**I Will Follow You**

Matt. 8:19-20

Introduction:

1. In Matthew 8:19-20 a scribe came to Jesus and said, “Teacher I will follow You wherever You go.” Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”

2. Now Jesus was about to cross over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, but this is probably NOT what this scribe was referring to when he said he would follow Jesus. To cross the Sea of Galilee with Him would have been no significant commitment.

3. And when Jesus said he had “nowhere to lay His head,” He was probably NOT referring to his being homeless. There is evidence that He stayed in the homes of disciples like Peter (Matt. 8:14), friends like Mary and Martha (Jn. 12:1ff) and relatives (as carpenter’s son, Matt. 13:55).

4. There are some Jewish cultural things we need to understand in order to comprehend the nature of the circumstances in Matthew 8:19-20.

5. What is the cultural background of this text? How does what is said here relate to our following Jesus?

Discussion:

I. The first-century Jewish context of “discipleship.”

 A. To become someone’s disciple in the first century might be compared to trying to get

 into a prestigious college today.

 1. A successful high school student sets his or her aim on an Ivy League education.

 Ex. Harvard, Yale, Princeton or perhaps even a Cambridge or Oxford English

 education.

 2. They take Advanced Placement courses, work to get the best grades, involve

 themselves in impressive extracurricular activities.

 3. Great care is given to exceptional answers to the essay questions on the application

 forms.

 4. Letters are written. Campus visits and interviews are completed.

 5. Wait until a letter comes announcing acceptance or rejection.

 B. Jewish education focused on boys.

 1. At age five they went to the local synagogue school to learn Hebrew and memorize

 the Torah.

 2. By age 13 it was typical to have memorized the Pentateuch, the prophets and the

 writings, which comprised all the Hebrew Scripture of the day.

 3. Those with promise were encouraged to continue multi-year studies to gain

 understanding of the meaning and the interpretation of the Law.

 4. Those excelling could extend their studies (typically ages 17-20) with a rabbi in a

 multi-year experience to sharpen their skills.

 C. Choosing your rabbi was of great significance. You adopted his interpretive approach,

 his peculiar perspective and so understood the application of the law in every day life

 through that window. To follow him or to be his disciple meant that in effect you

 became just like him. You submitted to his authority, transforming your thinking into

 his. And you asked to be his disciple. He did not ask you.

 D. Paul describes himself as, “a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in

 Jerusalem, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being

 zealous for God” (Acts 22:3).

II. When this scribe in Matt. 8:19 said, “I will follow You wherever You go,” it would seem that he intended to make a commitment to discipleship.

 A. But perhaps he has been too hasty and has not thought through what is involved.

 B. Jesus’ statement, “The foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man

 has nowhere to lay His head,” is meant to call the man to reflection.

 C. To be the disciple of a great rabbi could bring great promise.

 1. Someone like Paul, educated under Gamaliel, might someday have a seat on the

 Jewish Sanhedrin.

 2. But following Jesus will not result in institutional establishment. It will not result in

 institutional status, comfortable benefits, and future prospects. You will not receive

 the best parking spot or a fancy title. You will not receive a chief place ahead of

 someone else. Having an Oxford education might help you become President of

 the United States, but following Jesus does NOT have such benefits.

 D. Being a follower of Jesus does NOT seem very attractive.

 1. “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness” (Matt.

 5:10).

 2. “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all

 kinds of evil against you because of Me” (Matt. 5:11).

 3. Peter said, “We have left everything and followed You.” Jesus then spoke of leaving

 house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children and farms (Mk. 10:28-29).

 4. “Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn

 your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man” (Lk. 6:22).

 5. “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for

 the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they

 have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the

 members of his household” (Matt. 10:24-25). If they called Jesus ruler of demons

 what will they call his followers? Sons of the devil?

 6. “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and

 children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My

 disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My

 disciple” (Lk. 14:26-27).

 7. “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross

 daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it” (Lk. 9:23-24).

 E. Paul speaks of Christ emptying Himself to the point of death on a cross (Phil. 2:8) and

 as a disciple proceeds to do the same.

 1. “I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with

 persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake” (2 Cor. 12:10).

 2. “We are afflicted in every way, perplexed, persecuted, struck down, always

 carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus. We are constantly being delivered

 over to death” (2 Cor. 4:8-11).

 3. “I am being poured out as a drink offering” (2 Tim. 4:6).

 4. Jesus said to Ananias, “I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s

 sake” (Acts 9:16).

 F. So, being a disciple necessitates counting the cost (Lk. 14:25-35). It necessitates

 being prepared to make the payment of self-denial, sacrificed relationships, enduring

 persecution, insult, and even the sacrifice of life (Rev. 2:10). If one is not willing to lay

 it all on the table he/she cannot be a disciple. This is the example that the Teacher

 has set and He calls on us for the same. He endured the cross, despising the shame.

 Consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners so that you do not grow

 weary and lose heart (Heb. 12:2-3). It is NOT easy!!!

III. Following Jesus leads to great things.

 A. He “emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the

 likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by

 becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason God

 highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that

 at the name of Jesus every knee will bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus

 Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:7-11). Though crucified He was

 exalted!!

 B. “There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children

 or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, but that he will receive a hundred times

 as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and

 children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. But

 many who are first will be last, and the last will be first” (Mk. 10:29-31). There is great

 promise for those who follow Jesus.

 C. Paul, the sufferer wrote, “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but

 not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always

 carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be

 manifested in our body” (2 Cor. 4:8-10).

 D. “You have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may

 receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come,

 and will not delay. But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My

 soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction,

 but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul” (Heb. 10:36-39).

 E. “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those

 who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you

 are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that

 you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I

 will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:9-10).

 F. Following Jesus means going through the valley of the shadow of death and doing so

 courageously because you know He will deliver you.

Conclusion:

1. Who will follow Jesus?

2. Know that when you make that commitment it is going to be difficult.

3. Know that the Father exalted Him to His own right hand and that He has prepared a place for those who follow Him.

4. Will you? Will you give your life to Him today?