

Matthew 20-01-26b

Now as we continue our study in Matthew chapter 8, the sons of the kingdom in verse 12 will be cast into outer darkness. We have covered this before, I'm not going to posthole here for very long on the outer darkness, but the sons of the kingdom are sons, right? They are sons. A lot of different things Jesus could have said, but he says the sons of the kingdom and these are those who should inherit but don't.

Esau should have inherited the blessing from his father Isaac, but he didn't. He didn't stop being a son and he didn't not have a future. It was just not the future he could have had if he had valued his place and valued the God of his fathers.

The same is true here and without going into an entire study, there is a distinct difference between the lake of fire which is the destination of the rest of the dead who live not until the thousand years are complete in Revelation chapter 20. A lake of fire is not a place of darkness. It just isn't.

Darkness is not the same as fire. I look in the glass door of my stove, if I see fire, I'm happy. If I see darkness, I want to go build a fire.

They are not the same thing. Darkness is lack of fire. Pretty much all the light in the ancient world came from fire.

If it wasn't the fire of the sun or the reflected glory of the sun in the face of the moon or the fire of the stars in the heaven, it was a local fire. There was no other source of light in the ancient world. Light comes from fire.

So darkness and fire are not the same. This is an important clue to understanding what the outer darkness is. Being sons of the kingdom is a second case.

This also removes one of the arguments for eternal conscious torment when you understand that the outer darkness is not the same as or a synonym for being cast into the lake of fire. It just isn't. One of the ways we know this is through the teaching of Luke.

In the parallel to this, in Luke 13, verse 28, and if you keep your finger in Matthew 8 and turn over to Luke 13, we have a pretty decisive detail included here. Luke 13, verse 28. You remember in the Sermon on the Mount, the teaching on the hill, this section that begins up in verse 24 of Luke 13, Strive to enter through the narrow gate.

Many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open for us. This is a conscious presence.

It is in a place that people want to leave and go through a gate into a better place. There

could not be further from the passive emptying of death and the grave and the sea to stand before the great white throne judgment and finding your name not written in the book being cast into the lake of fire. That is the fate of unbelievers.

It is clear. It is unequivocal. There is no response on the part of the people.

There is no gate, no knocking, no viewing of any kind. This is completely different. The master of the house has risen up and shut the door.

There is a house that has an inner place where there is going to be a banquet at which people will recline. There is an outside the house where people will be, and they can see the house, they can hear the joy and the feasting inside, and they would like to join. And they knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open for us.

He will answer and say to you, I do not know you where you are from. Then you will begin to say, but we ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets. He will say, I tell you, I do not know you where you are from.

Depart from me, you workers of iniquity. The issue here is not belief, assent, recognition. It is works.

James says, I will show you my faith by my works. And these people have worked iniquity when they should have been working righteousness. It is easy to be a worker of iniquity.

It is hard to be a worker of righteousness, or a righteous worker, or a faithful servant. It's easy to be a lazy, disobedient, apathetic, self-interested servant. It is hard to be a faithful servant.

But he says, depart from me. He doesn't say depart into the flames. Angels come and cast these people into the fire.

He says, I don't know you. I don't know where you are from. Leave.

I'm not opening the door. You are not coming into the banquet feast. You are not going to come, as these have come from the east and the west, to sit down with faithful Israelites like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and recline at the banquet table.

You are outside. Verse 28. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.

You will see it. And you're going to cry and gnash your teeth. There's no idea here that they are in conscious, flaming torment.

They want to be in the place of privilege, in the place of blessing, in the place of opportunity, and they're not. This is the four directions here in verse 29. They will come

from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down, same word here, recline at the table in the kingdom of God.

And there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last. So the Pharisees on that very day come to him saying, Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill you. These seem to be sympathetic Pharisees.

And he says to them, Go tell that fox, Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Today and tomorrow and the third day. I just want you to note verse 32 because we're going to be coming up to something similar shortly.

They say, You need to leave, Herod is after you. And he says, Go tell that fox. Why would Jesus, why doesn't he just say, Go tell Herod, or go tell that false king, or go tell that arrogant guy that did end John the Baptist, go tell, you know, why does he call him a fox? Well, hold that thought.

