

Matthew Lesson 14

Matthew Chapter 14

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Memory verses for this week: *Psa 16:11 Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

Introduction: In last week's lesson, we studied the last of the seven parables concerning the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Lord used these parables to allow those who knew the Lord to come to a rich understanding, whereas those who were not saved could not comprehend. This week, we find three significant events in our Lord's ministry are found: (1) the death of John the Baptist, (2) the feeding of the five thousand, (3) and Jesus walking on the water.

I. Herod's Troubled Conscience and the Record of John's Death

Mat 14:1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,

Mat 14:2 And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.

Matthew records the account of the untimely death of John the Baptist. Record is made of Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, also called Herod the Tetrarch because he ruled over one fourth of his father's former kingdom. His rule was over the region of Galilee and Perea. He likely had not heard much of Jesus. This could be due to the fact that he was absent much of the time in military campaigns against Arabia. Upon returning and hearing more of Jesus' miracles, he thought that Jesus was John the Baptist come back to life.

Mat 14:3 For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.

Mat 14:4 For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.

The picture we have here is a man who trifles with his conscience rather than turning from his sin. Herodias, who King Herod had taken for his own although she was his sister in law, has a great hatred towards John the Baptist. John had called their hand on what was going on, and had told the king that it was not lawful for him to have his brother's wife. Herod had silenced John's voice by putting him in prison, and later having him put to death. But even though John was dead, he could not still the sound of his conscience. When a person does wrong, there is a knowledge of that. In a saved person, the Holy Spirit convicts

us to turn back to the Lord. The lost have that nagging voice of the conscience in the background. Again and again the memory of what he has done wrong comes back to torment him. When he hears of the fame of Jesus, he now fears that John the Baptist has risen from the dead. Amazing sometimes what the wicked think and fear.

Prov 28:1 The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.

Have you ever been around someone who is constantly in the wrong. They can't sit still... they are always looking around expecting someone to come up on them and condemn them. We used to be like that before Christ came into our lives, but now we don't have to fear condemnation.

Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Mat 14:5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

Mat 14:6 But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.

Mat 14:7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.

Mat 14:8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.

Mat 14:9 And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.

Mat 14:10 And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.

Matthew records how John the Baptist had been executed. John had preached against Herod's adultery with his sister in law Herodias. Here we catch a glimpse of the depravity of the rich and famous even then. Herodias was actually the niece of both Philip and Herod Antipas. She first married Philip but began an adulterous affair with Herod and eventually married him.

It was for the adultery that John publicly condemned Herod, rightly noting such a relationship was in violation of the Law of God. Herod imprisoned John. Herod's intentions were to kill him. But because he perceived the public thought John to be a prophet, he hesitated. When Herod's birthday was observed, the daughter of Herodias danced before them.

The dancing of Herodias' daughter certainly implies sensuality. It was not customary for the ladies of high rank to dance in public. However, this powerful, ruling family was not encumbered by propriety. Roman birthday dances were by custom lewd and could be compared to modern dancing.

Herod was entertained by this impure young woman and promised to give her whatever she wished. Her mother had already instructed her as to what she should ask. This wicked mother with forethought of the outcome induced her own daughter to degrade herself in order to accomplish her revengeful purpose. The vindictiveness of Herodias in demanding John's death and its gruesome presentation only reveals the depravity of the human heart.

She literally demanded his head on a platter. Notwithstanding Herod's reservations, and because he gave an oath sent word to behead John in prison and bring John's head to the celebration.

The real instigator of the crime in having John the Baptist beheaded was Herodias. She was the one behind the scenes that told her daughter what to ask the King for when he made his offer unto her. The woman was mad because John had pointed out that if her husband was still alive, Herod could not take her for his own wife. John the Baptist had great courage, and even though it was the king to whom he spoke, he told him that it was sin. Herodias hated him for his rebuke. She knew that if the king listened to John, that she might lose her position of queen of the country. Never be surprised what wicked men and women may do to obtain authority and power. Riches and power have corrupted many good men and women through the years.

