

WAYPOINTS
MONDAY, 1/23

Read Matthew 8:23.

Before we move into the next verses, Matthew prompts us to look back at what led the disciples to get into the boat with Jesus.

In the passage above, Jesus teaches us what discipleship means. We find the example of two men who are eager to follow Jesus, but who also lack understanding of what it means to follow Him. The first would-be disciple wants to follow Jesus but perhaps is hesitant to step away from the comforts and control of the life he enjoyed. The other would-be disciple has something in the way of his committing to Jesus. It's fair to say that many of us can identify with these men.

While we don't know if either said yes to following Jesus, we do know that Jesus' disciples did. Jesus gets into the boat and the Twelve follow Him. That is such a simple statement, but it gives us a great picture of what it means to follow Jesus. When Jesus gets into the boat, you get into the boat, too.

Following Jesus is about our willingness to go with Jesus. We do this because we trust Him. We have the utmost confidence that Jesus will take us where we need to be and that He will lead us to our highest purpose and fullness of life. We have such assurance that we can set aside our own agendas in order to take up His.

It's worth noting that following Jesus means we'll find ourselves in some situations not of our choosing. Take this story, for instance. Jesus had set sail for the "other side of the lake." This was the Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee. No self-respecting Jewish person would choose to go over "there" to "those" people, yet that is where Jesus was going. The disciples had a choice to make: get in the boat and trust Jesus, or make their own way.

We face that same choice. Discipleship is our seeking to understand what Jesus is doing in our lives and choosing to align ourselves with Him. Sometimes that means doing a new thing. Other times, it means doing what we're doing but with a new purpose. The question is this: are we getting into the boat with Him?

Praying Together:

"Jesus, You know my heart. You know when I am eager and willing to follow You, and when I'm faltering. You know when I am in the boat with You or standing on the shore. I choose to get into the boat with You. I want You to make Your purposes known to me. I want to know what You are doing and where You are moving in my life so that I can join You. I trust You and I give up my agenda for Your agenda. Amen."

WAYPOINTS
TUESDAY, 1/24

Read Matthew 8:24.

Storms. We've all been through them before. They aren't much fun to travel in. On a dry, sunny day, we feel safe on the road or confident we can harness the wind with our sails. That changes in a storm. We lose our sense of control as we are tossed about by the power of the storm.

The Sea of Galilee was subject to swift, furious storms. The warm air from Mediterranean Sea colliding with the cool air of the mountains surrounding the Sea of Galilee often spelled trouble

for anyone on its waters. Such storms were hard to predict and even seasoned fishermen were surprised from time to time. The disciples knew that if you spent time on the waters of the Sea of Galilee, you were going to get hit by a storm.

In the same way, we must expect to face some storms when we get into the boat with Jesus. Hardships will come. Some of them will be because we are following Jesus, while others are just the result of living in this world. No one avoids the storms of life. If that is true, then I would much rather be in the boat with Jesus than not.

Fortunately for the disciples, Jesus is in the boat with them. The surprising detail in this story is that Jesus is asleep. Asleep! Waves and water are crashing over the bow, yet Jesus is snoozing. As a fairly light sleeper, part of me is jealous. Something tells me the disciples weren't comparing their sleeping habits. They were terrified, and Jesus was asleep.

One of the many great reasons why it is so wonderful to be in the boat with Jesus is that Jesus will always be calmer in the storm than you are. I suppose having mastery over the storm will afford one that kind of confidence.

Jesus' calm and power in the storm have a profound influence on us as we face our own storms. Think about it this way. Some people are anxious about flying. I've always heard that if you want to know whether or not you should be anxious, look at the pilot. If *he* is nervous, then you should be nervous. If he is calm, then you have reason to be the same.

Jesus' confidence through every storm should inspire confidence for His disciples. Since Jesus is with us, we have every reason to trust that Jesus will see us through. So we turn our attention to Jesus when our storms arise. We also believe that Jesus will use our experiences with Him in the storm to shape us for our future.

Praying Together:

"Jesus, I look to You to find peace. Just as the world around me gets caught up in storms, my mind cannot be quieted and the anxieties of the day knock me off course, I continue to seek Your guidance. I hear Your words of comfort and purpose. I am listening for You and am thankful that You are always with me. Amen."

WAYPOINTS

WEDNESDAY, 1/25

Read Matthew 8:25.

