

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW  
*Lesson 10 – Study Questions*  
*Matthew 13:44-58; 14:1-36*

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**Review:** *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

**DAY ONE**

**Read Matthew 13:44-53**

**NOTE:** Taken together, the parables of Jesus encompass the meaning of the Church. They speak of preachers, congregations, processes of growth, values, sinners, ranges of devotion, martyrdom and ecstasy. They provide unforgettable insights into the spiritual nature of the Church and offer models for understanding of what it ought to be. *McBride*

1. Read the parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price in verses 44-46 and answer the following questions.

Who do the person who finds the treasure and the merchant who finds the pearl represent?

What is the treasure or the pearl?

What does hiding the treasure mean?

How are the parables similar?

2. The parable of the Pearl of Great Price teaches us that God rewards those who search for him, but in the parable of the Hidden Treasure, we learn that we can also come upon his love unexpectedly. Share a treasure of faith that you found either when searching or just accidentally.

**NOTE:** The parable of the dragnet (verses 47-50): Though not the elaborate story that Matthew 13:24-30 (the parable of the wheat and weeds) is, the problem is the same: how to deal with the mixed response accorded the gospel. And the solution is also the same: patience and tolerance until the final judgment, when God will set matters straight. *Sacra Pagina*

3. Jesus concluded by asking his disciples if they understood his parables. When they answered "yes," he told them another parable in which "every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household" (verses 51-53). What is the meaning of the two things he must bring from his storeroom to help him understand?

both the old

and the new

**NOTE: Verses 51-53: Matthew typically speaks of the understanding of the disciples. The church of Matthew has leaders among whom are a group designated as "scribes" (Mt 23:34). Like the scribes of Israel, they are teachers. It is the Twelve and these, their later counterparts, to whom this verse applies. *NABRE***

4. The parables about the Kingdom of God each provide a different perspective in a simple yet profound way. What spiritual and personal qualities do they suggest we will need to obtain it?

5. CONNECTION: We tend to think of treasure as a thing of great monetary value, but the image of treasure that Jesus uses in today's readings is a symbol for the deepest desires of our hearts. What is your pearl of great price? What would you give up to obtain it?

As you begin your prayer time today, spend some time reflecting on the following sentence, "The kingdom of God for me is like..." and ask the Lord for a willing and eager heart to forsake everything for it.

## **DAY TWO**

**Read Matthew 13:54-58**

**NOTE: Most scholars believe Matthew's account of Jesus' rejection at Nazareth is the same told in more detail in the Gospel of Luke where the people of the town became angry and tried to kill him (Luke 4:16-30). *Agape***

6. When Jesus arrived in his hometown and began teaching in the synagogue, his neighbors and friends were astonished. What questions did they ask each other in verses 54-55 and what might be one reason they reacted this way?

**NOTE: "The carpenter's son" (verse 55): this is the only reference in the Gospel to St. Joseph's occupation (in Mark 6:3 Jesus himself is described as a "carpenter"). Probably in a town like Nazareth the carpenter was a general tradesman. *Navarre Bible***

7. Instead of greeting him with a warm welcome, the people of Nazareth "took offense at him"(verse 57). Are you surprised by the reference to Jesus's brothers and sisters in this passage? Look up one of the following Scripture passages and explain who these "brothers and sisters" might be (see also the Commentary, page 79, and CCC 501).

Genesis 13:8

John 19:26-27

1 Corinthians 15:6

8. Record verse 57 (Good memory verse), and give an example of how it applies to a prophet of today.

9. When Jesus was rejected by the people of Nazareth, he was unable to work mighty deeds because of their lack of faith (verse 58). We have all experienced rejection of some kind. What is one way to get beyond the problem of needing to be liked and accepted? What did Jesus do?

10. CONNECTION: The people of Jesus' hometown judged him harshly because they assumed they already knew all there was to know about him. When we think we know someone or something so well, it can be hard to see them and the world in a new light. We limit our own growth and beliefs by retreating into what is familiar to us and can miss opportunities for grace just as the people of Nazareth did. Can you share an example of how this may have occurred in your life and some ways to always be open to what is possible in others?

Read and record Ephesians 1:18 and write a prayer today that the eyes of your heart be opened to all that is new around you so that you grow in faith.

### DAY THREE

Read Matthew 14:1-12

**NOTE:** In a narrative "flashback," verses 1-2 begin with Herod's opinion of Jesus and explain that news of Jesus even reached Herod Antipas, who had been both fearful of and fascinated by John the Baptist. Now, regretting having executed John, he speculates that Jesus is a resurrected or reincarnated John the Baptist. *Agape*

**NOTE:** In place of Mark's designation of Herod Antipas as "king," Matthew provides the more correct "tetrarch." After Herod the Great's death in 4 BC, his kingdom had been divided among his sons with Herod Antipas receiving control over Galilee. The word "tetrarch" means "ruler of a fourth." *Sacra Pagina*

11. Chapter 14 verse 3 begins the story of the arrest of John the Baptist by Herod. Explain in your own words what John did and why Herod delayed in killing him (verses 3-5).

**NOTE:** Extrabiblical history details how Antipas desired Herodias while she was married to his half-brother Herod Philip. Antipas and Herodias then abandoned their respective spouses in order to be united. The Mosaic Law, however, forbids the union of a man with his brother's wife while the brother is still living. *Ignatius Study Bible*

12. At his birthday celebration, Herod promised the daughter of Herodias, who performed a dance, to give her whatever she asked. When her mother told her to ask for the head of John the Baptist, the king was distressed. Because of an oath made in front of his guests, he ordered that it be done (verses 6-11). Have you ever made a rash promise that you later regretted? What should you do if you make a promise that you should not keep?

