

## Matthew 14:1-32

### Section 1: 14:1-12 – John the Baptist

Word of Jesus is beginning to spread throughout all of Israel, even among the Romans. News of Jesus has even reached the ears of Herod. But Herod immediately thinks that John the Baptist has risen from the dead.

How did John the Baptist end up being held captive and killed by Herod? John confronted Herod about his immoral relationship with his brother's wife. John wasn't shy about proclaiming truth and calling for people to repent. We learn from Mark 6:14-29 a little more detail about this relationship. To sum up: it was a love/hate relationship. While Herod wanted to kill John for calling out his sin, on the other hand he was intrigued by John and his message.

All was well in Herod's plan to keep John chained and talk with him occasionally but his new wife, Herodias, wasn't happy with the plan. She hated John because of the truth he spoke into their lives and she wanted him to be killed. When Herod made an oath to her daughter, her moment for vengeance had arrived.

#### Character Outlines

- Herod – Local Roman Ruler. Son of Herod the Great. Married his brother's wife, Herodias.
- Herodias – Wife of Herod. She was also the daughter of Aristobulus (another half-brother of Herod).
- Herodias' Daughter (Salome) – She danced before Herod. Served her mother's wishes.
- John the Baptist – A righteous man that spoke the truth. He was beheaded for confronting sin.
- Prison Guards – They beheaded John the Baptist and delivered it to Herodias' daughter.

#### Back story for Herod and Herodias:

While Herod was on a trip to Rome, he stole Herodias away from his half-brother Philip. He divorced his wife, daughter of King Aretas, to marry Herodias. King Aretas was a powerful king from Arabia that was so angered by Herod's actions he attacked and destroyed most of Herod's army and would have killed Herod but Rome intervened and saved him. Herodias was one of the most wicked women mentioned in Scripture. Herodias moved from brother to brother trying to build her own kingdom and John had become a problem because he was calling her actions sinful. Not only was John calling her acts sinful, but her new husband Herod feared putting him to death and actually enjoyed talking with him from time to time.

#### John the Baptist

John the Baptist is known for boldly proclaiming the coming Messiah. But he was also faithful in confronting sin even when it meant his life. John did not shy away from telling the ruler of the area, Herod, that he was in sin. Herod was a wicked man that was greatly feared. Yet John had no fear of him. John would be placed in the dungeon at Herod's palace. Archeologists have discovered a dungeon at one of Herod's palaces and it was a deep hole in the ground that would have been foul and dreadful. John and Herod were almost mirror opposites. John feared no one except God and Herod feared everyone except God. John the Baptist would become the first recorded martyr to die for Jesus.

After John had been buried his disciples reported all to Jesus. This leads Jesus to withdraw and that gives us our next miracle of Jesus.

#### Discussion Questions

- ❖ John was uncompromising in his desire to faithfully live out God's Word. Do you have areas of your life that it's easier to compromise? Why? How do we battle compromise?
- ❖ Herod grew angry when confronted with his sin, how do you respond when people call out your sin? How should we respond?

- ❖ Herod and Herodias acted on impulse and personal desire. Why is giving into your personal desires without considering God dangerous?
- ❖ John the Baptist was faithful even unto death. How are you building your faith now to possibly face persecution in the future?

## Section 2: 14:13-21 - Feeding of the Five Thousand

There is just a hand full of stories that are shared in all four gospels and the feeding of the 5,000 is one of those stories. This is an amazing story of how Jesus can take very little and make it produce much.

This story begins with Jesus hearing the news about John the Baptist, his cousin. After hearing the news of his death Jesus withdraws with His disciples to another place. The people hear that Jesus is moving across the sea and they rush to meet Him. Why did they rush to meet Him? Jesus was healing many and the people were drawn to this particular part of Jesus' ministry. At this point we see 5,000 men besides women and children following Jesus. Some historians and theologians estimate that the crowd could have been as many as 25,000. Either way, this crowd is way too big for five loaves of bread and two fish. But Jesus isn't just any man, He is the Son of God.

At this point we must ask ourselves: why would Jesus, who is grieving, heal and feed so many people? Jesus had compassion on the people. Throughout the gospels we see this phrase, "He had compassion on them." As believers, we must have compassion upon people as Jesus did. Did these people deserve Jesus' compassion? None of us do, yet Jesus shows us compassion. So, what is the source of His compassion? Love. Jesus genuinely loves people. In order for us to be "a person of compassion" we must love others well. Jesus showed His love by postponing His rest and mourning of John.

