through the narrow gate that leads to the narrow road**
- **We must remain on that narrow road with Him**
- And following Him - ultimately means walking the same path as Jesus
- As the Apostle Paul says in Phil 2:5 - we are to have **same mindset as Jesus**
- As Phil 2:6-8 says - Jesus didn't use His advantage of being God - instead He made himself nothing - and **humbled himself - sacrificed His life in obedience to His Heavenly Father**
- And as we said earlier - by definition a disciple does what the teacher does - so - to be a follower of Jesus - **we need to imitate Jesus' life!**
- And Jesus is saying - we are to neither rush into it - nor dither and delay
- Notice Jesus didn't treat the two would-be disciples the same
- To the one wanting to rush - **He said slow down think about it?**
- To the one dithering - **Jesus said don't hang about?**
- **Jesus treats people where they're at and understands their need** - **a lesson for us not to treat all people the same** - but understand where they are at and what they need
- Nevertheless - **to be a disciple of Jesus**
- Jesus is saying we are to count the cost - and then commit our whole life to Jesus

- As John the Baptist realised in John 3:30
Jesus must become greater, I/We must become less

Conclusion

[PowerPoint 7-Conclusion]

Conclusion

- *See Jesus as who He really is and see what a privilege it is to follow & serve Him*
- *Don't rush at Jesus without looking at ourselves and counting the cost*
- *Don't look at our problems, our circumstances, our life – without having our heart on Him*

- To finish up then
- If we see Jesus as who He really is - as the Son of God
- And if we see what a privilege it is to follow and serve Him
- We will realise
- He is the only cause that is going to win
- He is the only truth that is going to last
- His word is the only word that is going to last
- He is the only Lord worth serving
- His church is the only society worth belonging to
- His work is ultimately the only work worth doing
- If we really saw all that about Jesus clearly

- **Nothing would stop us from following and serving Him**
- **And we'd say to ourselves - I want to follow Jesus - and I need His grace and His strength to serve and follow Him**
- **Jesus is saying - to the 2 would-be disciples - and to us - this morning**
 - **Don't rush at me - without looking at yourself and what it will cost**
 - **Don't look at your problems, your circumstances, your life - without having a heart for Me and making Me your priority**

Let's pray...

Benediction (Hebrews 12:1-3)

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.