

Matthew Ch14v1-34 - True Faith

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[0 : 00] Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 14.

During the month of April we skipped ahead because it was Easter and we were looking at the whole Easter account, the death and the resurrection of Jesus and we were looking at the last couple of chapters in Matthew.

So now we're going back to where we left off earlier on, we're in Chapter 14. So follow with me as we read the whole of the chapter.

This is God's Word to us. It is trustworthy. It is clear. And we want to listen to him. So let's hear his Word to us today.

Starting at verse 1. At that time Herod the Tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus. And he said to his attendants, This is John the Baptist.

[1 : 18] He is risen from the dead. That is why miraculous powers are at work in him. And then what Matthew does is he goes back in time to record how John the Baptist had actually died.

Picking it up in verse 3. 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. Basically Herod had taken his sister-in-law to himself. 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 dish the head of John the Baptist. 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.

[2 : 38] His head was brought in on a dish 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 about what had happened, So we're back in real time now, 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 those who were ill.

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 that 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.

[3 : 45] Bring them here to me, He said. And he told 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 they distributed them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied. And 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.

Immediately, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat to go on ahead of him to the other side, While he dismissed the crowd.

After he had dismissed them, He went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, He was there alone.

And the boat was already a considerable distance from the land, Buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. Shortly before dawn, Jesus went out to them, Walking on the lake.

[4 : 58] When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, They were terrified. It's a ghost! They said, And cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately said to them, Take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid. Lord, If it's you, Peter replied, Tell me to come to you on the water.

Come, He said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, Walked on the water, And came towards Jesus. But when he saw the wind, He was afraid, And beginning to think, Cried out, Lord, Save me! Immediately, Jesus reached out his hand, And caught him. You of little faith, He said. Why do you doubt? And when they climbed into the boat, The wind died down.

Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, Saying, Truly you are the Son of God. When they crossed over, They landed at Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, They sent word to all the surrounding country.

[6 : 20] People brought all who were ill to him, And begged him to let those who were ill, Just touch the edge of his cloak. And all who touched it, Were healed.

Well, let's keep our Bibles open at that chapter, And we'll pray together. Our Father God, We thank you so much for the record of these events, These true accounts, And we pray that as we listen to them, Some two thousand years later, That we would learn more about Jesus, Who he is, And it would cause us, To trust you, To reach out to you in faith, And to know your help, The help that we need, And the salvation, That we desperately need.

So help us now, By your spirit we pray, In Jesus name, Amen. Well, we've got three events here, Haven't we?

The beheading of John the Baptist, An awful situation. And then we jump to, Another location, Where's the feeding of the five thousand.

And then we move on to the lake, Where Jesus walks on water. These three events. And when we take them all together, They teach us about faith.

[8 : 09] The kind of faith, That provides in our need, And the kind of faith, That overcomes, All our fears. So let's look at, Each of them in turn.

We're going to start, With Jesus, Who meets us, In all our need. Let's pick it up, In verse 13. When Jesus had heard, About what had happened, So that's the beheading, And the execution, Of John the Baptist.

And remember, John is, Is Jesus' cousin. So when he had heard, About what had happened, Jesus withdrew, By boat, Privately, To a solitary place.

Hearing of this, The crowds followed him, On foot, From the town. So Jesus is going, Across the lake, By boat, And the crowds, Have obviously heard about him, They've walked around, The outside, Of the lake.

And when Jesus landed, And saw the large crowd, Well how would you respond? I know how I would respond.

[9 : 21] There's Jesus, Trying to get away, Privately, To a place on his own, To grieve for his cousin. Perhaps contemplating, What his death, Is going to be like.

And all these crowds, Meet him. But rather than tell them, To clear off, Look at the end of verse 14, Jesus had compassion on them, And healed those, Who were ill.

You see, Jesus meets, These people, In their desperate need. You see, To have compassion, Is much more than just, Concern or care.

It's a deep feeling, That churns within you, And it's not quelled, Until something is done. It's an emotion, A strong emotion, That leads to action.

In other words, It's feeling a need, On the one hand, And alleviating the need, On the other. And that's exactly, What Jesus does.

[10 : 31] Now the sick may be healed, But a new need arises. The crowds that have gathered, Have nothing to eat.

And with no McDonald's nearby, Or a delivery on site, There's only one thing for it. Look at the end of verse 15. The disciples say, Send the crowds away, So that 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.

What do you mean, Give them something to eat? Can't you see, We've only got five loaves of bread, And two fish. Of course, Jesus wasn't just passing the buck, To the disciples, Jesus was highlighting, Their great need, And his desire, And his ability, To provide, For their needs.

And so Jesus prays, And he begins to break up the food, And the disciples distribute it, To all who were there. And let's not miss, The amazing provision of it, Verse 21.