Back to Matthew chapter 8, the weeping and gnashing of teeth is an activity of regret. It is an activity of missed opportunity. You see that in Luke 13, 28.

Matthew is going to record Jesus using these words two more times coming up. If you hold your place in Matthew 8, go over a few chapters to Matthew 13, verse 42. He's talking about the parable of the wheat and the tares, explaining it to the disciples.

Verse 37, He who sows the good seed is the son of man, the field is the world, the good seeds are sons of the kingdom, but the tares are sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, the reapers are the angels. Therefore, as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age.

Notice there is a distinction here between sons of the evil one and sons of the kingdom. It's the very same phrase, sons of the kingdom. The sons of the kingdom are going to watch while people from the east and west come in.

Do you see the contrast here? Sons of the kingdom. Son of man, verse 41, will send out his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. He doesn't say the sons of the kingdom are going to shine, he says the righteous.

The son of man will send out his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the

furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Now, how many kingdoms are in view here? Did you count them? What does it say in verse 41? The son of man will send out his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. This is not the lake of fire, this is the furnace of fire.

What happens in a furnace? What's a furnace for? This isn't a cooking stove, this is a smelting furnace. You separate the good metal, gold or silver, from the dross, right? It is a place of testing. You have this in Corinthians, we saw it not too long ago, the judgment seat of Christ.

There is gold, silver, and precious stones. There is wood, hay, and stubble that is used to build on the foundation that no man can lay except that which is laid, which is Christ. And the fire will reveal the nature of works.

This is a judgment of works. Luke 13 is not talking about the lake of fire, this is a furnace of fire. And there is a big difference.

People just have this knee-jerk response, if they see darkness, it's hell. If they see fire, it's hell. And it's not.

Attention to detail is the key. This is a furnace of fire. What does a furnace do? It separates out what you need from what you don't need.

You get rid of what you don't need. You can burn up chaff, and you can store wheat in the barn. That's not in a furnace, by the way.

The chaff that is burned, it's gathered in bundles and burned. It's not in a furnace. Chaff and straw that's gathered in bundles and burned, that's a fire of judgment.

The furnace of fire is a fire of judgment. The lake of fire is a lake of judgment. But these are different judgments, pictures of different judgments.

Fire is a regular picture of judgment, but you've got to distinguish your judgments. This is not the judgment of unbelievers. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom.

He's already got a kingdom. He's not about to set up a kingdom, and they're going to gather out of the world all things that offend, and then He's going to set up His kingdom. Out of His kingdom, all things that offend.

This is at the conclusion of the Gog Magog rebellion. You have this described in the Revelation, where Satan is released at the end of the thousand years, and there has

been plenty of time for unbelief and for disobedience, the sheep and goats judgment and so on. Gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire.

There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father. The kingdom of the Father is where the righteous will be qualified to dwell.

These weepers and gnashers of teeth are going to be outside. There is a furnace of fire judgment, and the wailing and gnashing of teeth are those who are not qualified to enter and shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father. This goes back to Daniel chapter 12.

We've gone there many times, but if you go to Daniel chapter 12, talking about the eventual resurrection, chapter 12, 1. At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people. There shall be a time of trouble such as there never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book.

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. The shame and everlasting contempt generates weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Those who are wise, verse 3, shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father. Those who turn many to righteousness like the stars la'olam, forever and ever. Weeping and gnashing of teeth.

That's Matthew 13, 42. We'll throw them into the furnace of fire. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In that judgment of believers. You go further to Matthew chapter 24. Matthew 24, and we're going to find this same phrase toward the end of the chapter in verse 51.

Start in verse 45. Matthew 24, 45. Who then is a faithful and wise servant? What did Daniel say? Daniel 12, 3. Those who are wise will shine.

Who is a faithful? The centurion has great faith. Faithful and wise servant. He's a servant.

He's got a relationship to the master, right? He's not an outsider. He's not a vagabond. He's not a transient.

