

MATTHEW

Chapter 14

John the Baptist Beheaded

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus, ² 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.” ³ Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, ⁴ for John had been saying to him: “It is not lawful for you to have her.” ⁵ Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered him a prophet. ⁶ On Herod’s birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for them and pleased Herod so much ⁷ that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. ⁸ Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.” ⁹ The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted ¹⁰ and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹ His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. ¹² John’s disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.

14:1–12 Herod had arrested John the Baptist (4:12) and kept him in prison (11:2), probably at the palace-fortress of Machaerus. This report of John’s beheading is a flashback to what Herod had ordered earlier. (TLSB)

14:1 AT THAT TIME – The reign of God comes in a lowly way with weakness, able to be violently attacked by violent men (11:12). (CC)

tetrarch. The ruler of a fourth part of a region. Herod the tetrarch (Herod Antipas) was one of several sons of Herod the Great, who had ruled all Palestine for the Romans. At the death of Herod the Great the area was divided among four of his sons. Herod Antipas ruled over Galilee and Perea (4 B.C.–A.D. 39). Matthew correctly refers to him as tetrarch here, as Luke regularly does (Lk 3:19; 9:7; Ac 13:1). But in v. 9 Matthew calls him “king”—as Mark also does (Mk 6:14)—because that was his popular title among the Galileans, as well as in Rome. (CSB)

Called Antipas, son of Herod the Great (2:1) by his Samaritan wife, Malthace. Ruled region of Galilee and Perea (4 BC–AD 39).

tetrarch. Roman title for a ruler of secondary rank, though sometimes called “king” (Mk 6:14). (TLSB)

14:2 *raised from the dead.* Herod's fear may have grown out of his own guilty conscience. (TLSB)

14:3 *Herodias.* A granddaughter of Herod the Great. First she married her uncle, Herod Philip (Herod the Great also had another son named Philip), who lived in Rome. While a guest in their home, Herod Antipas persuaded Herodias to leave her husband for him. Marriage to one's brother's wife, while the brother was still living, was forbidden by the Mosaic law (Lev 18:16).

Philip. The son of Herod the Great and Mariamne, the daughter of Simon the high priest, and thus a half-brother of Herod Antipas, born to Malthace (see chart on "House of Herod"). (CSB)

14:4 HAD BEEN SAYING – He has repeatedly denounced (elegen, "kept on saying,") (QV)

John condemned Herod's adultery with Herodias, the wife of Herod's half brother Philip, as contrary to divine Law. (TLSB)

14:6 *Herod's birthday.* Public celebration with invited guests. (TLSB)

the daughter of Herodias. Salome, according to Josephus. She later married her granduncle, the other Philip (son of Herod the Great), who ruled the northern territories (Lk 3:1). At this time Salome was a young woman of marriageable age. Her dance was unquestionably lascivious, and the performance pleased both Herod and his guests. (CSB)

Josephus identifies her as teenage Salome (TLSB)

DANCED – Matthew's listeners/hearers are left to fill the gaps in the narrative, and it is likely that the filler material is sorry and sordid. (CC)

Perhaps seductively. This would reflect the Greco-Roman cultural influence in Herod's court. (TLSB)

14:8 *platter.* A flat wooden dish on which meat was served. (CSB)

Herod was reckless and foolish to swear that he would do whatever this girl desired. He also sinned in fulfilling an evil oath. (TLSB)

14:12 JOHN'S DISCIPLES...BODY – The gory death of John anticipated Jesus' impending crucifixion (16:21; 17:12–13). (TLSB)

We do not know how long it is before John's disciples are able to gain access to his mutilated corpse and to bury it. Neither do we know how long it is before

John's disciples make their way to Jesus and tell him what has happened to John and what Herod himself is now thinking about Jesus. (CC)

Matthew's narrative of Herod to be ultimately a powerless and pathetic figure even as his violence takes its toll. He will not be able to stop the ministry of the figure whom he supposes to be John revived. Jesus withdraws because it is not yet the time for Him to go to the city that kills God's messengers. (CC)

14:1–12 Throughout history, wicked earthly rulers have attacked Christ and His kingdom (cf 2:16–18). But their rage is in vain (Ps 2:1–2). Believers might at times be concerned about the outcome of this warfare between God and Satan, but have no fear. Christ has won the victory (1Co 15:57). • Lord Jesus, when I fear the might of those who oppose Your kingdom, comfort me with the knowledge that You live and rule eternally. Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

¹³ 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. ¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. ¹⁵ 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." ¹⁶ Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." ¹⁷ "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered. ¹⁸ "Bring them here to me," he said. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ²¹ The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

14:13–21 See Mk 6:32–44; Lk 9:10–17; Jn 6:1–13 and notes. (CSB)

Significant event recorded in all four Gospels. (TLSB)

