



MONDAY 3 APRIL 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 14:13-15

Plug In...

Reading the fuller story, vv.13 to 23, we see that Jesus wasn't retreating out of fear of Herod. He seemed to acknowledge He needed God's help and escaped to pray.

Chew It Over...

Stop to take in where Jesus is at. He's under pressure from nearly everyone. What would His emotional state be at hearing the way His cousin died, the fate of one preaching about God? We've watched Jesus relentlessly go on mission, what would His physical state be like? Nearly every moment of His life is interrupted. Yet, how does He respond? (Notice how the disciples respond in v.15.)

How do you respond under pressure, when interrupted? What can we learn about priorities and attitude from our master the Lord Jesus?

Prayer Suggestion

Lord help us to see interactions with people as opportunities to show God's love. Enable us to care more for people than tasks, jobs, projects, even relaxation.



The Lakes

TUESDAY 4 APRIL 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 14:15-21

Plug In...

Matthew wants the audience to clearly get Jesus is located in the wilderness. This is underlined by the terms “solitary place”, and “remote place”. Both the same word as “wilderness”. This is first off evocative of Israel in the wilderness. It calls to mind all the times in the Old Testament when God fed desperate people. Follow up: Exodus 16; Numbers 11; 1 Kings 17:15; 2 Kings 4:42-44. Each time the feeding shows God is compassionate. Here Jesus is compassionate and does the very thing God has done.

Chew It Over...

Jesus does an amazing, large-scale, miracle. This costs Him. In verse 19 Jesus takes the loaves, breaks them, and give thanks. This phrase Jesus repeats on the night before He dies (26:26). Like we’ve learned before, for Jesus to do miracles for a sinful people, there is a transaction that takes place. Matthew pointed us to this transaction earlier after recounting Jesus healing many. He quotes from Isaiah: “He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases” (8:14-17).

Prayer Suggestion

Ask God to give you the bread of tomorrow's kingdom today. That He causes you to rely on Christ's broken body each day for survival as we await the kingdom's fully revealed future.



WEDNESDAY 5 APRIL 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 14:22-24

Plug In...

Jesus is in battle mode. He's been attacked by the Pharisees, His family attempt to divert Him, Herod and the political class are moving against Him, His own disciples start getting testy with Him too (14:15). We see Jesus set out to pray. The wind and the waves on the water are described literally in torment. The worldview of Israel in ancient Palestine was that the water was the portal to the underworld, where ghosts and demons entered and existed in the upper-world. This is clearly where the disciples' minds immediately go to in this storm (*cf.* 8:23-27).

This storm flares up as Jesus pushes into God to pray.

Chew It Over...

Again we are given how to picture things. The parables have shown there are two kingdoms. They clash. Game of Thrones is not entirely fictitious. There is power grasp. Jesus begins His mission and Satan comes and tempts. Jesus proclaims the kingdom and demons start expressing themselves. Serious about God's kingdom, and Satan gets serious about squashing it. We see this in Jesus' life, and He tells us this is the reality of life until the final judgement.

If you feel there is concerted effort coming against you and your mission, what does Jesus show we should do here?

Prayer Suggestion

Help us pray. Keep us praying. Let us submit to God and the Devil will flee.



THURSDAY 6 APRIL 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 14:25-33 & Isaiah 43:1-4

Plug In...

From the Old Testament texts, the feat of walking on water was something only God can do. See: Psalm 77:19 and Habakkuk 3:15. Jesus here literally says, "I am" when the disciples thought they saw a ghost. With I AM being the name of God in the Old Testament (Yahweh = I AM, see Exodus 3:13-14), what is Jesus saying? Given it is the name God revealed prior to leading them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea (powerful described in Psalm 77:16-20 as God walking on water) that question is posed more strongly. As someone has said, this is no ordinary hello on the water.

Chew It Over...

It is worth being aware of how many times in the Old Testament the name I AM is asserted as the basis for not having fear, sometimes explicitly, other times implicitly (see: Genesis 15:1; 26:14; 28:13; 46:3; Deuteronomy 32:39; Joshua 1:6-9; Isaiah 41:4; 43:1-4,10; 45:18-19; 48:12; 51:12).

Faith is seeing Jesus is God. Faith is believing that Jesus will save you. In the Bible, fear is the opposite to faith. What do you fear? Are you overly fearful? Is it debilitating you? Explore why that might be.

Should you have many fears, don't by-pass reading the exhortations from God above to not fear and why. Notice that the answer is not getting braver, this story shows that Jesus lifts Peter up, even with little faith. It is what Jesus did that enabled them to worship. The power over fear is extrinsic not intrinsic.

Prayer Suggestion

Increase our faith, minimise our fear. Help us to take courage for Jesus saves us from our sins.



FRIDAY 7 APRIL 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 14:33-36 & Romans 11

Plug In...

We've seen wholesale rejection of Jesus by Israel. Yet, in the middle of all this chaos, Jesus is bringing a small band of people to faith. They have been chosen and Jesus does things for them whereby they confess He is the Son of God and worship Him. The kingdom is emerging despite the buffeting opposition.

Another aspect to this emerges. While Israel proper seems to be rejecting *their* Messiah, the unexpected Gentiles are head-over-heels to receive Jesus. This marks a transition in Matthew's Gospel as Jesus begins to turn deliberately to the Gentiles.

Chew It Over...

The edge of a cloak for a Jewish man had tassels. It was meant to remind them of the commands of God instead of following their own desires (Numbers 15:39). Here, outsiders from the Jewish faith are grabbing these tassels in full confidence of who Jesus is and

what He can do. Jesus' own kind disregard God, His law, and His promises. The expected alignment in the parables of who is wheat and who are weeds is getting questioned.

Prayer Suggestion

Reflect on Romans 11. Use that to inform a prayer of humility asking that God will remove any pride within and keep you persevering in Christ.



WEEKEND 8-9 APRIL 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Review: Matthew 14:13-21 with Psalm 78

Plug In...

The disciples two times have come dangerously close to doing what the Israelites in the desert did – doubt that God will look after them. The disciples only see seven loaves, totally forgetting all that Jesus has previously told them and done for them. Peter gets overwhelmed by circumstances despite Jesus Himself standing on the water.

Spend some time reading Psalm 78, which has already been quoted by Matthew. This psalm says the problem Israel had was rebelling and grumbling: *They spoke against God, saying, "Is God able to provide food in the wilderness? Look! He struck the rock and water gushed out; torrents overflowed. But can He also provide bread or furnish meat for His people?"* – Psalm 78:19-20.

Chew It Over...

This psalm speaks of the grave mistake one can make in forgetting what God has done. Read the psalm and ask, what wisdom does it have for not forgetting what Jesus has done for you?

Prayer Suggestion

May we remember what God has done in Jesus for us every day. May it be close to our hearts, and on our lips.