Herodias had forsaken her husband so that she could secure a position of royalty. Herod had originally wanted to kill John, but feared the reaction of the people since they knew he was a prophet. Once Herodias' daughter danced, Herod promised to give her whatever she wanted. And the wicked mother told her to ask for John's head in a charger. Herod realized that he basically had to go through with it or break his own oath. So he does what she asks. I might add that the third thing that causes many to fall is a lack of control. When lusts overcome people, they will do bad things. Whether it be lusts for sexual favors or for money or any other thing, it can bring us down. Remember the three things that the Lord warns us against in I John.

1 John 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

1 John 2:17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he

that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Mat 14:11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.

Mat 14:12 And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

Mat 14:13 When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

Mat 14:14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

After John is beheaded, his disciples come and take the body and bury it. When Jesus hears of John's death, he withdraws to a desert place. Many of the followers of Jesus heard of Him going out into the desert and they follow after them. And even while in agony of John's death, it says that Jesus was moved with compassion upon the multitude and healed their sick. What an example Jesus gave to us that we might have the heart of a servant. Here was the creator of the universe, caring and healing those that were sick in a time when he must have been in grief over John's death.

The events of the rest of the chapter follow immediately upon Jesus receiving news of John's violent death. It was John's disciples who attended to the body of their master and informed Jesus. The humanity of our Lord is here in view (v-13). John the Baptist was a cousin and 'colleague' of Jesus. Upon hearing the news of his death, Jesus found a solitary place to pray.

Mar 6:46 And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

In times of distress, Jesus found a place to get alone with His Father. That lesson remains for all who believe.

In verse 14, 1 spiritual principle is presented, found in numerous places throughout the Bible.

"And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick."

Notice that Jesus "went forth." Then He "saw" people in their need. He then was "moved with compassion toward them." He thereafter acted to meet their need. A major key in developing compassion for the lost is *going to them* and seeing their need. It usually is not until we go forth and actually see people in their spiritual need that we will develop compassion for them. That is why Jesus on multiple occasions taught us to go with the gospel.

It is not until we go and see people in their lost condition that we will develop compassion for them to win them to Christ. A key ingredient for compassion is going in the first place. Compassion and concern will inevitably follow. This compassion is an act of God (Grace).

II. The Five Thousand Fed

Mat 14:15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

Mat 14:16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.

Mat 14:17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

Mat 14:18 He said, Bring them hither to me.

The lesson that we can all learn here is that Jesus can take a little and do a lot with it. How many pastors would agree with this? I know as a worker in the church, I am so happy with what God has done with the efforts we put into the weekly S/S lessons. We don't realize the impact that these lessons may have not only here in our church but also to those who receive them via our weekly email lessons. Jesus can take a little and do much with it. That should encourage us that no matter how little we may have, that we should put it in the Master's hands. There were 5 loaves and two fishes, giving us the total of 7. Then number 7 is the number of God which speaks of completion. The number 6 is the number of man, and seems to always come up lacking. We know from our study in Revelation that the number of the beast will be based upon 666. Jesus takes these 5 loaves and 2 fishes and feeds this great multitude. Not only does he feed them, but it says that they were filled in verse 20. Jesus satisfies when he makes provision for us.

Mat 14:19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

Mat 14:20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

Mat 14:21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

That same evening (after hearing of John's death), multitudes followed Jesus into the desert. When the disciples urged that He send back into the villages to buy food, Jesus astonished them by directing the *disciples* to feed the crowd. The disciples protested that they only had five loaves and two fishes. (The loaves

mentioned were a small day ration.) They, like we, saw the problem by sight. They, however, could not see how the problem could be solved.

The solution was to allow the Lord to work. Only when they brought their meager resources to Jesus and gave them to Him did His mighty power show forth. Notice that Jesus prayed over the food about to be eaten. Then the miracle began. Not only did the bread and fish extend to feed the five-thousand men (not counting the women and children), there were twelve full baskets left over.

When they in faith committed what little they had to meet the need, the Lord used it to meet that need. True is the saying, "Little is much when God is in it." Moreover, God is able to meet our every need, though through human eyes there seems no solution.