The day begins with the news of the death of John the Baptist. It continues with the return of the disciples from a short-term missionary journey. Following the disciples are five thousand men and their families. Jesus tried to get away from the crowd by crossing the sea, only to find the crowd waiting for him on the other side. He wanted to mourn in solitude, but instead he was surrounded by people. He wanted to spend time with just the disciples, but instead he got a crowd. He wanted time to think, but instead he and people to face. (A Gentle Thunder – Hearing God Through the Storm – Max Lucado p. 90)

The *Gospel* is the feeding of the 5,000. This is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels. Each Gospel focuses on the specific aspects of the story that best fit their account of the life of Christ. According to Matthew, the crowd is hungry and helpless in a lonely place. Jesus gives them “manna” in the way that God provided for Moses and his people in their wilderness wanderings. The Messiah has compassion on the crowd and turns scarcity into abundance. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 3)

14:13 WHAT HAD HAPPENED – Matthew notes Jesus’ personal response to the news of John’s execution. (TLSB)

The “what had happened” is identified in the preceding paragraph. Jesus and his disciples are told (*apēngeilan*) about John’s fate. This is why Jesus leaves for a private, lonely place (*kat idian* means “privately for one’s self”). John was his cousin; John had baptized him. There was a strong relationship between these two people of God. The death of John provides an ominous prelude. In the other Gospels, the occasion for his trip to the desert was the return of the disciples, who told him all the things that they had done and taught. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 3)

Jesus heard about John’s senseless death, which was brought about because Herod made a boast at a party. The disciples were also returning from their first apostolic journey, and Jesus would be hearing their report as well as giving them relief from the crowds (Mk 6:7–31; Lk 9:1–10). He brought them to the wilderness. It wasn’t far enough to escape the determined crowds. The determination of the crowd was fueled by their many needs. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 3)

HE WITHDREW BY BOAT – This does not mean that Jesus was running from Herod but that he was seeking a sequestered place to be alone with the disciples.

Jesus was seeking to withdraw “to a desolate place by himself.” The context identifies Jesus’ grieving the martyrdom of his cousin (14:1–12). John the Baptizer was put in prison for the cause of Christ, when along came silly Salome, who fooled her stepfather into making and keeping an oath that literally cost John his head. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 3)

As John’s death evidences, the tide is turning adversarial toward Jesus. Counterintuitive to reasoning, Jesus tells us a prophet is dishonored among his own (Mt. 13:57). Jesus’ kinfolk were so disbelieving that among them he did not perform many miracles (Mt 13:58). Away from there, he still ranked as an attraction. Like paparazzi, crowds swarmed Jesus. Some were curiosity-seekers; others sought spectacle and amusement. Some limped with legitimate needs. Swallowing his grief, Jesus continues touching the crowds with healing hands and teaching words. The disciples again assume their bodyguard response, trying to shoo away the crowds from their solitary place. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 3)

Practitioners of prosperity religion often are crowd-seekers and crowd-pleasers. They raise the ire of the apostle Peter, who labels their words *plastoi*; *lovgoi* (2 Pet 2:3). Some modern-day “apostles” have mastered the media as a means for selling a fast-food religion. Jesus disavows aiding or abetting our poverty of spiritual things by supplementing us with wealth in worldly things (2 Pet 1:5–8). His food is bread for the life of the world, and participants in his sacrificial giving will live forever (John 6). Jesus himself is sacrificed for the sin of the world. This self-giving character is anticipated in the eucharistic pattern of our text: taking, blessing, breaking, and giving. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 3)

desolate place. Jesus and His disciples (Mk 6:32) crossed the Sea of Galilee to an isolated place on the northeast shore near Bethsaida (Lk 9:10). (TLSB)

FOLLOWED HIM ON FOOT – People came in droves on foot from the surrounding towns. The Gospel message had attracted them like it does in Luke 15.

14:14 SAW A LARGE CROWD – This was after they had landed and he sees them from the sequestered place. He did not hide from them because they had needs only he could supply.

HAD COMPASSION ON THEM – *splagchnizomai* – This refers to the inner organs – heart, kidneys, liver, intestines, lungs – and later spoke of them as the seat of emotions such as anger and anxious desire. The Latin literally means to “suffer with, to feel the pain and suffering of another.” Compassion comes from identifying closely with another. He had this desire because they were as sheep without a shepherd, going about aimlessly and lost.