He's a servant. He belongs to the household. Who is the faithful and wise servant whom his master made ruler over his household to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing.

I say to you, he will make him ruler over all his goods. This is synonymous with those

who are going to shine like the sun because they are wise and faithful. But if that evil servant says in his heart, my master is delaying his coming.

Believer or unbeliever? What is this servant? Believer or unbeliever? My master delays his coming. He's in the household. He's got the same relationship to the master as a faithful servant does, but he's evil.

He is a worker of iniquity. Depart from me, you workers of iniquity. Evil servant says in his heart, my master delays his coming, begins to beat his fellow servant, fellow servants, fellow believers, abusing fellow believers, not loving them, not self-sacrificial, not serving.

He's beating his fellow servants. He eats and drinks with the drunkards. He has more in common with, more sympathy with drunkards than he does with his fellow servants.

The master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of because he's an unwise servant. And will cut him into and appoint him his meros, his portion, very same word that's used in Revelation for those who are outside watching their meros incinerated in the lake of fire. Will appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Unfaithful, unwise servants have their portion, their inheritance the same as hypocrites, which is incinerated. It's gone.

It's unavailable, unenjoyed outside the New Jerusalem, outside the land in the Millennial Kingdom. So weeping and gnashing of teeth. We saw it here in Matthew 8. We see it in Matthew 13, 42.

We see it in Matthew 24, 51. Flip over a page to Matthew 25. We're going to be looking at Matthew 25, verse 30.

This is the parable of the talents. It starts in verse 14. We don't have time to read the whole thing, but you remember that story.

He's talking in verse 24. He had received the one talent. Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you've not sown, gathering where you've not scattered.

I was afraid. I hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.

His Lord answers and says, you wicked and lazy servant. Same relationship, same opportunity as the other servants. Verse 27, you should have done this with my money.

Therefore take the talent from him, verse 28, give it to him who has ten talents. To everyone who has, more will be given and he will have abundance. But from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.

And cast, verse 30, the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. He doesn't lose his salvation. He doesn't lose his status.

Doesn't say cast the former servant or the could have been a servant. He's got the very same relationship to the master as the two who are rewarded and given more opportunities. Unprofitable servant is cast, not into the lake of fire, but into outer darkness where there is what? Weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This is a response to judgment on the Lord. And believers, specifically these are servants. This is spoken to Israel in the age of Israel.

But as with love, as with authority, we look at the principle of to him who has, more will be given. And to him who should have had, but has not, even what he has will be taken away. And it is just as true for us as it is true for them.

And we observe, we interpret, we apply. What are the benefits of centurion like faith? There is blessing. There is an approval from the Lord Jesus Christ.

And there is a comparison to those who don't have that faith. And there is a great difference in the future as well as the present for those who, you get the idea that the centurion has the wonderful blessing immediate of the healing of his servant or his son. And you have the future where he is going to be one of those who sits down in the kingdom.

There is present and future blessing for those who respond in faith and who pursue righteousness by faith. That is the part of wisdom. Well, a lot you can say about weeping and gnashing of teeth, but if you return now to Matthew 8, when Jesus had come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever.

In the first case, there is an appeal. The leper comes and says, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. In the second case, there is an appeal.

The centurion comes and says, my servant is sick. Jesus says, I will come and heal him. In the third case, Jesus came into the house and saw Peter's mother-in-law sick with a fever.

It doesn't say Peter's wife made a request. Peter doesn't make a request. Jesus sees it.

He comes to the house and there is a problem in the house. And he simply touches her hand and the fever left her. There is that contact.

And once again, if you think about the progress of presentation of the gospel and the kingdom, first to Israel, then to Gentiles and to the Gentile world and ultimately the church age, and then back in the millennial kingdom, the Lord Jesus is going to come and enter that house, isn't he? And where there is a malady, Jesus is going to, by contact,

remove the fever and the mother-in-law rises and serves them or serves him. It's probably a slightly better version of the text. Serves him.

And what is going to happen in the millennial kingdom when the Lord Jesus returns and is physically present in the house of Israel? What is the promise? I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, the house of Israel, the house of Judah. I will pour out my spirit and it's going to have beneficial effects. I will take out your heart of stone.