We see that not only did he feed them all, but there were 12 baskets full left over. How can you wind up with more than you began? Never doubt how far God can go when we offer what we have to the Lord. It says that little bit of food fed 5,000 men and the women and children also. This miracle is recorded in all four accounts of the Gospel.

God can take a little and make it go a long ways. Remember the story of the widow lady who had hit the bottom of the meal bucket and was about to make that last cake to feed her and her son so they could die. The prophet Elijah come on the scene and asked her to make him a small cake by faith.

1 Ki 17:8 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

1 Ki 17:9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

1 Ki 17:10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

1 Ki 17:11 And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

1 Ki 17:12 And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

1 Ki 17:13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

1 Ki 17:14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal

shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.

1 Ki 17:15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

1 Ki 17:16 And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.

III. Jesus Walks on the Water

Mat 14:22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

Mat 14:23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

Jesus commanded the disciples to precede him across the lake while he remained to dismiss the multitudes which He had fed with the five loaves. Jesus sends them on, and then goes up on a mountain by himself to pray. Jesus many times went out alone to pray, setting an example that we all need at times to get alone with God and pour out our hearts to Him.

Mat 14:24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

Afterwards, Jesus immediately directed his disciples to get into a boat and go before him unto the other side. As night came on, Jesus went up into a mountain to pray. He, perhaps, was still grieving over the death of John. In any event our Lord separated Himself to call on His Father.

During this time, the disciples found themselves in a ship during a violent storm on the Sea of Galilee. The word so translated (*plouion plouion*) refers to a boat in the twenty five to thirty foot range. As weather systems roll down from the high hills from the west and the Mediterranean (or the Golan Heights to the east), violent storms can be stirred on Galilee with no warning.

This body of water is only six miles wide and thirteen miles long, nevertheless, for a craft the size mentioned above, seas could very easily get rough enough to sink such a craft. The disciples were struggling with the ship against hostile seas. Moreover, it was the middle of the night making things even worse.

Mat 14:25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

Mat 14:26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were

troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

Just because the disciples did what Jesus commanded them did not exempt them from facing the storm this night. In this life, there will be many storms, and we as Christians are not exempt from them. Matter of fact, if we live Godly, we are promised that we will receive persecution. But we are also sure of something great... no matter what we face Jesus will be with us every step of the way and will NEVER leave us nor forsake us. Just as Jesus comes to the disciples amidst the storms, he will be there for us no matter what kind of storm comes our way. It says that it was the fourth watch of the night, and as Jesus approached the ship, the disciples look out and cry out for fear. They perceived a spirit was walking on top of the water.

This was a very unnatural manner in which Jesus came to them. In their defense, not too many humans had been able to walk on water before this night. I think it is worthy to note that they had to ride out the storm for a while before Jesus appeared. Sometimes the storms may test our faith, but he sure that God is in total control. And Jesus is always ready to save those who are in need, particularly when it comes to a soul that needs salvation.

After coming down from the mountain, Jesus came out to the disciples who were in the ship. When the disciples saw the Lord moving over the dark water and not knowing it was Him, they became even more terrified. They thought they were seeing some sort of out of this world ghost.

The word translated as spirit here (*fantasma phantasma*) could be rendered as 'phantom' or 'apparition.' Jesus came to them in the grey hours sometime after 3 a.m. The Jews had adopted the Roman system of watches which began at 6 p.m. Each watch was of three hours each.

Mat 14:27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

Mat 14:28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

Mat 14:29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

Mat 14:30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

Mat 14:31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

Mat 14:32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

A great and rewarding lesson is at hand. When He is near, we need not fear. Recall how that Jesus later said, *"Lo, I am with you always."* If we will realize He is always with us, we need never fear.

Matthew here records one of the most well known of accounts in the Bible. Peter, in brashness and yet with a note of doubt, spoke to Jesus that *if* it really were Him to bid him come. Jesus' answer was simple. *Come.* As long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, he was alright. It was only when he looked around and saw the threatening circumstances, he began to sink.

In desperate faith, he therefore cried out, *"Lord, save me."* Notice that immediately, Jesus caught him. What a wonderful picture of our salvation. When realizing there is no other deliverance, if we in simple, urgent faith turn to Him and trust Him; He immediately will save.