[11 : 45] The number of those who ate, Was about 5,000 men, Besides, Or not including, Women and children. So I don't think it's a stretch, To say, There were at least, 10,000 people.

Perhaps, More than that. It's an extraordinary provision, Isn't it? Five loaves, Two fish. But not only does Jesus, Just provide for their need, He satisfies their need.

Look at verse 20. They all ate, And were satisfied. Nobody coming back, Looking for more. And the disciples picked up, 12 basketfuls of broken pieces, That were left over.

There was an abundance. From just five loaves, And two fish. Jesus provides, And he satisfies. Because this is who, Jesus is.

He meets us, In our need, And he provides more, Than we could ever expect, Or imagine. Well, Jesus not only meets us, In our need, He deals, Or overcomes, All of our fears.

[13 : 09] With full bellies, Jesus sends, The disciples off, Verse 22. Immediately, Immediately, Jesus made the disciples, Get into the boat, And go on ahead of him, To the other side, While he dismissed, The crowd.

Now this isn't just, A casual suggestion, This is an intentional, Command. He made, The disciples, Get into the boat.

It seems, Jesus is deliberately, Putting them, Into the events, That are going to unfold. Why, Why, Would Jesus do that?

Well, Let's see. Let's pick it up, At the end of verse 23. Later that night, Jesus was alone there, And the boat was already, A considerable distance, From land, So, We could say that, They've been rowing, For at least, Six hours, At least.

Buffeted, By the waves, Because the wind, Was against it. They're in a dangerous storm, They're frightened, Things aren't going well.

[14 : 21] Of course, It had happened before, We can read about it, In Matthew 8, And on that occasion, Jesus was, With them, And Jesus stood up, And just commanded, And it became calm, But this time, They're alone, No Jesus, In the boat.

In fact, Things were going to get, A little bit more weird, And scary, Verse 25, Shortly before dawn, Jesus went out to them, Walking, On the lake.

And when the disciples, Saw him walking, On the lake, They were terrified, It's a ghost, And they cried out, In fear. Well, You and I, Would do much better, Wouldn't we?

I mean, If we had witnessed, Jesus, And the feeding, Of the 5,000, We would be, A model example, At this stage, Of faith, And courage. We wouldn't be, Panicking, Would we?

I mean, It's obvious, It must be Jesus, Who else would it be? Me? I never fear. No, What we see in the boat, Is a mirror, Of our own lives.

[15 : 38] Panicking, Shaking, Terrified, Not working out, What's real, And what's not. The fears, That overwhelm us. But Jesus, Jesus does know, And Jesus does see.

He not only has compassion, He is one who brings comfort. Verse 27, Jesus immediately said to them, Take courage, It is I, Don't be afraid, You fear, But don't fear.

I am here. I am present with you, In the storm. Jesus' words of comfort, Is what we need to listen to. But Jesus goes beyond, Just comfort. He saves Peter, And his disciples. Look what happens, He hears Peter's cry, He's been invited out, Onto the water, And he's walking, And he begins to think, And Peter cries out, Lord save me.

Verse 32, And when Jesus and Peter Climbed into the boat, The wind died down. Jesus hears their cry of fear, He reaches out, He saves them.

[16 : 59] You see, This is who Jesus is, He overcomes fears, And he brings comfort, And he brings calm. Now that's good news, Isn't it?

Because, Just like the disciples, Each of us have needs, And fears. And the problem is, We all feel so helpless, And overwhelmed by them.

So think about this with me, What are your needs, And your fears, Right now? What have you come into this room with today?

Where is your mind wandering, As you're listening? What needs are overtaking? What fears and concerns do you have? Need.

I'm alone. I need a partner, A wife or a husband. Fear. I'm always going to be alone, I'm never going to be married.

[18:08] Need. I'm sick, I need to be healed, And made well. Fear. I'm not going to be healed, And I'm going to die.

Need. I'm discontent, I need a new job, And a new start. Fear. Fear. I'm never going to move, It's never going to change.

Need. I want my children, And my family, To be safe and secure. Fear. Something bad, Is going to happen, And I won't be able to cope.

You see, We've all got, Multiple needs, And complex fears. They worry us, And they overwhelm us. So, So what is your need?

Come, With your need, To these stories. Come, With your fears, To these stories. See yourself, With a crowd, Who are hungry, And you're meant to provide.

[19:17] Come, On to the lake, In that storm, And you're worried. What's your need? What's your fear? For perhaps more importantly, Is this question, How do you face, Your needs, And your fears?

Well, The answer, I think, Is faith. It's faith. Because third, Jesus commands, Our desperate, Faith. You see, What these two accounts, Teach us, Is not so much, About Jesus meeting, My needs, And dealing with, My fears, But they're here, Primarily to teach us, About who, Jesus is.