**NOTE:** Josephus [a Jewish historian who lived around 37-100 AD] names Herodias' daughter who performed the dance that so impressed her step-father as Salome. She was Herodias' daughter by her first husband-uncle, Philip, son of Herod the Great. Most historians make her age between twelve and fourteen years old at the time of the party. *Agape*

13. After his disciples took away John's body and buried him, they went and told Jesus (verse 12). Recall that Jesus was prompted to begin his ministry with the arrest of John the Baptist by Herod Antipas (see Matthew 4:12). Reflect on how this cruel act might have affected John's disciples and Jesus and his disciples.

14. Note a few similarities in the deaths of John and his beloved cousin, Jesus.

15. CONNECTION: John was arrested and imprisoned because he was preaching God's laws to Herod who did not want to hear the truth. While Herod may have wanted to kill him, he realized that John was a prophet and feared him. When we go around planting seeds of truth in the world, we may not be well received by others, but as Herod shows us, our words may have an effect that we can't see right away. Are you aware of a time when you planted some seeds of truth and were able to see them grow at a later time? Share some thoughts with your group.

Read and record the words of John the Baptist in John 3:30. In your prayer time today, reflect on the life of John the Baptist and ask him to pray for you to become more courageous in speaking the truth.

#### **DAY FOUR**

**Read Matthew 14:13-21**

**NOTE: This miracle was considered so important in apostolic times that it was written up in all four gospels. The Supper of the Lord is the sacramental feast for the believers in the Kingdom. *McBride***

16. When Jesus heard of John's death, he left in a boat by himself to go to a deserted place, possibly to grieve the death of his cousin. Yet, what happened when he saw the large crowd that followed him (verses 13-14)?

**NOTE: As Jesus mourned the martyrdom of his cousin John, he pondered that the full leadership in the ministry of the Kingdom now passed to him. The prophet had made way for the messiah and now the messiah must act. *McBride***

17. As it was growing late, the disciples asked Jesus to send away the crowd so they could go to the villages to buy some food. When Jesus told them to "give them some food yourselves," they reported that they had only five loaves and two fishes (verses 15-17). What attitudes on their part do you think their actions demonstrate?

18. Then, Jesus instructed the disciples to bring him the food and ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass (18-19). Summarize what happened next from verses 19-21 and comment on the similarities of this miracle to our celebration of the Eucharist.

**NOTE:** The miracle occurs in the spring when the grass was green and the crowds of the faithful were journeying to Jerusalem for the annual festival of Passover (Mk 6:39; Jn 6:4). It is the second year of Jesus' ministry, 29 AD. *Agape*

19. Consider how Jesus multiplied the small amounts of bread and fish into enough to feed a whole crowd. How does this story help when you are not able to give as much as you would like to in service or financial gifts?

20. CONNECTION: "From the midst of his own grief at the death of his mentor, his wounded heart fills with compassion for others who are suffering" (Commentary, page 80). This image of Jesus grieving for his cousin, John, helps us understand the meaning of our human grief. When Jesus grieves, he teaches us that there is blessing, value and grace in our grief. We are all grieving something in our lives, and at times, we struggle to find meaning in it. Can you share with your group some gift of grace you have received in your time of grief?

The Psalmist tells us, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted, saves those whose spirit is crushed" (Psalm 34:19). As you pray today, remember that the Lord is present with you in your grief.

#### **DAY FIVE**

**Read Matthew 14:22-36**

21. After Jesus dismissed the crowds, he directed the disciples to get into the boat and precede him to the other side of the sea, and he went up on the mountain alone to pray in the evening (verses 22-23). What do you learn about how to pray from this passage about Jesus praying?

22. Meanwhile, the disciples were a few miles offshore and were being tossed about by the waves and wind (verse 24). Describe what the disciples saw during the fourth watch of the night (verses 25-26).

**NOTE:** The fourth watch: The 12 hours of the night between 6 P.M. and 6 A.M. were divided into four watches. This event took place between 3 and 6 A.M. and suggests the disciples were battling the storm most of the night. *Ignatius Study Bible*

23. Record what Jesus said to his disciples in verse 27 to reassure them (Good memory verse), and comment on how these words reassure you in the face of uncertainty and stress.

24. Read about Peter's response when he saw Jesus walking on the stormy sea in verses 28-31. What do you think he learned about Jesus in this passage?

**THINK:** When Peter and Jesus got into the boat, the wind died down and the disciples said, "Truly, you are the Son of God" (verses 32-33). Reflect on this verse as you pray today.

25. CONNECTION: As long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, he could literally walk on water, but as soon as he was distracted and became aware of the wind, waves and storm, he grew afraid. The same thing happens to us: as long as our eyes are firmly fixed on Jesus, we can walk on water but when distracted, we begin to sink. Think of the storms in your life that are keeping you from walking toward Jesus. What can you do to keep your eyes firmly focused on him as you weather the storms of life?

Read and record Isaiah 43:2. Pray today for the courage to know that God is with you when you to step out of the boat.

#### FINAL QUESTION of the WEEK

**NOTE:** As the chapter ends, Jesus continues his saving ministry to all who are sick in verses 34-36. As a pious Jew he is wearing tassels as a reminder to keep God's commandments. Those who want to touch them show faith and are healed (Commentary, page 82)

What healing would you ask for if you could touch the tassels of Jesus?

Read pages 78-82 in the *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: The Gospel According to Matthew* by Barbara E. Reid, O.P. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE) © 2010, 1991, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.