Jesus was deeply moved at the needs of the crowd and healed their sick. Mark reports that Jesus was deeply moved at seeing the crowd as sheep without a shepherd and taught them (Mk 6:34). This combination of teaching and healing confirms the varied nature of the needs of the crowd. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 3)

The verb communicates the inner attitude of Jesus and also implies the kind of action that He will take. Matthew employs the verb both in his narration and in Jesus’ own words, and he uses it more than the other Synoptic authors. (CC)

Although the death of John prompts Jesus to withdraw (*anechōrsen*) to the desert, it does not dissuade the crowds from following him on foot (*pezēi*). Jesus travels to his location by boat (*en ploiōi*). As he disembarks, he sees a huge crowd and has compassion on them (*esplangchisthē* : see Mt 9:36). Matthew, however, omits Mark’s comment that they were “as sheep having no shepherd.” Neither does Matthew indicate that Jesus taught them. Matthew notes that Jesus immediately began a healing ministry. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 3)

14:15 AS EVENING APPROACHED – These words signaled that the disciples were getting worried.

As the hour for the evening meal approaches, the disciples come to Jesus asking him to send the people away so they may buy food (*brōmata*: plural indicates the many kinds of food that the people might buy). Jesus reminds the disciples that the people do not have reason to leave, because Jesus can feed them. Therefore, he tells the disciples, “You (*humeis*, placed for emphasis) feed them.” Matthew does not include the derogatory question of whether 200 denarii could buy enough food for the crowd. Matthew does state that the disciples had already reviewed the crowd and found only five loaves of bread and two fish—food common to the poor of the Galilean district. (The rabbis said that in the messianic age, the Leviathan would be salted and given to the people as food [Ps 74:14].) Jesus said authoritatively: Bring “them here to me.” And like the widow of Zarephath (1 Ki 17:15), the disciples brought their small supply to Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 3)

A REMOTE PLACE – *eramos* means “deserted” in the sense that no people live there.

SEND THE CROWDS AWAY – 6:5 Philip. Since he came from nearby Bethsaida (1:44), it was appropriate to ask him. – Keep in mind that Philip has been forcing out demons and healing the sick (Mark 6:13). We’d expect him to be optimistic. A bit of faith would be appropriate. After all, he had just spend several weeks seeing the impossible happen. He can recite the stats, but can’t see how to help. He can crunch the numbers, but he can’t construct the answer. (manager vs. leader) And though the answer to prayer is standing next to him, he doesn’t even pray. Equally disturbing is the silence of the other disciples. It never occurred to the disciples to turn the problem over to Jesus. God’s faithfulness has never depended on the faithfulness of his children. He is faithful even when we aren’t. No, we don’t give up. We look up. We trust. We believe. We remember of baptism. And our optimism is not hollow. Christ has proven worthy. (A Gentle Thunder – Hearing God Through the Storm – Max Lucado pp. 90-93)

The disciples seem to have gained some compassion, but even though Jesus had given them power for their apostolic journey, they didn’t realize what they could do in this situation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 3)

The disciples’ suggestion makes sense from a human point of view. (TLSB)

14:16 Unexpectedly and forcefully, Jesus challenged the disciples to provide food for this vast crowd. He planned to teach them an important lesson. (TLSB)

DO NOT NEED TO GO AWAY – Jesus is saying: “That this place is deserted and that the hour is late, these facts do not cause a need.

GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT – Very plainly he is expecting them to find help in Him.

14:17 FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISH – They apparently bought these from the little boy mentioned in John 6:9. Perhaps they were thinking that this would be enough for their small group.

Staple foods in Galilee, especially for the poor, but barely enough to feed the 12 disciples and Jesus. (TLSB)

Bread and fish were not banquet food. They were subsistence food. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 3)

14:18 BRING THEM HERE TO ME – Jesus condescends to their smallness of faith. Luther says: “The great need of the disciples on this occasion was that, though they could think and figure, they did not believe or realize what kind of Lord they had in Christ. And that is the universal need even today, not only when we need food but also when we realize all sorts of necessities. We know how to figure and calculate carefully so that our needs might be filled. But when help does not come immediately as we would like it, we get nothing out of our careful figuring and calculating except sorrow and loss of spirit. It would be much better for us to commend the whole matter to God and not think so much about our needs.”

This is language and action associated with a meal, and it sounds sacramental because later the Lord’s Supper would also be associated with a meal. Without question, though, it signals Jesus’ messianic role with all that was to follow. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 3)

14:19 LOOKING UP TO HEAVEN – Jesus begins in the right place and overlooks no spiritual detail.

Jesus probably spoke a traditional Jewish blessing such as “Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe! You bring forth bread from the earth.” At the Last Supper, Jesus likewise spoke a blessing before giving the bread. (TLSB)

Notes from Mark 6:39... Grass is green around the Sea of Galilee after the late winter or early spring rains.

