

SERMON OUTLINE

SESSION 5: Jesus Learns of John's Death

TEXT: MATTHEW 14:1-21

INTRODUCTION

We left off last week wondering what Jesus meant when he said that the least in the Kingdom is greater than John the Baptist. We pick up from there in Matthew 14, where we learn why John was imprisoned and also how he was executed. We also see how Jesus responds to the news of John's death. Matthew 14 is also where we find the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand. As we look at this story we will consider three points:

1. The place where Jesus ministers from
2. The lesson he taught his disciples
3. The miracles that Jesus and John the Baptist invite us into

1. THE PLACE WHERE JESUS MINISTERS FROM. (MATTHEW 14:1-14)

John is not imprisoned or killed because he is wicked. In fact, he is killed because he speaks what is right (verse 4).

The circumstances surrounding the request for John's execution are scandalous (verses 6-8).

These two facts make the execution of John the Baptist seem even more unjust.

After John's disciples bury his body, they report the news to Jesus. Jesus' first response is to withdraw to a place of solitude (verse 14).

Jesus is in a state of mourning, vulnerability, and brokenness.

- If you remember Jesus' comment about being offended by him, Jesus may even be wrestling with knowing that he had the power to spring John from prison.
- Jesus is also likely frustrated with the circumstances surrounding John's execution.
- Remember too that John's mother, Elizabeth, and Jesus' mother, Mary, were cousins. Jesus is mourning not just a great man but also a relative.

The best place for us to begin to minister is from a place of brokenness.

- Even at our best, we must understand that we are still flawed, broken, prideful, and greedy.

Consider this portion from the reading in Day Thirty-Six:

Too often our understanding of Jesus is distorted. We think of him as a divine robot on a sacred mission; he was not. If Jesus felt human emotions, so should we. Ignoring our own feelings of being low and unsettled does not help us walk the path of obedience. We must learn to acknowledge our fears, doubts, and disappointments, and learn what it means to be obedient even when we don't feel like it. Do you have any feelings that you are trying to hide or mask? Will you take the time to acknowledge them to God today and pray for obedient faith?

We will never have it all together. If we wait for that moment before we begin to minister to others and work for their restoration, we will wait forever.

2. THE LESSON THAT JESUS TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES. (MATTHEW 14:15-18)

The disciples are genuinely concerned for the crowds (verse 15). They want to see the people receive the food and sustenance they need.

Jesus puts the responsibility back onto the disciples (verse 16). “You give them something to eat.” Jesus is inviting the disciples to join in caring for those in need.

The disciples think that what they have is insufficient (verse 17). And it should have been insufficient!

- We live in different times and circumstances where we have more than enough to care for those in need.
- Jesus performed a miracle then in multiplying the food. The miracle he needs to perform today is to change our hearts. In many ways today, he has already provided the food.
- When we look at our individual resources instead of our collective resources, sometimes the needs around us seem insurmountable. But we cannot underestimate what we can do together as the people of God.

But Jesus wants his disciples to give him what they have (verse 18).

- What would happen if we began to bring what we have to Jesus?
- What if we chose to use what we have for the things that Jesus would use them for, regardless of how big or small those things are?

Consider this portion from the reading in Day Thirty-Five:

If Jesus is our ultimate friend, and he calls us into loving friendship and community, and if we will be identified by our love for others, how will we carry this 40-day journey of solidarity with the poor into the rest of our lives? How will we reorient our journey, our friendships, our expectations? Will we befriend those whom Jesus would befriend? Care for those whom Jesus would care for? If so, we will experience the profound ways Jesus' love changes the world.

May we come to understand that God provides more than we need so that we can take part in providing for the needs of others.

3. THE MIRACLES THAT JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST INVITE US INTO. (MATTHEW 14:19-21)

Jesus gives thanks for the bread and fish (verse 19). His miracle and act of generosity is rooted in gratitude.

In the Greek the Scripture says that the people were “satisfied” (verse 20).

- How many of us are looking for satisfaction and can't find it?
- What if satisfaction is a miracle in and of itself?
- What if the place where we will find satisfaction is found in the place where we live grateful and generous lives?

There was also plenty of leftover food (verse 20).

- In God's “Kingdom economy,” we find our lives when we give them away.
- Many of us are afraid that if we give our resources away, there will be none left for us. But our God is a God of abundance.
- Perhaps you have learned on this 40-day journey of fasting that you do not need as much as you thought you did.
- Sometimes we don't realize how much of what we have is excess.

Consider this portion from the reading in Day Thirty-Seven:

I always wondered how our works could ever compare to feeding the multitudes or turning water into wine; but as I sat with Brandon I could see the miraculous power of our love and generosity. When we pool together our resources, those resources cross entire oceans and become bread from heaven to those on other continents. If you sponsor a child or help to fund a water well, you are part of a miracle greater than anything imagined during the time Jesus walked the earth.

Is it possible that Jesus is inviting us to participate in the miracle of ending the water crisis and/or hunger crisis in our lifetime? How amazing would that be?

Would anyone deny that the Kingdom of God has come on earth if we see these crises begin to lessen and end?

It is our hope and prayer that God has revealed much to you during this 40-day journey. May he continue to stir and move in your souls, and may his Kingdom come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.