

Jesus in the Midst

Matthew 14:1-21 and Psalm 23

Sermon by Josh Waidley, 12.28.14

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus, and he said to his attendants, “This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in him.” Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, for John had been saying to him: “It is not lawful for you to have her.” Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered John a prophet.

On Herod’s birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for the guests and pleased Herod so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.”

Matthew 14:1-21

The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted and had John beheaded in the prison. His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.

When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

Matthew 14:1-21

As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”

Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.

“Bring them here to me,” he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Matthew 14:1-21

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.
He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of
death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and
your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my
enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of
my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Psalm 23

News Event From 2014:

- Ebola
- Syrian Civil War
- ISIS
- Death of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, John Crawford, Ezell Ford.
- Death of NYPD Officers Ramos and Liu
- 70000+ undocumented children
- Kidnapping of 200+ girls in Nigeria
- Terrorist attack on school in Pakistan
- Russia/Crimea War
- Palestine/Israel Conflict
- CIA Torture Report
- Malaysia Flight 370

“The women in this story are unique. No woman is reported to have denied Jesus in the Gospels. In the Gospels it is women, not men who wait at the crucifixion, who watch at the burial, and who visit on Easter. The closest women get to being bad in the Gospels is here at the beheading of John. Herodias’s love of pleasure is so twisted that she can order —on a plate!— the head of another human being.” -
Frederick Bruner

Jesus' Response:

Jesus is present with them in their reality and attentive to their every need.

Herod:

- is holed up in his palace physically separated from his subjects
- willfully neglecting the needs of the people's he is ruling over (he kills John knowing how much the people loved him)
- throwing lavish, drunken banquet for himself
- a weak ruler who exercises his power through the unnecessary murder of an innocent.

Jesus:

- sees the people and loves them
- places himself physically in their midst
- is aware of them and has compassion on them
- shows his incredible power through physical healing and miraculously altering matter itself to abundantly bless tens of thousands through a meal.

Jesus is their good and powerful shepherd.

- He sees they are hurting, lost, afraid like sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:34)
- He makes them sit down in the green grass, besides the still waters of the sea of Galilee (Matthew 14:19).
- He restores them physically and spiritually (Matthew 14:14)
- He is with them in the valley of deep darkness/death (Matthew 14:1-12)
- He quite literally and miraculously prepares a table before them (Matthew 14:19-20)
- in the presence of and in direct contrast to their enemies (Matthew:14:1-12)
- Their baskets literally overflow with the abundance of Jesus' provision (Matthew 14:20)
- He embodies goodness and mercy in the midst of sorrow and longing (Matthew 14:13-21)

- He makes me lie down in green pastures, leads me besides still waters (Psalm 23:2)
- He restores my soul (Psalm 23:3)
- Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you are with me (Psalm 23:4)
- You prepare a table before me (Psalm 23:5)
- In the presence of my enemies (Psalm 23:5)
- My cup overflows (Psalm 23:5)
- Surely goodness and mercy will follow me, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Psalm 23:6)
- The Lord is my Shepherd (Psalm 23:1)