I will give you a heart of flesh. The fever will leave and they're going to have the same ability to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law in the millennial kingdom that we have now because of the power of the Holy Spirit. That's my understanding of those.

And what is the proper response to the grace and the compassion of the Lord Jesus in reaching out and touching us? Gaither's most famous song is, He touched me and made me whole. And it is a response of service, to be a faithful servant. How many of these future parables about those who fail and are weeping and gnashing their teeth are related to failure to serve, misappropriated opportunity.

So then in verse 16, when evening had come they brought to him many who were demon-possessed. He cast out spirits with a word and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, he himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses, that it might be fulfilled. He has authority over demons.

These are the powers, they will later be described as the principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age. Satan is the prince of the power of the air. And these demons are opposing the Lord Jesus.

Isn't it interesting that there is such a cluster of demon possession at this time? You don't see demon possession featured in the Old Testament and we don't notice it after, there is a little bit in the early apostolic age, but not much. And then it seems to fade out, at least as a widespread phenomenon. But there just seems to be demon possession everywhere at the time of Christ.

My personal belief is Satan doesn't know everything, but he's pretty smart and he knew the prophecy of Daniel and the 490 years and he did the calculations and figured out that the time to oppose the incarnate Son of God was going to be in this season. And this is when he planted his minions in as many people as he could and he found a lot of available vessels to do so. Then in verse 18, when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave a command to depart to the other side.

And this is just the most overlooked verse in the modern Christian big church. Do you not find this to be just a head smacking verse? This ought to just surprise everybody. Look at

that verse again.

When Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave a command to leave. Who does this? Isn't this the mission? Here's the multitudes, I can talk to all of them at one go. I don't have to travel, they have come to me.

So here's the great multitudes and Jesus says, hey guys, we're leaving. Pack, let's go, let's get out of here. Here's a great multitude.

He's the Savior and he's got to go. Why? I know you're waiting for me to say, but I want you to think. Why? Why is Jesus leaving the great multitudes? There's two questions you can ask there.

Why did they come and why does he go? It's two sides of the same coin. They are coming for the wrong reasons. Having a great crowd doesn't mean it's right.

Today, with the advent of social media, it's easy and comfortable to be in the crowd. A pastor from long ago, those of you that listen to Robert Thieme will remember him talking in the teen series about don't be herd bound. It's comfortable in the herd.

You don't stand out in the herd. The herd accepts you. There's a lot of instinct that says, stay in the herd.

But if you're a believer, if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, that herd is on the Broadway going through the wide gate to destruction. Jesus saw the great multitudes and he says, this is not where I can do the work that the Father has sent me to do. This is a waste of time.

It is a waste of time to stick around with the great multitudes. We are mission driven. We are not crowd driven.

We are God funded. We are not crowd funded. We are God guided.

We are not crowd guided. And just because a lot of people think a thing doesn't make it right. He saw the great multitudes.

I think there ought to be sermon after sermon after sermon on passages like this. Jesus saw the multitudes and left. You think about some of the great auditorium size sanctuaries filled with people.

You'll never hear them talk about this verse. And they ought to. And I'm not saying everybody there is there for the wrong reasons, but I think all of us ought to think about why are we where we are.

Are we there for the right reason? And it is not enough that others have gathered or that there's a sensation or there's a feeling or there's an excitement, there's a level of

electricity or this is sort of an ambulance chasing instinct. Why does traffic slow down when there's flashing lights on the opposite lane? Want something unusual? Let me go look. Let's go see what is this, you know, like Moses with the burning bush.

I will turn aside and see this strange sight. We need to keep focused on who we are and why we're here. Jesus saw a great multitudes.

He gave a command to depart to the other side. This is the most interesting context. In the other Gospels, Jesus says, let's go.

They get in the boat. Luke says there's other little boats. And they start heading across the sea and you get the storm scene.

But look at what Matthew puts here. Jesus gave a command to depart to the other side. Then a certain scribe came and said to him, then a certain scribe came.

