

Dwelling in the Word

Prayerfully read Matt 14:1-36 and ask: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? 2) What does this say about what God desires to accomplish in you? 3) How could you respond to what God says in this passage?

Beginning the Conversation

1. From your recollection of Matthew thus far, how would you describe the difference between the “kingdom of heaven” proclaimed by Jesus and the kingdoms of this world?
2. How strong do you feel your faith is on the spectrum between having “faith to move mountains” (17:20) and “Lord, save me!” (14:30)? Share about a time when you stepped out in faith? Do you think the depth of your faith has changed over the years?

Digging Deeper *(pick some of the following questions to discuss as a group)*

1. In 14:1-12, Matthew recounts the gruesome death of John the Baptist. How does John’s death foreshadow Jesus’ death?
2. Herod Antipas abused his power and exploited the women in this story (especially his young step daughter), even though they manipulated him to have John the Baptist executed. What does this say about the misuse and abuse of power by those in the kingdom of this world? How are Christ followers called to be different?
3. Recall in the temptation story in 4:1-11, Satan tempted Jesus to turn stones to bread to satisfy his own hunger. Now in 14:13-21 Jesus multiplies the bread and fish to feed the crowd. Why do you think Jesus did the one and not the other? What does this say about Jesus’ use of his divine power?
4. In 14:25-28, Jesus comes to the disciples walking on water sometime before dawn. When Jesus announces himself, Peter asks for a sign to join him, after which Peter steps out of the boat and walks on the water until fear and doubt overtakes him and he sinks. How did fear derail Peter? How can fear derail you from walking out in faith?
5. Read Job 9:4-11 and reflect on the significance of the miracle of Jesus walking on water. What does this say about who Jesus is?
6. In 14:32, the disciples confess to Jesus, “Truly you are the Son of God!” They had just seen Jesus walk on water, and just before that miraculously feed well over 5000 people (in addition to the many other miracles they had witnessed following Jesus up to that point). What do you think prompted their belief at this point?
7. What do the two miracles (multiplication of fish and loaves and walking on water) reveal about Jesus?

Living it Out

1. What are some practical ways you can grow your faith as a Christ follower? Is there some way you feel God nudging you to step out in faith?
2. In this and other places, Jesus seeks solitude and goes off by himself to pray (14:23). The spiritual practice of solitude for the purpose of praying and being with God has a long history. If you haven’t ever got away by yourself to spend time with God, perhaps you can plan a retreat for yourself in the next month?

Three Vignettes about Kingdom & King (14:1-36)



Discourse 4
Community of the
Kingdom (14-18)

February 8, 2026
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Kingdom of Heaven

“From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near’” (4:17).

- Jesus teaches about the nature of the kingdom, how to enter the kingdom, how to live life in the kingdom — and the miracles and exorcisms he performs are signs of the presence of the kingdom.
- The Kingdom of Heaven is **NOT** like the kingdoms of this world.



Kingdom of Heaven

1. The Kingdom is *less of a realm and more of a rule or reign*.

- The kingdom of heaven refers to “the reign of God, or rule of heaven,” and it “is found whenever and wherever *God is in charge*” (Mark Allan Powell, *Matthew*, 8).
- Like in Jesus’ model prayer: “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (6:10).



Kingdom of Heaven

2. The “Already” and “Not Yet” Kingdom is both *present and future*.

- It is **present** in King Jesus — in his life and ministry, in his death and resurrection — but will not be fully **consummated** until he returns.
- **From Reign to Realm**. Through and because of Jesus, God reigns in and through his people — the church — until the time Jesus returns in glory and fully establishes the kingdom realm.

The King of the Kingdom

Jesus is God's Messiah, the rightful King

- Jesus is "Messiah" (1:1; 1:16; 11:2; 16:16, etc.); "Son of David" (1:1, 9:27; 15:22; 20:30; 21:19); "Emmanuel" (1:23); "King of the Jews" (2:2; 27:37); God's "beloved Son" (3:17); "Son of God" (8:29; 16:16; 26:63; 27:54); "Son of Man" (23x).
- King Jesus invites each of *to follow him* and become citizens of the Kingdom of heaven...

Three Vignettes

1. **The Cruel King:** Herod Antipas and the death of John the Baptist (14:1-12)
2. **The Compassionate King:** Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand+ (14:13-21)
3. **The Faith of the Kingdom:** Walking [on water] with Jesus (14:22-36)



**Discourse 4
Community of the
Kingdom (14-18)**

1 The Cruel King

The execution of John the Baptist (14:1-12)

- Herod Antipas, the son of the cruel tyrant Herod "the Great" (2:1-19).
- John the Baptist spoke truth to power, and it cost him his life.
- Even though Antipas thought he was powerful, he was driven by fear (14:4) and manipulated by Herodias and her young daughter (14:8) to execute John.



2 The Compassionate King

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand+ (14:13-21)

- Jesus' compassion led him to heal & feed the crowd (contrast Herod's banquet!).
- "Compassion" (*splagchnizomai* σπλαγχνίζομαι) – to feel deep sympathy (also 9:36; 15:32).
- Jesus, the Messiah, is imbued with great power, but uses it to serve others.

Recalls Moses and manna (Exod 16) and Elijah (2Kings 4:42-44).

Foreshadows the Last Supper (26:26-29), which in turn prefigures the Lord's Supper and the Messianic banquet (22:1-14; Rev 19).

3 The Faith of the Kingdom

Walking [on water] with Jesus (14:22-36)

- In response to Peter's failure, Jesus chides him: "You of little faith... why did you doubt?" (14:31).
- "Little faith" (*oligopistos* ολιγοπιστος) – small, weak; only Jesus to his disciples (6:30; 8:26; 16:8).
- "Doubt" (*distazo* δισταζω) – not refusal to believe (*apistos* απιστος; cf. John 20:27) or being double-minded (*diakrino* διακρινω; 21:21; James 1:6); but to be uncertain, to hesitate (same in 28:17).

3 The Faith of the Kingdom

They Move from Fear to Worship

- "Truly you are the Son of God" (14:33; cf. 16:16).
- While their "little faith" may prevent them from walking on water, it does not prevent them from confessing Jesus to be the Son of God and worshipping him!

3 The Faith of the Kingdom

"The Jesus who multiplied the loaves and fish and who appeared to the disciples walking on the water and who saved Peter from sinking, this same Jesus is the Lord of the church who has brought salvation and who stands similarly prepared to save his people, even when they may doubt, from the evils that beset them. This Jesus who rules over nature and even the realm of evil is rightly worshiped as 'truly the Son of God'" (Donald Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 425).

Invitation

- 1 Reveals the Humble King:** The miracles demonstrate Jesus' power and authority over the natural world. "Truly, he is the Son of God!"
- 2 Reveals the Nature of the Kingdom:** Jesus' selfless use of power demonstrate the contrast between the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdoms of this world.