Only Mark records this detail, possibly a vivid recollection from the disciple’s memory. (TLSB)

FIVE LOAVES...TWO FISH - labw;n tou;" pevnte a[rtou" kai; tou;" duvo ijcuva", "taking the five loaves and the two fish." Grace chooses us; we do not choose God (Jn 15:16). The journey of faith begins beside still waters. In Baptism, we are snatched from the evil one's jaws and taken into the hands of God for life in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 3)

Nearly a millennium ago, Hugh of Saint Victor summed up the two-sided character of human persons: "By one the body lives from the soul, by the other the soul lives from God. Each has its own good by which it is invigorated and nourished so that it can subsist" (*De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei*, ca. 1134, ed. by J. P. Migne, PL 176 [Paris, 1854], col. 417–18). All people require bodily sustenance, daily bread. But no one lives by bread alone. We are created in the Divine image for a spiritual existence requiring Divine nurture. Unless we are taken into God, by faith, this cannot ever be satisfied. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 3)

GAVE THANKS - eujlovghsen, [he] "said a *blessing*." The God who begins our faith through Baptism continues to bless us with the Word of faith. Believers are recipients of God's sacramental initiative, splashed in the triune name, with life's paramount blessing: salvation that cannot be snatched away. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 3)

So-called "pie-in-the-sky" Christianity emphasizes primarily the blessing of an afterlife with God, paying little attention to the earthly benefits of being a believer. This truth is lopsided. Concern for spiritual life offers only a partial picture. By contrast, when our prayer for daily bread becomes "give us this day an *abundance* of bread," the distinctive good of our two-sided character is distorted in the other direction. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 3)

"Prosperity" systems may emphasize being blessed by things: rust rots up, moths eat up, mold covers up, floodwaters sweep up, fire burns up; we, however, believe, teach, and confess we're blessed because we, ourselves, are named and claimed in Baptism. This *thing* we seek first, trusting that all these other *things* will be added (Mt 6:33). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 3)

BROKE THE LOAVES - klavsa", he "broke" the loaves. Life's primary pattern is cross-shaped. Bread is broken. So, inevitably in life, are we. God takes our brokenness to work more goodness than we could ever anticipate through us; he takes us to solitary places, to desert existences, to places of discipline for those he loves (Heb 12:4–13). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 3)

Serious concerns must be raised also about prosperity religion's notions of being cursed: especially regarding HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and the reemergence of polio—once conquered. Or, what is the response toward the millions of unemployed young women and men who crowd burgeoning city centers. Chiefly, these are educational and economic issues, not the result of the suffering ones' lack of faith, inability to pray rightly, or the sins of ancestors haunting their health and stifling their wealth. Jesus does not blame those hobbling toward him for possessing ailments. But neither does the theology of the cross paint over life's tragically broken dynamics with a brushstroke of denial or excusing or anesthetizing or philosophizing. At the cross, God faces for us and our salvation, face-to-face, these realities. The crosses of brokenness we carry are conquered at the cross of Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 3)

GAVE THEM - e[*dwken*, "he gave" them to the disciples. Rarely do the Gospels record a meal in the evening, v 15. The customary time for eating had passed. Middle Easterners ordinarily partook of two meals per day—a simple breakfast between 10 and 11 in the morning, and a large meal in the late afternoon, around four o'clock. In the colloquial piety of some African Americans: The Lord may not come when you want him (*crovno*"), but he's always right on time (*kairov*").(Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 3)

In the presence of the self-giving transcendence of Jesus, time flows into insignificance. Who cares what time it is when Jesus is giving the meal? Jesus gave to his disciples, who gave to the crowds. The gifts of God beg being given away. Divine giving begets more giving. God gives to us the gift of salvation, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the faith-inducing Word, the gifts of a victorious promise and Jesus' real presence in, with, and under bread and wine. God then gives us away, sending us gifted people into the world with the nutrition of salvation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 3)

As we review what happened, then we can think of Jesus as the mediator between God's compassion and the sick and hungry crowds. Just as Moses provided manna in the wilderness, so did Jesus. Jesus, once again, answers this familiar prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread." But the miracle also points to the banquet that will take place before their eyes, the Eucharist meal. Then, Jesus looks up to speak with his Father those four important words (v 19): (1) he took (*labōn*); (2) he gave thanks (*eulogēsen*), expressing his dependence on God for all of man's needs and gratitude for his constant goodness (John uses *eucharistēsas*); (3) he broke the loaves (*klasas*); and (4) and he gave them to the disciples (*edōken*). (See Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22; Lk 22:7–23; and I Cor. 11:24.). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 3)

14:20 ALL ATE – No one was overlooked.

