

## 29: *Tough Times* Matthew 13:53-14:13

If you've been told that following Jesus brings physical, emotional, relational, & financial peace, freeing you from tough times...then somebody LIED to you! In this study we see Jesus and His disciples experience tough times, and we find hope in our Compassionate King who is willing & able to help us when tough times come our way.

### beourguest

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### teachingnotes

**Matthew 13:53-56** (NIV) When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. **Coming to his hometown [Nazareth],** he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and **they were amazed.** "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't **his brothers** James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all **his sisters** with us? Where then did this man get all these things?"

Jesus comes to his **hometown** of Nazareth (several scholars estimate a maximum population of 2000 and more likely somewhere around 500 people).<sup>1</sup> Jesus **began teaching the people in their synagogue**, the place he probably attended as a boy. Now this mature young man causes the audience to be **amazed** at His teaching. And His miracles? Where did he get that ability since he never used these powers while growing up in Nazareth.

These people knew Jesus and his family. They thought Jesus was Joseph's - **the carpenter's son**. Of course, **Mary** was his mother. And then there are the His **4 brothers** and **multiple sisters**. Contrary to Catholic tradition (NOT based on Scripture), Matthew certainly does not teach that Mary was a 'perpetual virgin' (meaning a virgin forever).

1. **Mary got married to Joseph.** Consummating the union required sexual intimacy. They waited for this until Jesus was born.

**Matthew 1:24-25** (NIV) When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Joseph and Mary didn't experience marital intimacy **until** after **she gave birth to** Jesus.

2. **Jesus had brothers and sisters** (Mt 12:46; 13:55). The brothers of Jesus are even named here - **James** (Jacob), **Joseph**, **Simon**, and **Judas**. Two of these brothers later wrote what we call "James" and "Jude".

Even though the hometown folks were amazed by Jesus' teachings, they were cynical as they asked, "**Where then did this man get all these things?"**. You'd think they'd be happy that one of their own is now famous, but they weren't.

**Matthew 13:57-58** (NIV) And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home." And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

#### **WHY were they so offended at Jesus?**

These hometown people, who had seen little Yeshua (Jesus) grow up in their community, could not swallow the claims others were making about Him. They couldn't believe this small-town boy was the One the Jewish nation had been awaiting for hundreds of years!"

☀ **Craig Keener** "How could anyone believe that God had stepped into history in the person of a young man who had spent most of his life in their own community?"<sup>2</sup>

According to Dr. Luke, Jesus had been teaching in Nazareth before and the hometown folks got so mad at Him that they tried to throw him off a cliff (go read about it - Luke 4:16-30). And now, once again, rather than *applaud* Jesus, most people are appalled at Him. And what Jesus said to His disciples about persecution is now magnified in His own home town.

**Matthew 10:24-25** (NIV) The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

<sup>1</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 396.

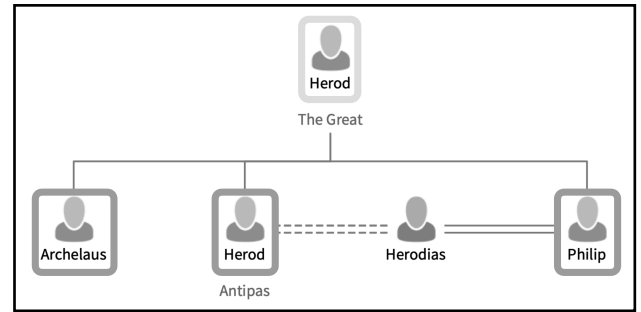
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 395.

**Matthew 14:1-5** (NIV) At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus, 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." 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."  
**Herod wanted to kill John**, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered John a prophet.

**John the Baptist...risen from the dead?** Now *that* would be miraculous, and Herod is just a little bit concerned...here's why.

John the Baptist was calling out this politician for his immorality - taking his brother's wife for his own.

- **Herod the Great** (tried to have Jesus killed as an infant) had 3 sons.
- In this text, **Herod** is referring to Antipas, who took **Philip's wife - Herodias**.
- Herod Antipas and Herodias both divorced their spouses and got 'married' to each other.



**Matthew 14:6-13a** (NIV) 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 platter 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. **His head was brought in on a platter** 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 what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.

