

## Doing Without

Matt. 8:18-34

With the Memorial Day weekend celebration we might be able to see a connection between our Lord and the life He lived and the kinds of sacrifices made by soldiers on behalf of their country. As a soldier gives up home and hearth for a greater cause so did the Lord. In the midst of battle, or during a campaign when the infantry marches to gain advantage over their opponent, the soldier lives as if he were homeless, sleeping on the ground, eating MRE's, and foraging for food. He may have inadequate clothing, be required to perform rigorous feats on poor nutrition and even accept that giving his life will be a necessary sacrifice.

As harsh as all of these things are, the testimony of soldiers has often been that the war years were the best of their lives. One of our favorite authors, Nevil Shute, lived through the 2nd World War and wrote a number of novels set in the war years. His characters suffered much in the war but also reflected the spirit of the day when they found a greater purpose and fulfillment in their war responsibilities than they would ever know again in normal life.

The hardships of soldiers is a good way to see the things that Jesus and His disciples endured during His Galilean ministry. In our passage Jesus lived as a homeless person with no place to lay His head. He gave up the usual family obligations and gatherings in order to tend to the urgent business of the Kingdom. He risked life and limb in a sea crossing that was very hazardous and during which the experienced boatmen on board despaired of life. He cast demons out of a man in a strange land and was asked to leave in a situation that had become hostile.

But in all of this there was a comradeship and fellowship that was rich and rewarding. So much so that others wanted in. The scribe said, "Teacher, I will

follow You wherever You go." He was apparently not one of the group that did follow Jesus wherever He went, but he wanted in that group. He could see the joy and blessing attending those who were in the group. It was attractive to him. He could see himself as one of them. But he was looking at the reward without an eye for the sacrifice. Jesus had nowhere to lay His head. The ministry was on a shoestring budget. Creature comforts for Jesus and the disciples was not a priority. Jacob fled from Esau and used a rock for a pillow but soon he found his way to Laban's home where he again had a place to lay his head, not so Jesus who lived in this way for the 3 years of His ministry. If the scribe had gone with Jesus then he would soon have found himself in a sinking boat. Another disciple wanted to be excused to go and bury his father. It is difficult to know the exact nature of his family obligation. You hear different things

about it. Had his father died? Was it imminent? Was it a possibility? In any case, it was a family obligation and Jesus required that it be set aside in favor of what was most important. The apostles and the others of Jesus' disciples including many women had set everything in their lives on hold in order to be with Jesus, and they were with Him, wherever He went. Family had to wait. Jobs were abandoned. What Jesus was doing and saying made everything else insignificant. These were the conscious choices that were made by the disciples and as they lived this extreme life, they had the time of their lives.

On the sea, Jesus gave His followers even more to think about. Jesus was sleeping through the storm suggesting that He was considerably sleep deprived. On the boat meant away from the crowds - it was a respite, a chance to relax. So the storm came up and in spite of the violence of the storm and the water crashing into the boat, Jesus still slept. He did not awaken until the disciples cried out, "Lord, save us. We are perishing!" Jesus answered, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"

It is hard to imagine any response to the circumstance other than what the disciples did. Many a devout believer has shared in the fear of the disciples during sea crossings. If their faith was shaken, then who am I to assume that my own faith is any better? But Jesus rebuked them. They were fearful rather than faithful. It had everything to do with who was with them in the boat. They

believed that God had sent Jesus and that Jesus was the Messiah, even the Son of God. Did God send His Son so that He would die in a freak storm on Galilee? No, He did not. Everyone knows that. Therefore, it should have been clear to the disciples that they would survive the storm, even as it raged and things appeared to be hopeless. Even without having Jesus in the boat, we can have a sense of God's workings in our lives and be assured of His care even when the outcome of our circumstances seems to be up in the air.

Jesus' rebuke suggests that He expects us to attain the level of assurance that sees through our troubles and to the other side of them. God is working in and through our lives. You can expect that the pattern of God's work will continue since He has a purpose and method of working that is settled. It is not necessary for Him to make things up as He goes.

In the last story, an entire city reacts to the miraculous deliverance of the demoniac by rejecting Jesus and His ministry. In the face of this Jesus appeared to be unperturbed. He simply left without comment. Rejection for Jesus was routine. Neither Jesus, nor His disciples, could afford to concern themselves with outcomes. Jesus obeyed the Father and did the work that He was sent to do. The disciples followed and watched and learned. Hardships, storms, and rejection were their everyday life. But their life

was lived with the Lord. Their lives were good. They were the best they would ever know. Jesus teaches us to recognize the nature of our lives and to treasure our blessings.