Notice Jesus' admonition to Peter. *"Wherefore didst thou doubt?"* When we take our eyes off Jesus, the alternative is doubt. Thereafter, when they boarded the ship, the wind ceased. Then everyone in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, *"of a truth thou art the Son of God."*

It is apparent that God allowed this storm in the lives of the disciples to impress upon them a profound lesson. It took such a storm to impress upon them that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. God allows storms in the lives of His people to teach and to train. It took such a storm to transform what had been an academic truth into reality in the minds of the disciples. They had given lip service that Jesus was the Son of God. Now they knew it to be true from experience. Indeed, all things work together for good for them that love God, who are the called according to His purpose.

Peter shows us what can be done when we step out by faith and approach the Lord. And like we said earlier, no matter how high the winds or the storm, Jesus is in the midst of that storm and can save us. Christ did not rebuke Peter for asking to come out of the boat... he rebukes him for his lack of faith when the waves overwhelm him and he takes his eyes off of Christ. There is a real lesson here. No matter what we face, if we want total peace and deliverance, we need to keep our eyes focused on Christ. Greater is He that is in you than he that is in this world. Satan is no match for Jesus Christ. Christ never rebukes us for attempting too much, but he is saddened when we don't have the faith that we should have. A lack of faith can cause us to come to a position of peril. But no matter where we are, Jesus is there ready to save us from our situation. When Peter cried out, Jesus came immediately it says there in verse 31. He stretched forth his hand and Peter took that hand. If you are here this morning and you've never reached out to Jesus Christ, I hope you'll consider what you are missing.

Heb 2:2 For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every

transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;

Heb 2:3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

Heb 2:4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

J. Vernon McGee said this about Peter and his experience.

Peter has certainly been criticized for this. They say that he should not have asked to walk on water. Well, I rather admire the man. William Carey said, "Expect great things of God, and attempt great things for God." Certainly Peter did that! I am afraid that most of us are satisfied with little things from God.

Notice that Jesus did not rebuke Peter for asking— I hear people say that Peter failed to walk on the water, but that is not the way my Bible reads. My Bible says that Peter *walked* on the water to go to Jesus. This is not failure! Peter asked a tremendous thing of God. No wonder God used him in such a wonderful way during the days that followed. No wonder he was chosen to preach the sermon on the Day of Pentecost.

But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me [Matt. 14:30].

Peter took his eyes off the Lord Jesus while he was walking on the water. When he began to sink, he prayed the shortest prayer in the Bible, "Lord, save me"! If Simon Peter had prayed this prayer like some of us preachers pray, "Lord, Thou who are omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent ... ," Peter would have been twenty-nine feet under water before he would have gotten to his request. Peter got right down to business, and you and I need to pray like that. Peter's problem was that he took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the waves rolling. You and I are in a world today where we see the waves rolling, and this is the time when we need to keep our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mat 14:33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

Mat 14:34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.

Mat 14:35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;

Mat 14:36 And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

The next day, after crossing the sea, they came into the land of Gennesaret. Gennesaret was a town on the northwest side of the sea of Galilee. Here is a wonderful illustration of the principle of faith. The men of that place undoubtedly were aware of Jesus and His power. They sent word throughout that immediate area for all sick and diseased to be brought to Jesus.

In simple faith, they begged to be allowed to touch even the hem of His robe. That in itself had no healing power. Jesus perceiving their simple but desperate faith healed each who came and touched Him. Implicit is not only physical healing but spiritual redemption as well. However, the undergirding principle for it all was their simple willing faith. Though official Israel had rejected Jesus, these common country people were willing to trust Him altogether. He responded in great power.

When Jesus comes on the scene, the winds cease. This caused the disciples to worship Christ and speak the truth when they proclaim *"Thou art the Son of God."* He is worthy of our praise... and only he. All others before or after Christ who claimed to be God are men dead in their graves. But Jesus is the only one that ever claimed to be God and rose from the dead and lives forever more. The people come out from the land of Gennesaret, and Jesus healed those that were diseased. Some had the faith that if they could but touch the hem of his garment, they could be made whole. And by faith, those that did touch him were TOTALLY healed.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.

