

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 14 (PART 2)

Matthew 14:6-12, Matthew 14:13-14

On the heels of John the Baptist's death, Jesus understandably withdraws from the crowds and the ministry work (v. 13). He is by himself for an unknown amount of time. Yet it is not long before the people hear that he is in their region and the buzz of this news draws the crowds anxious to see and hear Jesus.

Q - What Do You Think Of The Contrast Of These Two Verses?

It is important to withdraw but it is also important to not remain withdrawn.

From the example of Jesus we see that it is inhumane to ignore sorrow and pain or “spiritualize it” away. John was not only Jesus’ ministry contemporary and Messianic forerunner - he was also his cousin. We all will have times in life when we not only need to withdraw, but also should. Because of what we know of Jesus’ life, surely his withdrawal to a “secluded place” was for prayer and rest in God’s presence. This was a place free of distraction and tasks.

But we also see that at a certain point, Jesus returns to the real world and begins again to care for others. His own process of bringing his pain and emotions to his Father will allow him to have compassion on others. Too many people withdraw from the “crowds” but then never return, remaining isolated and drowning in pain and hurt.

Q - How can we ensure we attend to both of these very different practices in a healthy way?

Matthew 14:15-21 - Feeding 5000

Q - What Do You Take Away From This? What words or phrases stand out to you?

Jesus has compassion and cares not only for the spiritual needs of the people (met through the gospel and power of God) but also the physical needs of the people (in this case met through a full stomach).

v. 20-21 - 5000 people (not including the women and children) and there were leftovers!

There is miracle working power in the hands of Jesus.

2 Kings 4:1-7 - Oil Multiplied

2 Kings 4:38-41 - Poison Stew Antidote

2 Kings 4:42-44 - Bread Multiplied

Matthew 14:22-23 - Back to The Mountain

Jesus sends the disciples away first and then will dismiss the crowds (I wonder what that was like!). After sending the crowds away, Jesus returns to the solitary place, alone, to pray. As we will see as the chapter concludes, he will come down again and return to ministry - both to his disciples and the masses.

Jesus has a rhythm of life which regularly calls him to the mountaintop for time with his Father followed by time down in the “valley” of human need. After his time caring for the needs of others, he returns to the mountain for time with His father.

As disciples of Jesus, we not only hear and do what our Master and teacher says, but we also need to look at his life and follow his example. We too must have a rhythm of life that begins with our own personal relationship with God and then moves into care and connection with others. Only attending to one or the other is not following the example of Jesus. Jesus didn't just “pray all day”. But he also didn't just love and serve others all day either.

Which place do you need to give more attention to? Are you good at regularly praying, reading the Bible, and spending time with your God? If so, are you also regularly serving others, showing compassion, hearing and meeting needs?

You might be good at caring for others and are often serving, hosting and reaching out. If so, are you also regularly in prayer, reading and meditating on Scripture and seeking God independent of your ministry and/or service to others?

We need to take intentional action to have regular practice in both of these areas. Many Christians work hard at personal holiness but can't interact with sinners and the world. Others are active at loving and reaching out to the world, but lack the holiness that is required of God's people. Jesus had both - faithfulness to God and a friend of sinners. This is our example.

So as we conclude, let's consider the life of the disciple of Jesus on the mountain and in the valley.

Mountain - How is my relationship with God? What intentionality can I take to improve that?

Valley - How is my relationship with others? What intentionality can I take to improve that?

And here's good news if we are currently struggling with either one - Jesus is present and waiting in both. We will find him there.