Let's set the scene: Jesus and His disciples are caught up in a storm as they cross the Sea of Galilee. While the disciples are panicking, Jesus is sleeping. The disciples go to the slumbering Savior and beg, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

Clearly, the disciples didn't take the cue from Jesus that the storm was nothing to be concerned about. They were terrified, and they reacted like terrified people do. Jesus addresses them in the next verse by noting their lack of faith. It is evident that they struggle to trust Jesus as they should, but a little honest reflection helps us realize that we have all been like the disciples here.

There are a couple of points to note about this verse here. The first is that storms reveal what lies within us. While the disciples might have thought they had indomitable faith, the storm revealed the cracks. They cast light on the vulnerable places where their faith was weakest. Storms do that. In seasons of ease, we can affirm what lofty things we believe about God, but when a storm pops up in our lives, what we truly believe comes to the surface.

Storms uncover what lies in the deeper places of our souls. Sometimes we like what comes out; other times, not so much. There is hope for you whether your faith is found complete or lacking.

The disciples help us see that there is hope even when our faith isn't what it could be. While the disciples failed to meet the challenge as they should have, they at least knew where to turn. They turned to Jesus amidst their fears. They looked to their Savior to rescue them. Jesus was pleased to save them, as He will do again and again. Jesus shows His disciples mercy here, and He will continue to do so.

What wonderful news this is for us when the storms expose our weaknesses. Jesus shows us mercy. Jesus uses such storms to speak into the lives of His disciples, but not as a reason to reject them as failures. Jesus will use the storms we face to shape us. With His help, the greatest of challenges we face can become seasons when our confidence in Him grows and when our love and commitment to Him are sharpened.

So whether a storm in your life is showing your faith to be complete or lacking, know that there is hope for you in Jesus. The Master Disciple-maker will use this experience to teach you and equip you. He will use your circumstances to make you more mature in your faith. He will prepare you for faithful service to come.

Praying Together:

"Lord, I am so grateful that You show me mercy. I have been through storms that showed where I was lacking in faith. You love me and encourage me. You promise to work with me to see that I mature in my faith. You pledge to equip me for what You have called me to. I trust You and the work that You are doing in me even in the midst of the storm. Amen."

WAYPOINTS

THURSDAY, 1/26

Read Matthew 8:26.

Today's scripture reads, "Jesus replied, 'You of little faith, why are you so afraid?'" I have to wonder how many times in my life Jesus could have asked the same of me. Let's take a deeper look at what Jesus means by "you of little faith."

Jesus is not pronouncing a final judgment on His disciples. He is not saying they failed the test of discipleship and therefore were no longer worthy to follow Him. No, He is saying this particular test has revealed that they need more faith. They needed to learn to trust Him more, especially given the storms that are on the horizon in Jerusalem.

"You of little faith" is a statement of reality. The disciples' faith has fallen short of what is needed, but the reason Jesus acknowledges it is to call them to a greater faith. As their Teacher, Jesus is showing them a better way. I remember taking pre-calculus my junior year of high school. In the spring semester, I began to struggle. I failed a test, and I knew that I couldn't afford to fail the next one. I went to visit my teacher after school and he bluntly said, "The problem is you don't understand the concepts." Ouch, but he was right. He had me sit down in a seat and spent the next two hours working through the concepts with me until I understood them. My teacher pointed out where I was insufficient, but he did so in order to grow my understanding.

In the same way, Jesus helps the disciples see their shortcomings--not to shame them, but to help them grow. That is what maturity is: growing out of our inadequacies. James 1:2-4 points to this idea. James says that we can rejoice in our trials because God can use them to make us

“mature and complete, not lacking anything.” This is the aim of today’s disciple who is learning from Jesus how to live life, not only for the Twelve who walked with Jesus long ago.

One thing we need to recognize is that in order to grow, we must commit ourselves to learning from Jesus. Being a student is not a passive endeavor, at least not if you want to be a good one. We have to give something. Given that the subject Jesus is teaching us has to do with living a Kingdom life, we must seek His teachings and to live them out. We must lean into Him for strength and wisdom for our living. James uses the term “perseverance” in James 1:2-4 to capture the idea. We keep seeking Jesus. Bolstered by His grace, we continue to pray and move toward Him and His will for us.

Praying Together:

“Father, I celebrate Your patience with me. I am always in need of Your grace. I am thankful that You possess the heart of a Father who loves me, Your child. Thank You for working on me and in me for my good so that my life will produce fruit for You and others. Continue to show me how I can learn from You and become mature and complete in my faith. Amen.”

WAYPOINT
FRIDAY, 1/27

Read Matthew 8:27

After seeing Jesus calm the storm, his onlookers felt somewhere between marvel and disbelief. The disciples had just been through a harrowing ordeal. They could not see past the moment; they panicked and felt certain they would drown in the storm. Sitting in a short-lived moment of relief, their minds begin to make sense of it all.