Up until this point the persecution was just threats & imprisonment. Now **John the Baptist**, the prophesied forerunner of the Messiah - had been murdered. This was painful for the disciples of John, the disciples of Jesus (some used to follow John), and for Jesus Himself. Jesus loved John and had even said that John was the greatest prophet and human ever (Mt 11:11). But now John's voice was silenced and his decapitated body was **buried**.

*Talk about tough times.* Jesus had been rejected by many of the folks in His own hometown, and now his greatest cheerleader had just been brutally killed because of selfish, prideful people living in blatant sexual sin. Jesus needed some time away, so he took his disciples, so they **withdrew** crossing the Lake Galilee **to a solitary place**.

- 🕒 *All of us will have tough times.* Thankfully, we have a Compassionate King who is willing & able to help us when tough times come our way.

**Hebrews 4:15-16** (NIV) For we do not have **a high priest** who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Jesus experienced human **weaknesses** (exhaustion, hunger, thirst, disappointment, grief, betrayal, laughter, and tears). He felt what we feel, so He can **sympathize with our weaknesses**. Jesus experienced real temptation as a real human being. Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness being tempted by the devil (Mt 4:1-11). And after facing every temptation the enemy could throw at Him, Jesus remained **without sin**.

✓ When we are experiencing weakness and facing temptation, we know where to turn - JESUS!

The God of the universe, the sovereign Creator of all kings, *INVITES us to **approach His throne**, not to be judged for our GUILT, but to be welcomed into His **GRACE***. Knowing this, we can **approach with boldness** - having received the invitation from the King, Himself!

**John 16:33** (NCV) ...have peace in Me. In this world you will have trouble, but **be brave!** I have defeated the world."

**1 Peter 5:7** (NCV) Give all your worries to Him, because **He cares about you**.

Through it all, **the first followers of Jesus remembered this most important truth** - that God's love was forever demonstrated at the CROSS. Their circumstances would change, just like ours. But they didn't play "*He loves me; He loves me not*" based on their *circumstances*. Instead, especially when the tough times came, they looked to the *cross, because...*

**The CROSS always outweighs our Circumstances.**

**Tough times drive us to seek God's Presence & God's People, & share the message of the Cross with others!**

**When you face tough times, you have a decision to make...**

- Will you question God's love for you?
- Will you remember that the cross always outweighs our circumstances and embrace the reality that tough times drive us to seek God's Presence & God's People, & share the message of the Cross with others?

## heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

\* Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!

\* Or call our **deacons & wives: Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Steve & Debbie Bass** (850-673-7952), **Tim & Joni Hughey** (850-464-1156), **Mark & Dot Mancil** (850-253-5405), **Boss & Amelia Mulkey** (850-464-6717), or **Tom & Martha Waddail** (850-973-0011).

## discussionquestions

Take some time to discuss these questions with your family, friends, or group.

1. What former classmate has surprised you since you graduated from high school? Why? Why are we more often impressed by people we don't know than by people we *do* know?
2. How would you react if a guy from your neighborhood started doing miracles and claiming to be God?
3. **Read Matthew 13:53-58.** Why might people from Jesus' hometown have trouble believing he was the long awaited Jewish Messiah? Why wouldn't Jesus do many miracles in His hometown?
4. What are 3 things you need to trust Jesus for in the coming week?
5. **Read Matthew 14:1-11.** Why was Herod "distressed" with the decision he had to make (v 9)? Share about a time when you made a promise you wish you wouldn't have made. Did you honor your word, explain why you couldn't, or simply not fulfill your promise? How does peer pressure often keep us from humbling ourselves and changing our original claims or commitments?
6. **Read Matthew 14:12-13a.** What does the withdrawal of Jesus to a quiet place tell you about how the news of John's murder impacted Him? Have you ever stopped to consider the frustration & pain that Jesus faced as a human being? Explain.
7. **Read Hebrews 4:15-16.** How does it encourage you to know that Jesus, who experienced human weakness & temptation, did not fall to sin and wants us to seek Him in our time of need?
8. Share some tough times you have experienced. Were you tempted to think God didn't love you or didn't care about you during those times? Explain your answer.
9. **Read Romans 5:8.** How might remembering God's love demonstrated at the CROSS, help you to trust God loves you - even during the toughest times?
10. *Explain how tough times* drive us to seek God's Presence & God's People, & share the message of the Cross with others.
11. What challenged or encouraged you *most* from today's teaching and what does God want YOU to do with what we studied today?
12. Share prayer needs and pray for one another.