As Jesus is preparing to feed the multitude, He asked the disciples to give them something to eat. They are confused by this and we learn from the other gospel accounts that they felt this task was impossible. We see this time and time again from the disciples, they underestimate or totally miss the power and abilities of Jesus. Believers today often do this as well. We come face to face with a problem in life and we can find ourselves underestimating God's power and ability to see us through. Sometimes God asks you to do something that doesn't make sense at the time but if you are faithful you will see God do mighty things. We see this here with the disciples. They are preparing the people to sit in groups and they are gathering up baskets all the while not knowing what Jesus is going to do. The disciples learned that Jesus will supply their needs even when it seems impossible.

Jesus has the disciples divide the food into 12 baskets, one for each disciple. This is a unique miracle. As the disciples pass out food the baskets never deplete. Not only did they never run out of food, everyone ate until they were full and then the disciples were able to collect 12 baskets full of left overs. Jesus could have fed the people without the disciples but what a joy for the disciples to be used by Jesus to accomplish His will. God never needs us to accomplish His work but, in His grace, He has decided to put us in the middle of His work. This reminds me of Ephesians 2:10 (CSB):

*<sup>10</sup>For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.*

### Discussion Questions

- ❖ How often do you seek to be alone and rest in the presence of God?
- ❖ Jesus often showed compassion. How easy or difficult is it for you to show compassion to others?
- ❖ When was the last time you remember knowing the Lord was calling you to do something? What was it?
- ❖ God's plans don't always make sense to us...so, how important is faith in following God?
- ❖ How does it encourage your spirit to know that God wants to use you to accomplish His work?

### Section 3: 14:22-32 – Jesus Walk on Water

Matthew uses the word “immediately” often in this story. I believe this is pointing us to the truth that Jesus was extremely intentional in everything He did. Jesus didn’t do random. He walked with purpose and fortitude.

Jesus immediately sends the disciples across the sea while He goes up on the mountain to pray. While Jesus was alone praying the disciples were struggling with the weather. Jesus finishes praying and walks across the sea. As He approaches the boat the disciples become scared. They believe Jesus is a ghost. And this is where the story becomes amazing. Peter wants to be called out upon the water and Jesus tells Him to come. Peter is actually walking on the water with Jesus, but then he begins to sink. Why does Peter begin to sink? He takes his eyes off of Jesus.

This is common among believers. We get going through life and take our eyes off of Jesus. Distractions are everywhere: money, sickness, stress, pandemics, politics, personal desire, social media, family crisis and on and on. We will never be able to remove all the distractions in this world. Our enemy desires to use distractions and trails as a way to cause us to doubt the faithfulness of God. Doubt is a wicked enemy. Doubt can cause us to abandon God’s Word and His plan for our lives.

So, what do we do? We can turn to James 1:2-4:

*<sup>2</sup>Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, <sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup>And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing. (CSB)*

God can use the distractions and trails in our lives to our benefit. The key to facing our distractions and trails is to see them as an opportunity to grow closer to our Father. We can respond to life differently than those in the world because we have the hope of Christ.

What was the outcome of this experience? The disciples worshiped and proclaimed that Jesus is truly the Son of God. Anytime we face distractions and trails we want to come out the other side worshipping.

#### Discussion Questions

- ❖ Jesus was purposeful in everything He did. Do you have a purpose behind the things you do or are you living a life of random acts?
- ❖ Jesus made sure to have alone time with His Father. Do you work hard to have time alone with your heavenly Father?
- ❖ How easy is it to get distracted by the day to day things of life?
- ❖ Why is it important to keep our eyes focused on Jesus? How do we do that practically?
- ❖ How do you respond to the trails of life? How should believers respond?

### Section 4: 14:33-36 – Jesus is Compassionate

News of Jesus’ willingness to heal is spreading quickly. Jesus sees people and has compassion on them. Compassion should be a characteristic of His followers as well. We must be willing to show compassion every chance we get. It’s easy to be harsh and rude. While it’s difficult to be compassionate at times, we must strive to be so.

This moment also reminds us that Jesus was bringing the gospel to all people. Jesus didn’t just pick a certain town or people group. He wanted the good news of salvation to be spread everywhere.