Was this calming of the storm a coincidence? Maybe Jesus had a sense that this storm was about over and just waited for the winds to change before he “calmed” it. Long shot, I know. They may have refused to believe it was possible, and that refusal could have driven a wedge between them and Jesus. Their fear and doubt, even mixed with some faith, could inhibit confident trust in God. Jesus saw the doubt first as He confronted His disciples with the words, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?”

There is also a chance that they marveled at what they saw. Yes, in the moment, they feared for their lives. But as the storm quieted, they might have known that it was Jesus’ doing. Their marvel turned into careful thought about what really happened.

To marvel is a healthy response to something unknown and sacred that happens. Our culture wants closure on investigations like these. We tend to search for answers instead of relishing the possibilities that God has a hand in it. How would you respond to Jesus’ calming the storm? Would you be willing to marvel at the possibility that miracles happen on this side of heaven?

Praying Together:

“Jesus, how patient You are. How many times have You sent miracles that we were quick to dismiss? Open our field of vision so that we can actively look for miracles happening in this world. How life-changing it is to know that You are present and actively working in this world, Lord. Keep us safe in our search and help us to be open to experiencing Your presence in all that we do. In Your name, Amen.”

WAYPOINTS
SATURDAY, 1/28

Read James 1:2-3.

Change, turmoil, challenge and even defeat are necessary to develop and define us spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually. Such times are meant to push us to the limits of our knowledge and understanding so that we may grow in trust, strength, courage, confidence, and faith. With each challenge, there is an opportunity to trust and obey God, and to continue to invite Him into every part of our lives.

Our 14-year-old son was invited to work at the glider port to offset the fee to learn to fly a glider solo. Though some of this had to do with his father being a Navy aviator, it also had to do with learning to follow orders and doing whatever needs to be done to maintain the gliders and the airport. More so than that, it became about the mentorship/advising offered freely at lunch time. My son had a chance to learn something that these pilots/engineers knew how to do well with over 40 years of experience in the air per pilot.

Sitting at their feet (figuratively), he learned respect for his elders, how to fix the mistakes he made, how to be prepared for everything in the air, and, best of all, he enjoyed being mentored. These men challenged him, held him to his word, and criticized him when needed. He walked away from that experience with a much better understanding of how things work... and how they don't! It challenged and changed him as a person. Apply that learning to spiritual maturity, and he walks away with an understanding of the significance of discipline, obedience, and determination for the long haul as well as their effect on a person's faith.

How do you prepare yourself for an oncoming challenge? What personal challenge has strengthened your faith?

Praying Together:

"God of Grace, I am nowhere near perfect. With every challenge, I can easily grow weary. Sometimes I take on more than I can handle and get lost in the details. Fix my eyes upon You, Lord. Embolden me to take on challenges to my faith. Open my heart to witness a miracle in the making. Amen."

WAYPOINTS
SUNDAY, 1/29

Read James 1:4.

A seminary professor once said that, as imperfect as we are, we need to invite God's perfection into our lives and spend the rest of our lives working toward that perfection. We are a diamond in the rough. We have yet to be cleaned, cut, and buffed. It is rare if not impossible to become a perfectly cut diamond. But in experienced hands, we can get pretty close. It takes precision, determination, and intentional steps to cut such a diamond.

The process of becoming a good disciple requires trials, temptations, and sometimes life-or-death challenges that can refine and define us. This will not be easily achieved and even more difficult to be maintained. Prayers inviting God to work in our lives keep us humble and remind us that we need God's help in this process. We must become dependent on God for guidance. True disciples look to God for standards of behavior that challenge the conventional standards of society. The "perfect work" that stems from endurance under trials is a characteristic that will be exhibited in the good works described in the letter.

The road is hard and long, and the task is unrelenting: to endure the first onset of the startling, unexpected trial, to endure again while it persists, and then go on enduring is hard work. This kind of endurance is similar to that of Jesus who “endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2) right to the point where the whole work of salvation was accomplished. We are called to a persistent endurance.

What do you do to endure the trials of discipleship? What keeps you motivated to continue enduring the trials of discipleship, knowing that there are no perfect disciples this side of heaven?

Praying Together:

“Gracious God, I am humbled while serving You. I need Your guidance to show me what I must do when I am all out of answers. Show me how to love the way You Love. Move me through the darkness in this world so I can be guided by Your Light. Push me toward the lessons I need to understand You better. Allow me another chance to get it right. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”