So the focus, Of these stories, Is not so much, About me, But my faith, In Jesus. You see, If we think of Jesus, Is some kind of like, Little magic genie, That we have in our pocket, And any time, We run into trouble, Or we've got a need, Or we've got a fear, We pull him out of our pocket, Give him a little rub, Say the magic words, And whoa, Hey presto, All your needs are met, And all your fears are dealt with.

And put Jesus back in your pocket. If you, If you think of Jesus like that, You'll be disappointed, Disappointed, Disappointed, What am I saying?

[20:49] Disappointed. You'll be disappointed. Look at how these events started. They started, With John the Baptist, Didn't they?

Where's John? He's in prison, For speaking against Herod, The provincial ruler. Herod was a nasty man. He could do what he liked, And he did do, What he wanted.

Imagine John, In his situation. What do you think his need was? To be released from prison, And set free.

What do you think John's fear was? That I'll never be released, And that I'm going to die. And what happened?

He didn't get released. And he did die. What's going on here? What's happening now? Did Jesus fail to deliver?

[21:54] Was he not aware of what was going on? Or was it because John just didn't have enough faith? And if only his faith was bigger, He would have walked out of prison, And he would have been kept safe.

No, none of those things. The truth is, The fact that John was actually, So courageous, And so confident, To publicly speak against Herod, Knowing that if he did so, He would end up in prison. Or worse, He would be put to death. The fact that he did it, The fact that he did it, Proved, That God was sufficient in his need, And in his fears.

John was comforted, And John was strengthened, And he was enabled to obey, And do what was right, Because of his faith. You see, Just because things don't turn out, The way we think they should, Doesn't mean Jesus has failed us.

In those moments, Jesus looks for desperate faith. Desperate faith. Three things, I think we learn about, Jesus, In all of this, In terms of our faith.

[23:17] First, Jesus is the God, Who comes to us. Now the feeding of the thousands, Is extraordinary, Isn't it? It's an amazing event.

But it's not the first time, That this has happened. Go back in your history, To Israel, When they were released, From slavery in Egypt, And they ended up where?

In the wilderness, With nothing to eat. And they cry out to God, And they're complaining, And giving off, You've brought us here, And we've got no food. And what did God do?

He provided for them, Every morning, What looked like, Thin flakes of frost, Lying on the ground. I guess they were the original frosties.

And Moses explains, What is going on. This is what he says. Oh, I don't have it.

[24 : 15] Sorry. There it is. It's the bread, The Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded. Everyone is to gather as much as they need.

Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed. Now picture Jesus, Turning up, Giving bread to thousands of hungry people.

What's he doing? He's only doing with the things that God could do. Jesus is saying, It's me. I'm not just the provider. I am God.

I am God. Now we have a better picture of what is happening when the disciples are in the boat. Let's jump across to the lake in verse 25.

Shortly before dawn, Jesus went out to them walking on the lake. God is going out to them on the lake.

[25 : 18] He doesn't wait for their cry of help. He takes the initiative and moves out towards them. God is coming to them in their need and in their fear.

Verse 26. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. It's a ghost, they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them, Take courage.

It is I. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. Now Jesus doesn't answer in the way that we think he would. He doesn't say, Guys, it's me. It's Jesus.

Don't worry. It's all okay. He says, It is I. It's I. Only one person refers to himself like that, and that is God.

It's the way he had first revealed himself to Moses. I am the great God, the self-existing God, the self-sufficient one. I know your need and I see your fear.

[26 : 23] You see, this is the God we have. He moves towards us through his Son. He comes to us in the person of Jesus. He's not immune to your troubles and worries.

And more than that, when you are struggling with your great need, when you are overwhelmed with all your fears, listen to the voice of Jesus in verse 27.

Take courage. It is I, the God of the universe. Don't be afraid. God has come to us.

Now the God who comes to us is also the God who calls us to himself. Back again to the feeding of the 5,000.

Surrounded by his disciples, Jesus says something that is a little bit odd, doesn't he? Verse 16. They do not need to go away, Jesus said.

[27 : 28] You give them something to eat. Well, Jesus knows they can't possibly provide enough food for themselves, never mind the thousands watching on. You see, what Jesus is doing is he's confronting the disciples with the impossible because Jesus wants them to see, one, their utter helplessness, and two, their absolute need for Jesus.

It's a call to see that Jesus is sufficient. And that's the very lesson that Peter begins to learn out on the lake.

Let's pick it up in verse 27. Jesus immediately said to them, Take courage, it is I. Don't be afraid.

Lord, if it's you, Peter replied, tell me to come to you on the water. Come, he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and came towards Jesus. Picture the scene, the storm raging.

[28 : 42] Peter, come to me. Jesus is calling Peter to himself. He's saying to him, I am enough for you, Peter.

I am sufficient for you. He doesn't calm the storms immediately. He just says, come to me. So often we see Jesus as one who is there just to do what we want.

