

Matthew 14

Read Matthew 14:1-12: Herod imprisoned and killed John the Baptist. John fulfilled his role; and was now able to return to heaven. John had his own disciples, and was involved in many baptisms and miracles. Some of John's disciples became Jesus' disciples. It was time for Jesus to take the stage; and become the center of attention. John's martyrdom seemed to be a huge loss for the Kingdom. Keep in mind that we come and go; but the Kingdom only marches forward. John could not save souls himself. He could just introduce them to God. The contrast between John the Baptist's and Jesus' mannerisms proved that the people were not sincerely seeking God. They were critical that their expectations were not met.

And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. -He who has ears to hear, let him hear! -But to what shall I liken this generation?
It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: 'We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And you did not lament.' -For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' -The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children." (Matthew 11:14-19)

The work of the Old Testament prophets were completed; and finished with John. All scripture points to Christ.

"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. -And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. -For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. (Matthew 11:11-13)

Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" -And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. (Luke 24:26-27)

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. (Matthew 5:17)

God uses unholy vessels when necessary. He used Cesar to bring Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. It was a similar scenario to the story of Esther. Another king was having a party; and he committed to something that brought his absolute authority into doubt. The result was to replace the Queen with a Jewess; who would save her people from a worldwide genocide plot. God knows how to switch things up.

We need to see wins and losses differently. In baseball, a hitter will be put out in the process of advancing a runner, on purpose. When I lose; the Kingdom still wins. My struggling business efforts placed me in deep need for assistance from Mexican immigrants. That connection has provided ministry opportunities. Survival fears have turned many to Christ.

It is interesting that the evil ruler, Herod was willing to believe that John rose from the dead; but would not commit his life to God.

Read Matthew14:13-21: Jesus is presented with a situation. The disciples saw the importance of sending the people to where they could have their physical needs met. Jesus corrected his disciples; and stated that he would take care of their problems. Our efforts to minister to others really comes down to turning people to Jesus. Jesus can resolve issues and heal people. In fact, the circumstances surrounding people's dilemmas many times stem from their own bad decision making. God allows people to struggle until they obey his direction. It can be a fine line in between reinforcing bad decisions and ministry assistance.

We all have self-defeating behavior to one degree or another. Jesus is the only one who makes people whole. This pertains to salvation and physical needs.

Read Matthew 14:22-33: Jesus sent the crowds away. There are times for public ministry, a time for family gatherings, and times of private discipling. It is a mistake to just be a slave to the beckoning masses and endless requests for help. Many pastors get burned out and create family problems by not having any boundaries. Church board meetings and other church activities go on every night of the week. The ministry needs never stop; but we have other priorities to also include. We cannot feel guilty not chasing every *foul ball*. We are not God. We need to trust that God has a way to help others when we are unable. Their needs will be met without us. There are mentally-unstable people who call at 3:00 AM to pray with them. There are people looking for money every day. Obviously we need to get sleep; and pay our own bills. It is like the psychiatrist's office and a mile-long line.

So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said,
"What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit,
and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?" And
Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire
of God. When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between
one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws." So
Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do is not good. Both
you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For
this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by
yourself. Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be
with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the
difficulties to God. And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and
show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must
do. Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear
God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to

be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. (Exodus 18:14-21)

Jesus is trying to improve our lives. His presence is not always felt. It is like when he sent the disciples ahead in the boat. They feared their stormy-circumstances; and lost their composure. We can pray to God at any time. Faith is following the invisible. Our fellowship with him will produce across-the-board healing. We do not see God in the storm. Deeper peace comes from higher trust. We need to have peace in a world that could drown us. The waves are limited by God.

But the wicked are like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt. "There is no peace," Says my God, "for the wicked. (Isaiah 57:20-21)

O LORD God of hosts, Who is mighty like You, O LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You. You rule the raging of the sea; When its waves rise, You still them. (Psalm 89:8-9)

"If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, In which you trusted, they wearied you, Then how will you do in the floodplain^[a]of the Jordan? (Jeremiah 12:5)

We are to promote personal relationships with God. We are not to take the place of people asking God about their problems directly. It is not a coincidence that we feel compelled to pray about certain people at certain times. They may be about to go through a storm.

-knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, (2 Peter 1:20)

Read Matthew 14:34-36: We cannot bring the peace of God if we do not have the peace of God. Do our circumstances reveal that we only trust God when things are smooth? How can we minister to cancer patients if

we cannot even deal with our own financial stress? God is preparing us to come into fields white for the harvest. We are wasting the opportunity if we are not even tuned into our fathers business.