In the other Gospels, you don't necessarily have this context. Mark says, as Jesus was going down the road, a man came. But Matthew says this guy is a scribe.

What's a scribe? He's a professional expert on the law. He knows the law of Moses. That's his job.

He physically makes copies of it. He reads it. He's an authority on it.

He can count the letters. He can tell you how to pronounce any given word, right? He's a scribe. A certain scribe, this is a specific man, came and said to him, teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.

Now, if you stop right there, if you're Jesus, what would you say? Well, I admire your loyalty. That's a good idea. You're going to hear a lot of great teaching.

If you follow me wherever I go, later on Jesus is going to say, if any man will follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me, right? Jesus is going to encourage genuine followership. So here's a man that says, teacher, I'll follow you wherever you go. If I didn't have the rest of this scene, I would think, well, if I had to fill in the rest, Jesus is going to say, well done thou good and faithful servant.

Come along. Sit thou at my right hand. Let's travel.

This is the weirdest response. It's one of the reasons I know man did not write the Bible out of his own head, because it's too unexpected. Nobody would think in a human brain to put the response that Jesus gives this guy.

It's completely counterintuitive. It's illogical. It makes no sense.

You tell me what this means. How is this an answer to what the man says? 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. What has that got to do with, teacher, you're the greatest.

I will follow you wherever you go. Is Jesus saying, well, we're not going to have a comfortable motel room. You're going to have to rough it.

Is this seriously what Jesus is telling him? Well, you know, we're not going to have luxurious accommodations, so if you're coming with me, just be prepared to sleep under the stars. I'll ask you a more interesting question. If that was going to be Jesus' point, if you were going to make that point, if I said, fill in your name here, I'm going to come with you wherever you go.

Are you going to some other state? Are you going to go visit? Are you going to go sightseeing? I'll go with you wherever you go. Are you on some kind of a mission? Have you got some form of service? You're going to be a missionary? I'll come with you. And if you wanted to illustrate to me that, well, I'm going to Zimbabwe and we're going to be out in these small villages and I'm going to have to take my own little sleeping bag and there's going to be mosquitoes, you're going to need netting and all.

If you were going to explain that it's not going to be comfortable accommodations and you were going to use an animal analogy, what animal would you pick? Sheep have folds. Cattle have stalls. Oxen have mangers.

Isn't this the natural, you know, if you say, well, there's shelter and comfort, why not domestic animals that are cared for and have security and protection and provision and warmth and all the rest of it? Foxes? Foxes have holes? How is this an encouragement that, well, you've got to be ready to rough it? I mean, foxes have dens. This particular kind of fox, you can look it up, you know, it's got a scientific name, the species that lives in the Syrian region and there's some foxes that are from Egypt and so on and they're native to Palestine. But these are burrowing foxes.

They make a hole. But a hole in the ground? Why not sheep in a fold or oxen in a stall? Why would you pick foxes? And then what's the next one? Birds of the air have nests. Of all of the animal kingdom, why would Jesus pick these two? What do you think? What do these two have in common that might suggest Jesus used them instead of sheep and oxen? What do we know about sheep and cows and those animals? Goats.

They're domesticated. They respond to the authority of their shepherd or their goat herd or their masters. You know, they yoke of oxen and you drive them, they plow, they do work, they pull wagons and such.

How much control do you have over a fox? Are they domesticated? They're a wild animal. How much control do you have over birds of the air? A guy goes and scatters seed and it's on the hard packed ground, what happens? Birds of the air come and pick it

away. What is the theme of this book? What is the message especially in this section? What is Matthew emphasizing and documenting? Jesus the King, he has authority, he has authority over disease, he has authority over demons, he has authority over sickness.

Do foxes and birds have any respect for authority at all? Do they have any respect for authority? A fox is a predator. Normally when you see, you can talk about birds, eagles are one thing, doves are one thing and when they're specified, there's a different point in view. Mounting up with wings as eagles is a beautiful picture.

The eagle as one of the faces of the cherub is a beautiful picture. But when you say birds of the air, we've seen this before. We're going to see it again.

