

MATTHEW 13:53 – 14:23 JESUS’ HUMANITY AND COMPASSION

A novel by Madeleine L’Engle is entitled, “*A Severed Wasp*.” The title, which comes from one of George Orwell’s essays, offers a graphic image of human lostness.

“Orwell was describing a wasp that “was sucking jam on my plate and I cut him in half. He paid no attention, merely went on with his meal, while a tiny stream of jam trickled out of his esophagus. Only when he tried to fly away did he grasp the dreadful thing that had happened to him.”

The wasp and people without Christ have much in common. Severed from their souls, but greedy and unaware, people continue to consume life’s sweetness. Only when it’s time to fly away will they grasp their dreadful condition.

This is the Biblical view of humanity, our human nature, at least as far as humanity is concerned. And while the Bible has much to say about the human condition and sin, it also has much to say about the nature of the God who became man. That is Jesus – God incarnate. He is fully God and fully man. While it is hard for us to wrap our heads around that, especially for those of us who “math people,” it is nonetheless true.

We have now come to a section of scripture – a hinge point, if you will whereby we see Jesus’ ministry as it begins to wane in the eyes of the people. This of course isn’t true of all the people, but is true of the majority of them. There are very few maxims, which are true of 100% of humanity. That we are all sinners is definitely one of those, but still we find it hard to sum up anything concerning a people group that is 100% true all of the time. Therefore we continue to see those that come to Jesus, but in the overall sense, the crowds are beginning to lose faith in His claims of being their Messiah. Today we will get a sense of why that is. But what I really want us to focus on is Jesus’ reaction to the people. We begin by reading of Jesus’ ministry as it pertains to his hometown of Nazareth.

53 Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there. 54 When He had come to His own country, He taught them

in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? 55 Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? 56 And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?" 57 So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." 58 Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

This is a good example of context. When we first read this we get the idea that the people were overwhelmed with Jesus' ministry. But that isn't the case if we continue reading. Once we get to verse 57, the former verses are placed into their context and we see the feeling behind the astonishment of the people.

Whether this is a parallel account of Luke chapter four, is a matter of debate, but the theme is the same. The people could not get past their provincialism when it came to Jesus.

Provincial – a person of local or restricted interests or outlook

- We can all fall into this trap.
- Jesus had been just another youth brought up in this small village of which nothing was notable.
- **John 1:46**
And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."
- This is a common theme in areas of hopelessness. People can't get beyond their own sense of their limitations. These feelings can be endemic in communities. (Street gang mentality)
- Who are you? (Who do you think you are? What makes you better than us?) Because of this they question Jesus' source of wisdom and power. He can't be anything special. They know His family and His history. He has only the training of a carpenter.
- Verse 57; *skandalizo* – they were scandalized by Him. This word is used in the sense of being an obstacle to their faith. Instead of His words, wisdom and power testifying to His being their Messiah, they fell back on His history as just another local boy.
- Because of this Jesus aligns Himself with the OT prophets.
- He didn't do many mighty works there because of their unbelief. Why

- not?
- Can God do miracles without the consent of the people? Yes, in certain circumstances. But Jesus wasn't in the business of doing miracles for the sake of doing miracles.
 - So now we are at the same point as when Jesus decided to teach in parables.
 - Jesus knows the hearts of the people and they aren't open to His teaching. Therefore He doesn't waste time there.

And now we see how another prophet is treated.

1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus 2 and said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him." 3 For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. 4 Because John had said to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." 5 And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

6 But when Herod's birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. 7 Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask.

8 So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, "Give me John the Baptist's head here on a platter."

9 And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her. 10 So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. 11 And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. 12 Then his disciples came and took away the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

- John had already been beheaded when Jesus went to Nazareth. He had probably been imprisoned for close to a year and a half.
- Herod's HQ was only about 8 ½ miles south of Capernaum. Jesus' ministry was now garnering the attention of high-level people.
- John was a threat to Herod's power. His wife wanted that threat removed. Now Jesus is seen as a threat or possibly the continuing ministry of John.

By this time Jesus has returned from Nazareth to Capernaum.

13 When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by

Himself.

We can see how the news of John's death affected Jesus. He needs to get away from people and be near to His Father in peace and quiet.

- This is something of which we should all take note.
- Jesus did this often when He was troubled. (The garden)
- Can you see the humanity of Jesus bleeding through the text?
- This is one reason for His incarnation – to be able to empathize with us.
- **Heb. 4:14-16**
- **14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**
- The death of John moved Jesus, but it didn't move Him from the focus of His mission.

13 When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. 14 And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.

Jesus wanted to get away but the crowd wouldn't allow it. Because of His compassion He stayed and ministered to them, healing their sick.

- Jesus put their needs above His own. Can you see His compassion and mercy bleeding through the text? Let's keep going.

When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food."

16 But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

17 And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish."

18 He said, "Bring them here to Me." 19 Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the

disciples gave to the multitudes. 20 So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. 21 Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Jesus Walks on the Sea

22 Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. 23 And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray.

- The people had been with Jesus all day.
- Upwards of 10,000 people. There were no villages capable of handling a crowd that size, let alone feeding them. No one had made provisions for such a long day or the journey as they followed Jesus.
- Jesus uses this as a teaching moment. "You feed them."
- 12 baskets of leftovers were taken up after the feeding; one for each disciple.
- He then sent the people and the disciples away.
- He went up on the mountain to pray. He finally gets some alone time with His Father.
- Jesus was moved by the rejection of His own people, those with whom He was raised. He was no different from any other prophet.
- He was moved by the death of His cousin and cohort - John the Baptist. Remember that Jesus left him in prison. While He was moved by the circumstances, He couldn't lose focus on His mission.
- The people continually want Him to heal the sick, but they can't see past their immediate needs to the truth of the Gospel of the kingdom. They want Him to be a king now, not later. He can't do that. Therefore He has to continually leave the crowds.
- And now He needs to seek the help of the Father but the crowds, the very ones that reject His claims are in need of Him and He stays to heal them.
- After everyone else is seen to, He can seek the help of the Father.
- We can see the humanity of Jesus in this section. From now on, Jesus will begin emphasizing how He has to eventually go to Jerusalem and die. This is also weighing in Him.
- **Heb. 4:14-16**
- **14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16**

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

To the believer, we have a savior who can empathize with our struggles and trials. He doesn't abandon us or roll His eyes at us. He understands. To the unbeliever, the savior is waiting with outstretched arms because He understands. Do you understand? Do WE truly understand the grace and provision that has been given to those who would hear what He has to say?

Don't be like the Severed Wasp!

He who has an ear to hear, let him hear.