In the Church of the Multiplying of the Loaves and Fishes in the Holy Land, the mosaic artwork in the floor depicts the loaves and fishes of the eucharistic meal. The disciples in the Upper Room receive a foretaste of the feast of the messianic banquet in heaven. The line of service that enables all to eat and to be satisfied runs from God through Jesus to the followers. In Matthew's day, wilderness

hunger and isolation made the people dependent on Jesus to feed them. Jesus' command to feed the crowds transforms their meager resources of food into an ample supply for a hungry multitude. All ate and were satisfied (*echortasthēsan*, an effective aorist). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 3)

WERE SATISFIED – They were satiated (to satisfy fully – to indulge excessively – gorge). (CC)

All of the people had enough to eat, and none went hungry. (TLSB)

PICKED UP TWELVE BASKETFULS – The left-overs amounted to many times more than the original five loaves and two fishes. One commentator makes an interesting point here that each disciple had a basketful and each then ate from his own basket for then or for the next day.

That Jesus had provided an abundance of food was impressed on the disciples, whose baskets were full of leftovers. (TLSB)

Similarly, this can only be suggestive—not fully illustrative—of the heavenly banquet. Although the crowds were satisfied and there were leftovers, this surely wasn't banquet food! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 3)

The broken pieces (*klasmata*) indicate the pieces into which the Lord had broken the food, not the pieces the crowd had wastefully thrown to the ground. Matthew's adding the 12 baskets of leftovers merely indicates the generosity of our Lord when he feeds the needy. Each disciple gathers a basket of crumbs larger than the original supply of food. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 3)

14:21 *besides women and children.* Matthew alone notes this. He was writing to the Jews, who did not permit women and children to eat with men in public. So they were in a place by themselves. (CSB)

After noting the food remaining, Matthew adds that the number of eaters (*esthiontes*) besides (*chōris*) the women and children was about 5,000. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 3)

14:13–21 This miracle is obviously important because all four evangelists have recorded it. The account here makes no mention of the crowd's reaction. They seem not to realize that a miracle has taken place. But the disciples know. Each has a basketful of leftovers to testify to what Jesus has done. They will also be privileged to feed the nations spiritually with the bread of life, a resource that will satisfy and never be exhausted. Whenever you have doubts about God's power to supply your needs, whether physical or spiritual, recall this miracle. Jesus is able to provide. • Heavenly Father, thank You for abundantly answering my prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread." Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus Walks on the Water

²² Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but the boat was already a considerable distance ^a from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. ²⁵ During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear. ²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: **“Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”** ²⁸ “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹ **“Come,”** he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” ³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?” ³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³ Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.” ³⁴ When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. ³⁵ And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him ³⁶ and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

Jesus had just finished feeding the five thousand (Mt 14:13–21). There should have been no doubt in Peter’s mind about Jesus’ mighty power over every area of life and nature. But how soon the disciples, and we, forget. When we confront frightening events and challenges in our lives, our faith often becomes weak and fragile because we rely on our own wisdom and strength instead of on the power and wisdom of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 3)

John’s gospel gives a fuller picture of the immediate context. After feeding of the 5000, the crowds made a confession of faith: “Surely this the Prophet who is to come into the world” (Jn 6:14; cf. v. 33 of our text). But their vision of Him was more as a Savior from earthly problems, i.e., hunger, so they “intended to come and make Him king by force” (Jn 6:15). The crowds desire to make Him that sort of “bread king” resembles the devil’s earlier temptations for Jesus to turn stones into bread and rule a worldly kingdom (Mt 4:1-11). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 3)

It was for this reason that Jesus immediately sent His disciples off in the boat by themselves. He may have wished to prevent that twisted view of His mission from rubbing off on the twelve. He may also have desired time alone to commune with His Father in order to strengthen His own resolve to carry out His true mission. As in the earlier temptations, we see our Lord combating doubt – and prevailing. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 3)

14:22-23 Why did Jesus “compel” the disciples to go on ahead of him to the other side of the lake? Did he realize their faith was still fragile, even after the feeding of the five thousand? Did he know they would need another dramatic sign in order to be able to believe and proclaim, “Truly you are the Son of God” (v 33)? Or did he simply need some time alone with his heavenly Father in prayer? We need to encourage our people to spend more time alone with their heavenly Father in prayer, especially when their faith is fragile or their loved ones are in danger from the storms of life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 3)

14:22 *Immediately*. Cf vv 27, 31. Emphasizes key events in Mt: Baptism of Jesus (3:16), call of the first disciples (4:20, 22), Palm Sunday (21:2), some healings (8:3; 20:34). (TLSB)

JESUS MADE THE DISCIPLES GET INTO THE BOAT – *enankasen*, literally, “compelled.” The fact that Jesus made the disciples get into the boat is clear here and in Mark’s parallel account (Mk 6:45). The disciples weren’t on some careless ride under the direction of their sinful natures. They were following the Lord’s instructions—carefully calculated to remove them from the temptation of instant popularity (Jn 6:15). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 21, Part 3)

other side. To the northwest shore of the sea, the Plain of Gennesaret (v 34). (TLSB)

HE DISMISSED THEM – From John 6:22 we learn that not all left. Some stayed and followed Jesus to Capernaum the next day. Lenski remarks: “That multitude wanting to make him king was one of Satan’s temptation to Jesus, and the sending these crowds away shows the temptation overcome.”

