

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 27TH-28TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

JOHN'S HEAD ON A PLATTER (MATTHEW 14:1-12)

At this point in Matthew's narrative, Jesus has been traveling, teaching, preaching, and performing miracles in the region of Galilee.

- Apparently His fame had spread so that "Herod the tetrarch" (governor of the 4th part of a kingdom) concluded that He was "John the Baptist...raised from the dead" (vs. 2).
- Apparently, Herod & John had a history- so Matthew explains the backstory.

John had been put in prison by Herod (vs. 3,11:2) because he'd publicly denounced Herod's adulterous relationship with his brother Phillip's wife, Herodias.

- At Herod's birthday party (which was a Gentile custom), his stepdaughter/niece pleases him with a questionable & most likely seductive dance.
- In a drunken stupor, he foolishly promises her more than he has the authority to give.

Through her mother's influence, all she asks for is John the Baptist's "head on a platter" (vs. 8).

- Normally a trial would've been required, but oaths were legally binding
- To avoid being humiliated in front of his guests, Herod reluctantly concedes (vs. 9), John is beheaded, and his severed head is ceremoniously presented on a platter to Herodias & her daughter.

John's disciples claim his body and report the news to Jesus, who retreats to a lonely place

- The application here is noteworthy for anyone who lives out and speaks the truth of God's Word- it will be costly.
- If we choose to stand for what God says is truth and to stand against what God says is sin, there will be a price to pay.

The persecution John & Jesus endured came from BOTH the religious and the unbelieving.

- The rage and anger that many people feel towards those who stand and speak for Christ, His Kingdom, and His truth is nothing new.
- If our response is fleshly rage, unkindness, and disagreeableness, it may be proof that the reasons the persecution bothers us is not because of Christ, but simply because it's an assault to our pride.

5,000 (MATTHEW 14:13-21)

When Jesus heard about the death of His cousin, "He withdrew ... (vs. 13).

- We catch a glimpse of Jesus' humanity- He wanted to be alone to grieve.
- But the news that Jesus was in the region traveled rapidly, and when He reached the shore He's greeted by a crowd of possibly 10,000 or more (vs. 21).

Even though Jesus desperately needed rest, the needs of this great crowd, "moved Him with compassion", and He began to minister to the sick (vs. 14).

- Even though Jesus knew many in the crowd would ultimately reject Him after receiving healing, He was still compassionate even in the face of such shallowness.
- We see the nature of true, Godly compassion.

Grace expressed through true compassion must be given freely- if someone can "earn it", it ceases to be grace.

- Of course we don't enable sinful or destructive behavior, but we show compassion and generosity to those in need regardless of whether some will take advantage of us.
- As evening comes, the disciples become worried about providing for this mob.

So they order Jesus to send the crowds away so they can find food (vs. 15).

- The disciples' lack of faith and spiritual insight in understanding who provides for the needs humanity is revealed in their comment.
- Jesus response is a bit comical- He tells them, "you give them something to eat" (vs. 16).
- And if they'd only realized how divine provision operates, they could've!

But it's impossible to give away what we don't already possess- we can't sincerely point people to the provision God gives when we're not really trusting God ourselves.

- So Jesus performs an incredible miracle to preach a sermon, train His disciples, and provide for a real, tangible need all at once.
- They bring to Jesus what little they do have in trusting obedience, and He does a miracle.

THREE O.T. PARALLELS AND PICTURES OF JESUS-

1. The New and greater Moses (Ex. 16)
2. The Greater Prophet (Elijah & the widow's jar, 1 Kgs. 17:81-16)
3. The Messianic Host (Isa. 25:6)

All of these pictures point to Jesus' ability to meet our souls' every need perfectly, thoroughly, and in His own unique manner and timing ("satisfied", vs. 20).

Not only were the disciples involved as channels of blessing and provision to the needs of the people, Jesus also met their needs in the process!

- It's no coincidence that there were 12 leftover baskets for those working with Jesus
- When we faithfully serve with the resources of God and the compassion of Christ, we're blessed in the process and God always takes care of us.

WALKING ON WATER (MATTHEW 14:22-33)

John tells us the reason why Jesus was in such a hurry to dismiss the crowds and send away the disciples in the boat- the crowd wanted to make Him king by force (Jn. 6:15)!

- Jesus knew that their motives weren't spiritual as much as they were physical (Jn. 6:26), so He sends the crowd away and renews His attempt at solitude (vs. 23).

From the hills that surround the Sea of Galilee, you can always see a boat on the lake.

- As Jesus is praying, He most likely sees the disciples, beaten by the waves and wind.
- Rom. 8:34 tells us that Jesus is in heaven making "intercession for us"- He sees us and knows our needs just as He did of the disciples.

The storm they were in wasn't because of their disobedience (like Jonah), it came because of their obedience to Jesus' command.

- They were in God's will, yet their circumstances were uncertain and terrifying.
- In the darkest part of the night (between 3am-6am), the disciples see a lone figure walking on the sea towards them.
- In their terror, they conclude it's a ghost!

Above the roar of the wind, a familiar voice shouts a profound statement- "It is I", (or quite literally, "I AM"), "take heart...do not be afraid" (vs. 27).

- This isn't a rebuke, it's an effort to comfort the disciples who are still growing in their faith.
- Not only that, Jesus is walking on top of the very thing the disciples are most afraid of (the waves) coming to them to draw close.
- Sometimes we experience Jesus most closely through difficulties.

Peter, in a magnificent display of faith & courage, says to Jesus to "...if it is you, command me to come to you..." (vs. 28).

- He seems to understand that the only way he can walk on water too is if Jesus commands it to be so- his own effort or power can't make it happen.
- Jesus responds with, "come"- to which Peter miraculously walks on the water

At some point, Peter's faith begins to waver and He "sees the wind" (vs. 30a), takes His eyes off Jesus, and begins to sink.

- This is when the real miracle happens- He cries out, "Lord, save me!" with no, "if" (vs. 30b).
- Sinking is often more important than walking when it comes to building our faith.
- Immediately Jesus is there to grab Peter's hand and direct him safely to the boat.

"Why did you doubt?" (vs. 31), Jesus asks him as miraculously, the storm disappears (vs. 32).

- For the first time, the disciples "worship Him" as the son of God (vs. 33).
- Jesus was in the storm watching over them the whole time, but they didn't recognize Him- probably because they weren't looking for Him.
- What matters is not the measure of our faith, but the object of our faith.

THE FRINGE OF HIS GARMENT (MATTHEW 14:34-36)

As soon as they land on the other side of the lake, they are surrounded by crowds.

- The word has spread that just by touching the fringe of Jesus' prayer shawl, someone can be healed (Matt. 9:20).
- The crowd's begging may have been intensified because most religious leaders of the day wouldn't allow themselves to be touched.

But everyone who touched the fringe of Jesus' garment were "made well" (vs. 36).

- What we don't see described explicitly but what's safe to assume is the tremendous faith and absolute desperation of the crowds.
- They're willing to do anything to get close to Jesus and experience His touch and power.
- Do we have that kind of faith and desperation in our lives?

It seems like we look everywhere else in our lives for healing, restoration, satisfaction, and provision but Jesus.

- So often in our pride of spirit, we aren't hungry for Him and we don't see ourselves as desperate for His touch and needy for His healing.
- So we won't do what seems silly or trivial to us to find healing in Jesus- and we stay in our hurt, dissatisfaction, loneliness, and need.

Meaningful relationships are built on love & trust, not rules or traditions- God is pleased with us and glorified in us when we have trusting faith in Him (Heb. 11:6). **Do I Trust Him?**