A last resort when everything fails. Lord, give me that new job. Give me better health. Change my circumstances. Make it all stop. But in the midst of the chaos, Jesus is directing us to himself.

He calls us, come to me. You see, Jesus is our provision in our need. Jesus is our comfort in our fears.

Jesus is the peace in the storm. He is the hope in times of trouble. He is enough. He mightn't always give what we want or what we ask for, but he always gives of himself to us.

[29 : 55] So when you cry out in your loneliness, Jesus is saying to you, I am enough for you. When you long for healing and better health, Jesus says, I am sufficient for you.

When you desire that new job and a new change of life, Jesus says, I am all satisfying. And when you worry over your family and your friends, Jesus says, I am all that you need.

You see, in our helplessness, Jesus wants us to see that he is what we most need.

In your fears, listen to his command. Come. Come to me. Step out of your boat and walk in faith towards Jesus.

So Jesus is the God who comes to us, who calls us to himself and then commands our faith.

[31 : 08] You see, through these events, Jesus is revealing who he is so that we will trust in him. In fact, what he looks for is not a strong faith, but a desperate faith.

Look again at Peter in verse 29. Jesus invites them, come. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came towards Jesus.

But when he saw the wind or the effects of the wind and the surging waves and the wind howling, he was afraid and beginning to think, cried out, Lord, save me.

For a moment, his gaze is on Jesus. But then he looks away and his focus is on the storm.

Instead of peace, there is panic. Instead of faith, there is terrible fear. Isn't that us? We take our gaze away from the God of the universe and we look at our needs and we dwell on our fears and all we think about and all we can talk about is how desperate and how hopeless it all is and we become overwhelmed and sick with worry.

[32 : 35] Like Peter, we need to respond with a desperate faith. Let's pick it up in verse 30 again. When he saw the wind and was afraid and beginning to think, cried out, Lord, save me.

And immediately, Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. I think this is just so encouraging. This is not a courageous faith.

This is not a confident faith. This is a desperate faith. Lord, save me. Unless you act now, I'm done for.

I'm a goner. Save me now. We can picture Peter shaking and stuttering in fear, hanging on to Jesus with all his might in case Jesus would suddenly let him go and he'll sink beneath the waves.

But Jesus isn't going to let him go. Instead, with the howling storm still going on, there's a gentle rebuke.

[33 : 42] Look at the end of verse 31. You of little faith. Why do you doubt? Now, this isn't a demand for a greater, stronger, bigger faith.

Jesus isn't wagging his finger telling Peter, Peter, you've got to have more faith here. No, it's a challenge. Who is your faith in?

You see, it's not about how big my faith is, but how desperate I am for Jesus. Because Jesus stands before Peter as the God who is over all things.

The God who has just fed thousands with a few loaves. Who walks on water in the storm. I am the great creator God, the almighty.

You can trust me because I am big. I am strong. I am great. You're small. You trust me.

[34 : 47] Look, we've all come here today with great needs and great fears. And on our own, we will never deal with them.

But God is coming to us in Jesus and he calls us to himself. And he says, I am enough for your needs.

I am sufficient for your fears. He calls us and invites us to cry out as we are with all our mess and all our brokenness and all our sin.

Lord, save me. Jesus knew what it was to have needs and fears.

Picture Jesus just before the cross in the garden of Gethsemane. So full of fear that he was sweating blood thinking about what was to happen.

[35 : 56] Great need. He cries out to his father, take away this cup of suffering. But not my will, but your will be done.

Jesus prays in desperate faith, entrusting himself to the father. And he goes to where you and I will never have to go.

He goes to the cross and he meets our greatest need and deals with my sin and your sin. And he rises from the grave to defeat our greatest fear.

death itself death itself so that we might live with him forever. Jesus prays the prayer that we all need to pray for us so that we in our weakness and in our need and in our fears day to day can come to him and cry out and cry out Lord save me and he will answer.

He mightn't give you all that you want or all that you ask for but he is enough in your need and he will always be sufficient in your fear.

[37 : 23] Trust him. he is good he is strong and he is kind. Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord God thank you thank you for your word to us today thanking you for helping us to see how big how great how

awesome is our God the Lord Jesus Christ.

We come as we are with our needs and with our fears. sometimes we don't know what to ask for we don't know what to do but we simply come in desperation Lord save me.

Father would you give to each one here today all that they require in their need. Would you be sufficient be their comfort their hope their peace.

Fill them with reassurance that our sins are forgiven that death has been dealt with and you will never leave us but you will walk with us through every step of our journey till we are at home with you.

Thank you for how great you are. Help us. that we might trust you. In Jesus we pray. Amen.

[39 : 30] Well we're going to sing and this song helps just bring together our thoughts where we've started this morning.

We opened up with where does our help come from? our help comes from the maker of the