The birds of the air nesting in the branches of the kingdom. What can you say about foxes and birds they have in common? And I had to think about this a little while myself. But here's my suggestion.

They are opportunistic. Birds of the air are usually like carrion birds. They're not helpful, they're not useful and they're not subject to authority.

They're doing their own thing. They're opportunistic. Birds build their own nest.

Foxes dig their own holes. It's unlike and contrasted with animals that are cared for and that are under authority and that are submissive and serve a useful purpose. Foxes are a nuisance.

Birds are a nuisance. Have you ever seen these cities where the birds all roost in the trees and people can't park underneath them and even walking down the sidewalk, you get rained on and it's a real problem. And they pay people to poison them and shoot them and discourage them and they can't figure out what to do with these birds of the air.

So now, if that's the idea, why is that Jesus' response to this man who says, teacher, I will follow you anywhere you go? Jesus gives a command to depart. What's the function of a scribe? Would a scribe like to have a lot of people around? Jesus says we're leaving and this guy says, well, wherever you're going, I'll go with you. And Jesus says, these opportunistic animals make homes for themselves and predate and clean up.

They're not clean animals. They're not food animals. And they've got homes.

They've got places where they make themselves comfortable and from which they exit to do their opportunistic things. But the son of man has nowhere to lay his head. The son of man has nowhere to lay his head.

What is this contrast? The son of man is not here to be opportunistic. The son of man is not here to make himself comfortable. And if you're going to go where he goes, you can't

be an opportunist.

You can't be looking at it as what's in it for me. There's no accident that he's described by Matthew as a scribe. Not all of the Gospels say that, but Matthew does.

Why? And you can say, well, Jesus is encouraging him to count the cost and I don't doubt that that could be an application. But I'm intrigued by the choice of animals because it's such an odd response to the call of the Lord. I don't claim.

It's not even a question. I'll follow you wherever you go. And if you start at the end, well, the son of man has nowhere to lay his head.

This is a place to which you return time and again. And Jesus is going to be itinerant and he's not going to stay in one place for very long. He's going to travel throughout Galilee.

He's going to travel throughout Transjordan. He's going to travel even into Samaria. He's going to go down to Jerusalem.

And he doesn't, his power, his authority is being exercised on behalf of others. And you get the idea that this scribe wants to attach himself to Jesus wherever he goes for selfish reasons. He's got his own agenda.

And it isn't a matter of lack of comfort or, you know, be sure and bring a rucksack and prepare to rough it. It's a matter of self-interest. Foxes and birds are opportunistic.

Birds literally feather their own nest. Foxes dig their own burrow in a place that they choose, where there is abundant prey for them to come out and get. It's very interesting, by the way, as a side note, the word for fox in the Old Testament is shual, S-H-U-A-L.

And it drifts into the Persian language as shugal and is the source eventually of the word jackal. And especially when you come to Judges chapter 15 and it's talking about Samson who takes the foxes and ties their tails together. He finds 300 of them and then puts firebrands in and sets them in the fields and it burns up all the Philistines' crops.

It's been suggested that those actually are jackals, which are also indigenous to the region and they're much easier to catch. And there's a lot more of them because they're in packs. They're a canine where foxes tend to be individual and scarcer and harder to catch.

But jackals, Samson is able to assemble 300 all in one go and tie their tails together. So he had to not only be fast, but he had to kind of like corner them. But it's just interesting that in some cases, especially in the Old Testament, when it talks about fox, it could be talking about jackals.

And there's grist for that mill as well. But you remember when Jesus said, when he's told that Herod is looking for him, he says, tell that fox what is the characteristic of Herod?

Opportunistic, self-interested, and you get the idea that there is a warning note in what Jesus says to this rather shallow remark. The guy says, well, it's kind of like Peter saying, you know, well, these others may forsake you.

I will never forsake you. And Jesus says, think again. What you think you're going to do and what you're actually going to do are two different things.

And you need to recognize what you are committing to and make sure that you are not self-interested or opportunistic in your commitment. Think carefully before you make a commitment. This is a biblical Christian principle.