14:23 *mountain*. Or, hill, of which there are several in the area. (TLSB)

BY HIMSELF TO PRAY – All alone with his Father Jesus must have spent at least eight hours in prayer. What did he pray about? Suggestions: a) The news of the Baptist’s death (verse 12) must have filled him with foreboding of his own death, a year hence (John 6:4); b) As pointed out above he had just overcome the temptation to be proclaimed an earthly king; c) Likely he foresaw that the remnants of the 5000 would totally reject him, the living bread from heaven, the next day (John 6:60-66); d) As pointed out above the Twelve were in danger for a number of reasons and needed to pass a severe the next day (John 6:67-69).

Matthew’s report that Jesus prayed by Himself suggests that an important moment in His ministry was about to take place. Lk often notes that Jesus prayed at significant times in His life. (TLSB)

14:24-25 The “fourth watch of the night” by Roman standards was 3:00–6:00 A.M. As the wind on the lake picked up, the disciples were getting anxious. They may

have been thinking, as some people think today, Where is Jesus when you need him? But the truth is that Jesus always comes to us, as he did to the disciples, in the midst of the storms and struggles of life. He comes to calm our fears and strengthen our faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

14:24 *long way*. Jn 6:19 reports that they had rowed c 3–4 mi. (TLSB)

BUFFETED BY THE WAVES – Sudden, violent storms were common on the Sea of Galilee, but the disciples were well qualified to deal with such a storm. Some of them were fishermen who had previously made their living on that same lake. But this storm was more violent than most, and weary disciples were not making much progress on the way back to the western shore. (PBC)

The disciples were having a hard time fighting the wind, but there isn't the same sense of danger and fear for their lives that there was in Mark 4:35–41. It was difficult, but they made it halfway across and didn't say anything about perishing or fearing for their lives. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

14:25-26 The fear comes from seeing someone walking halfway across a rough sea on the water. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 21, Part 3)

14:25 *fourth watch*. 3:00–6:00 A.M. According to Roman reckoning the night was divided into four watches: (1) 6:00–9:00 P.M., (2) 9:00–midnight, (3) midnight–3:00 A.M. and (4) 3:00–6:00 A.M. (see note on Mk 13:35). The Jews had only three watches during the night: (1) sunset–10:00 P.M., (2) 10:00 P.M.–2:00 A.M. and (3) 2:00 A.M.–sunrise (see Jdg 7:19; 1Sa 11:11). (CSB)

Early morning; 3 to 6 a.m. Romans divided nighttime into four segments of three hours each. (TLSB)

When the exhausted disciples were over three miles from land (Jn 6:19), Jesus came to them through the storm. He saw the disciples and their problem. The Savior has the same constant concern for us today. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 3)

walking on the sea. Jesus revealed His divine nature when He made His presence known to His disciples in this way. (TLSB)

14:25 **WENT OUT TO THEM** – Jesus, in his omniscience, knew their plight. He neither is ignorant of, nor indifferent to, the situation of his disciples. Nothing escapes his eyes.

The miracle of walking on the sea may indicate more than His mastery over nature; it may point to His victory over Satan. Scripture often portrays the sea as the realm of chaos that opposes God's order. For that reason, the sea is said to be the dwelling place of the ancient serpent, who is God's primordial and

eschatological enemy (Is 27:1; Amos 9:3). In the description of God's awesome power over everything, He "treads the waves of the sea" (Job 9:8). Finally, because of this association of the sea with the devil, in the new heavens and earth there will be no more sea (Rev. 21:1). [*Commentary from Rev. 21:1 says The absence of the sea from the new heaven and earth in the context of 21:1-8 suggests not the absence of water in the geophysically renewed earth, but an absence of any fear of water and terror that the sea evoked, especially the absence of any painful reminder that God's saints had once been separated from him. (CC pp. 593, 595)*] All this indicates that Jesus' walking on the water demonstrates not only His divinity, but also His conquest of the evil foe. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 3)

14:26-29 When the disciples saw a *phantasma*, a phantomlike figure approaching in the darkness, they were terrified. Jesus immediately identified himself and spoke to calm their fears. Then Peter took a bold step. Perhaps it was just another of Peter's impetuous acts. But he did trust Jesus enough to say *keleuson me elthein*, "command me to come." Jesus did and Peter did. At Jesus' invitation Peter stepped out in faith and actually began walking on the water toward Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

14:26 IT'S A GHOST – Exhausted, wet, and windblown, these experienced fishermen saw something that terrified them. When God reveals Himself, mortals tremble (Ex 3:6; 20:18; Is 6:5). (TLSB)

