

Gospel Life Communities Study Guide

Matthew 14: 1-21

Two Desolate Places

Welcome back to another season of GLC's! Between now and Easter, we will be working through Matthew chapters 13-16. This section is full of parables, miracles, and more. It should be a great time for our groups.

Here's a short summary of the purpose of the book of Matthew, according to the ESV Study Bible:

Matthew crafted his account to demonstrate Jesus' messianic identity, his inheritance of the Davidic kingship over Israel, and his fulfillment of the promise made to his ancestor Abraham (Matt. 1:1) to be a blessing to all the nations (Gen. 12:1-3). Thus in large part Matthew's Gospel is an evangelistic tool aimed at his fellow Jews, persuading them to recognize Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah. At the same time, the Gospel reveals clearly to Gentiles that salvation through Jesus the Messiah is available to all nations. For Jewish Christians, Matthew's Gospel provides encouragement to stand steadfast amid opposition from their own countrymen, as well as Gentile pagans, secure in the knowledge of their citizenship in God's kingdom.

Our weekly studies will have four parts, following the four categories that we've set for GLC's, and end with prayer.

exploring

we will explore God's word together, looking at the actual words of the passage each week.

digging

we will dig deeper into the word, discussing the context and meaning of the passage.

growing

we will discuss how the passage is applied to our own lives.

going

we will discuss how the passage informs, challenges, and encourages our gospel witness.



exploring

14 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus, 2 and he said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.” 3 For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, 4 because John had been saying to him, “It is not lawful for you to have her.” 5 And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet. 6 But when Herod’s birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod, 7 so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. 8 Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter.” 9 And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given. 10 He sent and had John beheaded in the prison, 11 and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. 12 And his disciples came and took the body and buried it, and they went and told Jesus.

13 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. 15 Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” 16 But Jesus said, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” 17 They said to him, “We have only five loaves here and two fish.” 18 And he said, “Bring them here to me.” 19 Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. 20 And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. 21 And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

1. Read the passage together as a group.
2. In v.13, Matthew writes “when Jesus heard this”. What did Jesus hear?
3. The events in verses 3-12 are Matthew’s explanation of why Herod was saying that Jesus was a reincarnation of John the Baptist. What sins do you see Herod



and his clan commit in that whole ordeal? (you should be able to name at least three)

4. Verses 13-21 are commonly called “the feeding of the five thousand”, but there were 5000 what? In light of that, would it be reasonable to assume that there were at least double that number of people? Discuss.

digging

5. In the sermon, Paul explained what a “tetrarchy” was. In light of that, why did Jesus go to a desolate place, according to v.13?
6. Read 1 Kings 17:8-16 together. What similarities do you see between this miracle and the feeding of the five thousand in our text today?
7. In v.15, the Greek word for “evening” is more like late afternoon, not nighttime, therefore the disciples’ idea of sending the people to a town for dinner was not unreasonable. However, Jesus chose to perform this miracle. Why do you think he did?

growing

8. Many people (even some who profess to be Christians!) will focus exclusively on Jesus’s compassion and service and say his role was just to be a good example to us. How does this passage refute those claims?

going

9. Read this quote from C.S. Lewis together.
 “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a



madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

(C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*)

Could this help you in your evangelism? How?

10. What are other Bible passages that you could show people that point to Jesus’s divinity?

Pray “Kingdom Prayers”

Kingdom prayers are prayers that don’t only focus on the immediate need, but also on God’s glory. For example, if someone has a sore knee instead of just praying “God, please heal Betty’s knee”, you would pray something like “God, please heal Betty’s knee so that she can continue to serve you and your people; so that she can continue attend worship services pain free and give you glory for your healing hand.” See the difference?

Some ideas of what to pray for:

- Each other’s needs/requests
- King Road’s ministries, missionaries, members, and pastors
- Opportunities to share the gospel