If you're going to make a commitment, think about it carefully before you make it. Don't make it flippantly or casually. And you see this as this continues.

And real quickly now, another of his disciples said to him, Lord, let me first go and bury my father. Now, this is not, he just died, let me run to the funeral, I'll be right back. He says, so Lord, you're leaving the region.

Well, I'm your disciple and I should come with you, but I need to stick around because my father is not well and I need to stick around until he is gone and I resolve things and then I can, then I'll be free. Now, what is one of the Ten Commandments related to parents? Honor thy father and mother. So, what's wrong with this man having a responsibility to his father and saying, let me tend to my father, my parents, let me make sure my family is well-situated then I will come follow.

Look at Jesus' response. Follow me and let the dead bury their own dead. Let the dead bury their own dead.

What's he saying here? It's interesting. Yes, there is a responsibility under the law and there is a command, but what is the responsibility and what is the priority and what is the nature of that situation? Jesus knows things at a distance. We learned this from the centurion.

What does he know about this disciple's father? He's dead while he lives and the rest of the family is dead in the sense of faith. There's no faith there. Should a faithful believer sacrifice spiritual priorities for the sake of insensible people who have made a choice and are going to go their own way? Let me bury my father.

Maybe I can get him to do a deathbed repentance. Maybe I can get him interested at the last minute. Maybe as he approaches the gates of death he'll suddenly wake up and realize that you're the Messiah.

Jesus says, let the dead bury their own dead and he's talking about dead in terms of response, dead in terms of faith. Yes, we have a commitment that we make. We have responsibilities within families, but remember later on Jesus is going to say, I've not

come to bring peace but a sword and it will divide families.

If there comes to a choice between family responsibility and family loyalty, and I say this carefully, you can't just bug out and say, I'm doing it all for Christ, but if you have a right understanding in this disciple's case, he's a disciple, he's not a scribe, he's a follower of Jesus Christ and he has a responsibility to Christ first and to his family second. There are other people in the family who are as disinterested as this man's father. They can exercise that responsibility, that responsibility is covered.

This guy should follow and it's very interesting if you look at the parallel over in Luke chapter 9 because there's an additional command given to this guy and as we close, just turn to Luke chapter 9, toward the end of the chapter there in verse 59, he said to another, follow me. Jesus gives him the command, follow me. This is the same man, this is the disciple in Matthew chapter 8. Jesus says to this disciple, follow me, but he said, Lord, let me first go and bury my father.

Jesus said to him, let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God. He has been called by the Lord Jesus to a specific opportunity and he's equivocating, he's finding an excuse to not do it. Jesus says, there are other people that can do that.

You have a spiritual priority. Observe it. Matthew shortens it and simplifies it to a simple contrast.

There are others who can deal with the requirement of the law that the father be honored and they have more in common with him than you do. You're alive and they're dead. Let the dead bury their dead.

Follow me. Follow me. That's our encouragement.

Faith, recognition of the authority of the Lord Jesus, the knowledge of the Lord Jesus as he intercedes for us before God's throne at the father's right hand, as the Holy Spirit guides us, witnesses to us with the word, transmits our prayers with groanings that cannot be uttered. We have a responsibility to respond, to follow, to fulfill the calling that God has assigned to us without excuse, without delay, without distraction. That's what these sayings do.

We had three miracles and now we have this short teaching about what it is to be a disciple, what it is to be a follower. We'll pick up here in verse 23 with the Lord Jesus getting into the boat. He's departed from the crowds and he's getting into the boat and we're going to see the great storm on the sea and even as many times as we've looked at it there are some things here we've not seen before that we'll look at next time but we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the powerful witness that it

has within us, the authority of the Lord Jesus to lead us and lead us by example and by word and by deed. We pray that as we reflect on these things your Holy Spirit will minister them to our hearts so that we will find our path illuminated and our steps guided in a sure and certain manner so that we can invest our time and live our lives in a way that is pleasing in your sight, that we'll stand up in the judgment like the house built on the rock and we will be invited in to recline at the banquet table in the future days of the kingdom of the Son and your own kingdom.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.