It is no surprise that the disciples did not immediately recognize Jesus. After all, it was dark and stormy, and they were not expecting to see Him there. So their immediate reaction was to be terrified and to imagine they were seeing a ghost. (PBC)

Even though the waves are tormenting the boat, the disciples know what they are doing and they have already progressed many stades out into the lake. Their problems are caused when they are confronted by the true identity of Jesus and they don't know that here is a man who is also, at the same time and mysteriously, God. (CC)

Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2504, maintain: "The crux to understanding the Christology of 14:22-33 is the fact that walking on the sea has its background in the OT, where Yahweh the omnipotent creator treads upon the waters...The powers of the deity have become incarnate in God's Son. (CC)

14:27 JESUS IMMEDIATELY SAID – Jesus never permits the frightened, penitent sinner to flounder. It is like a frightened child who hears the voice of mother or father with the result that fears dissolve.

Jesus replies “immediately” (euthus) in triple fashion, matching the disciples’ responses perfectly. Because they are troubled, Jesus calms them with His invitation “be courageous.” Because their anti-confession shows that they don’t who He is, Jesus responds simply and absolutely, with overtones of Yahweh’s own speech, “It is I.” Because they have cried out from fear, Jesus speaks assuring words, “Stop being afraid.” He has matched their need, immediately, there in their presence. (CC)

DON’T BE AFRAID – Jesus spoke a word of encouragement and self-revelation. (TLSB)

It is I. Gk ego eimi. God made Himself known to Moses using similar words: “I AM WHO I AM” (Ex 3:14). (TLSB)

Sermon Illustrations:

Sometimes the Lord calms the storm. Sometimes he lets the storm rage and calms his child.

Unknown.

One summer night during a severe thunderstorm a mother was tucking her small son into bed. She was about to turn the light off when he asked in a trembling voice, "Mommy, will you stay with me all night?" Smiling, the mother gave him a warm, reassuring hug and said tenderly, "I can't dear. I have to sleep in Daddy's room." A long silence followed. At last it was broken by a shaky voice saying, "The big sissy!"

Unknown.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University reported that 30 years ago, the greatest fears of grade school children were: 1) Animals, 2) Being in a dark room, 3) High places, 4) Strangers, 5) Loud noises. Today, kids are afraid of the following: 1) Divorce, 2) Nuclear war, 3) Cancer, 4) Pollution, 5) Being mugged.

Back to the Bible Today, Summer, 1990, p. 5.

14:28 TELL ME TO COME – First of three scenes where Peter’s role is prominent (16:13–23; 17:24–27). Peter’s request exhibits his impetuous yet genuine faith. *if it is You.* Or, “since it is You,” an expression of Peter’s faith. (TLSB)

It seems clear, however, that Peter does not consider Jesus’ word to be enough, and he asks for something more, something bizarre. (CC)

A look at the other times that Peter speaks in this Gospel certainly suggests that Peter is speaking from a lack of understanding at best, and perhaps from a far worse motive. When Peter speaks, bad things come out of his mouth. The one clear exception to the pattern occurs in 16:16, of course, where Peter speaks wonderful truth. He only does so, however, because the Father has given him the words to speak. (CC)

Peter serves remarkably well as an illustration of the struggles all of us Christians have in this life. Bold Peter first asks Jesus to invite him to participate in the miracle. Christ's word empowers him to literally "step out in faith." But the instant Peter's focus shifts from his Lord and His Word of promise, he begins to sink in doubt. Yet our gracious Lord does not let him perish, but rescues him so that his "little faith" may increase. "A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out" (Is 42:3). Christ responds favorably to the prayer, "I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mk 9:24). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 3)

It was Jesus' power, not Peter's faith, that kept Peter from sinking, but his doubts momentarily separated him from Jesus' power. We, too, often miss our blessings that our Lord would be happy to give us because we don't quite believe He will really keep all of His promises. We, too, need to ask our Lord to increase our faith. But then we must not sit idly back and wait for something wonderful to happen to our faith. The Scriptures clearly tell us that the Holy Spirit increases our faith through the power of the gospel of Christ in Word and sacrament, the means of grace. So any sincere prayer for a stronger faith will surely be followed by faithful use of the means our Lord has provided for that purpose. (PBC)

14:29 COME HE SAID – Blepon is the almighty Word of God. It enabled Peter to walk on the water.

14:30 BUT WHEN HE SAW THE WIND – Similarly, when our eyes and hearts are distracted or diverted from Jesus and His cross, we will be overwhelmed by the winds and waves of life, and we may sink into doubt or despair or sin or shame. With a faith and hope made sure by the cross and empty tomb we cry out with Peter, "Lord save me!" (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

Peter's fear resulted from his failure to concentrate on the object of faith: Jesus. (TLSB)

BEGINNING TO SINK – Faith dare not be unsteady like a falling and rising wave but steady as calm water. Doubt is the beginning of unbelief. The doubter begins to sink, here literally, otherwise metaphorically.

Was there ever a Master more patient and gracious than this Jesus, whose power and authority go out to all who call upon Him in their need – even when they themselves have created their fatal situation of need? (CC)

Similarly, when our eyes and hearts are distracted or diverted from Jesus and His cross, we will be overwhelmed by the winds and waves of life, and we may sink into doubt or despair or sin or shame. With faith and hope made sure by the cross and empty tomb we cry out with Peter, “Lord, save me!” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

Hebrews 12:1-3, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

Lord, save me. Peter’s shout for help repeated the disciples’ prayer during an earlier storm. (TLSB)

14:31 YOU OF LITTLE FAITH – Jesus rebuked Peter for his lack of faith (cf 8:26). Peter still had much to learn, as will become evident. (TLSB)

Jesus can save, and He will save all who have even only a little faith in Him – even if at times we too doubt. (CC)

WHY DO YOU DOUBT – Jesus directs the same question at us when we doubt His Word or question the power of His saving grace. But He also offers us the same unconditional forgiveness and acceptance that He offered to Peter. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

14:32 WIND DIED DOWN – Abrupt evidence of a divinely wrought miracle. (TLSB)

14:33 WOSHIPING HIM – Lit, “bow low,” “fall at another’s feet.” See p 1276. The disciples’ expression of reverence for Jesus right there in the boat is striking. In their worship, they joined the Magi who had honored the child Jesus (2:2, 8, 11). The women (28:9) and the 11 disciples (28:17) would also worship the risen Savior. (TLSB)

Prompted by the grace and guidance of the Holy Spirit we respond in faith as the disciples did, by worshiping Jesus as our Lord and Savior and proclaiming that He is truly “the Son of God.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

They worship Him, although not as fully as they will after His resurrection (28:17) (CC)

TRULY YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD – This reminds us of Nathanael’s confession (John 1:48) or that of the centurion (Matthew 27:54) and that of Peter the next day (John 6:69). In fact, we think that the Lord permitted all of this to

happen to strengthen the disciples in view of their insensitivity to the miracle of the loaves and fishes (Mark 6:52) and also in view of the ordeal in Capernaum the next day (John 6) when, after all the others left Jesus, Peter, in the name of the disciples made such a wonderful confession.

When Jesus had previously calmed a storm, the disciples wondered what sort of man He was (8:27). Now they confidently confess that He is the Son of God (cf 3:17; 4:3, 6; 8:29). (TLSB)

The text culminates in the confession of the disciple and in their worship of Christ. . (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 3)

14:22–33 When Jesus reveals His divine presence to His disciples by walking on the sea, they can only conclude: “Truly You are the Son of God.” As long as Peter keeps his eyes on Jesus, he also is able to walk on the water. Like Peter, we often look away from the object of our faith and focus on our problems and doubts. Although we know the Son of God is with us and provides for all our needs, we still worry and fear. Jesus states, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” His powerful arm reaches out to steady us and guide us into His safe harbor. • Divine Savior, when the storms of life threaten to shipwreck my faith, assure me of Your loving presence and protecting care. Amen. (TLSB)

14:34-36 This little three-verse periscope acts as a closing bracket around two amazing deeds of Jesus, who has fed great crowds and revealed Himself to His disciples as the powerful and saving Lord over creation. (CC)

14:34 *Gennesaret*. Either the narrow plain, about four miles long and less than two miles wide, on the west side of the Sea of Galilee near the north end (north of Magdala), or a town in the plain. The plain was considered a garden spot of Palestine, fertile and well watered. (CSB)

Populated plain south of Capernaum along the Sea of Galilee, 3 mi long and 1 mi wide, known for its fertility. (TLSB)

14:35 Jesus did not seek to escape the crowds of needy and hurting people who flocked to Him. Cf vv 13–14. (TLSB)

14:36 *touch*. Jesus often touched those with maladies to effect healing (8:3, 15; 9:29; 20:34). On this occasion, the sick were made well after begging to touch His garment (cf 9:20–22). (TLSB)

fringe. May refer to the tassel that Israelite men were to wear on the four corners of their outer garment (Nu 15:38–39; Dt 22:12). (TLSB)

14:34–36 Surprisingly, Jesus heals many who only touch the tassel of His garment. What about today? Does not God permit both believer and unbeliever to be healed through medications that are derived from His creation? (Cf 5:45.) What happens on the Plain of Gennesaret demonstrates Christ’s exceeding goodness to all. Yet because we know Jesus and trust Him as our Savior and Lord, we thank and praise Him for the multitude of

undeserved favors that we daily receive. • “Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever!” (Ps 118:1). Amen. (TLSB)