



# *The King's Ransom*

Matthew 20:28

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Text

Matthew 14:1-21

Topic

Jesus withdraws when He hears that John the Baptist was executed after Herodias had her daughter dance for Herod and ask for John's head on a platter

Title

*"Dance Mom"*

Introduction

I'm guessing the answer is "No," but did you ever wonder why William Shatner was suddenly dropped as spokesperson for [priceline.com](http://priceline.com)?

A 2012 article explaining why was titled, *Priceline Kills the Messenger Because Ads Worked Too Well*.

The problem was that Shatner was too closely identified with his character, *The Negotiator*, and Priceline was moving to focus on its fixed-price discount instead of the name-your-own-price business.

They killed-off his character in an ad that had him saving folks out of the back of a teetering bus that he was unable to exit from in time before the vehicle made a fiery and spectacular crash into a ravine.

"Don't kill the messenger" is a phrase you hear from time-to-time when somebody is called upon to deliver bad news.

It's not usually associated with delivering good news; but it ought to be. Historically more bearers of good news have been killed than bearers of bad news.

Obviously the Good News I'm talking about is the greatest news of all, the Gospel by which men are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Multiplied millions have been, are being, and will yet be martyred for being its messengers.

Among the most notable messengers was John the Baptist, forerunner of Jesus Christ. For telling the truth that accompanied the Gospel, he was imprisoned, then beheaded.

It forms the backdrop for our study of the first twenty-one verses of Matthew fourteen. I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 There Is Always A Sinister Plan To Silence You As God's Messenger, and #2 There Is Always A Spiritual Plan To Utilize You As God's Messenger.

## #1 There Is Always A Sinister Plan To Silence You As God's Messenger

(v1-11)

Our focus comes out of verse thirteen where it says, "when Jesus heard it, He departed from there." What He heard is in verses one through eleven. It caused Him to withdraw, with His disciples, and give them an object lesson - which we see in verses twelve through twenty-one.

**Mat 14:1** At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus

"Herod" was a family name, and that is why we can be easily confused about which Herod is meant.

- "Herod the Great" was the Herod who slew the children after the birth of Jesus.
- "Herod Antipas" was a younger son of Herod the Great. He was not really a king, but merely a tetrarch - the ruler over a portion of the kingdom. He is the Herod in our verses who had John the Baptist killed.
- "Herod Agrippa" is the Herod who slew James and imprisoned Peter. He was a grandson of Herod the Great.
- Finally, "Herod Agrippa II" was the Herod before whom the apostle Paul was tried. He was a great-grandson of Herod the Great.

Warren Wiersbe writes, "All the Herods had Edomite blood in their veins and hated the Jews. They were treacherous rulers who in the Bible typify the 'god of this age.' Like Satan, all of them were liars and murderers."

Keep that comparison to Satan in mind; it will come into play when we make our application of these verses to our own lives. We'll see that nonbelievers act as Herods in our lives to try to silence us.

Mat 14:2 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."

Mat 14:3 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.

Mat 14:4 Because John had said to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her."

Mat 14:5 And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

Herod had been married to the daughter of Aretas, King of Nabataea in Arabia. During a visit to Rome, Herod fell for Herodias, who was the wife of his brother Philip. Herodias was a granddaughter of Herod the Great, so Philip, her husband, was also her uncle. Herodias had a daughter named Salome. Herod Antipas was a half-uncle of Herodias.

In spite of all these entanglements, Herod Antipas ran off with Herodias. Herod's wife then returned to her father, King Aretas, and he waged war against Herod - one he would lose.

Adultery... Incest... Divorce. John boldly spoke out against their sexual sins. Earlier I said it was truth that accompanies the Gospel. God's messengers are called upon to deliver the whole message, not just the parts they enjoy or happen to agree with.

Did Herod really think John had risen from the dead? Probably not. If you don't believe the truth, any lie will do.

By imprisoning him, Herod temporarily silenced John, at least from speaking in public. It's as far as he could go politically since the people recognized John as a prophet.

But Herodias had other plans.

Mat 14:6 But when Herod's birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod.

This would be Salome, Herod's step-daughter, who commentators suggest was in her late teens. At that time, at these type of banquets, the women would be off by themselves, leaving the men to drink. When it says that "she danced before them," you can be certain that it had the atmosphere of a strip club.

As a princess, this was unheard of; it just wasn't done. Yet in this case, her own mom put her up to it for her own selfish ends. Not exactly mother-of-the-year material.

It may be less sordid, but today when a dad or a mom follows their lust and commits sexual sin, they are thinking of their own satisfaction rather than the welfare of their children.

Mat 14:7 Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask.

Mat 14:8 So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, "Give me John the Baptist's head here on a platter."

Mat 14:9 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.

Mat 14:10 So he sent and had John beheaded in prison.

Mat 14:11 And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother.

You may have heard someone say, jokingly, "Nemo didn't have a mom." It's a reference to the fact that many parents choose to skip the opening scene in the Pixar film "Finding Nemo," in which Nemo's mom is killed by a barracuda while defending her eggs. It's a nod to parents trying to shelter their kids from disturbing images.

Herodias would have been OK with the barracuda. If it wasn't bad enough that she had Salome dance, she had her ask for a man to be executed, and then carried his head on a platter back to her mom.

By the way, in case you were wondering, the Jewish historian, Josephus, reports that Herodias and Herod Antipas were eventually exiled by the Roman government. Salome decided to join Herod and Herodias in exile rather than be alone. The emperor had sent them to Spain and as she was passing over a frozen river, the ice broke and she sank in up to her neck and died.

Not wanting to lose face, Herod was OK with John losing his head.

Who'd of thought adultery would lead to murder? I know who. As the Church Lady used to say, "Satan."

Sin breeds sin; sin permeates your whole way of thinking, darkening your judgment. We ought to therefore pursue holiness in even the smallest things so that one bad thing doesn't lead to another.

Herod and Herodias provide a good example of people being taken captive by the devil to do his will. They surrendered to the passions of their flesh and, next thing you know, they were doing things even they once would not have done - like prostituting your own daughter or murdering a man you knew was innocent and telling the truth.

What this tells us is that there is **always** a sinister plan to silence you as God's messenger. When Satan is in power over a government, the plan is to imprison you or kill you, as we've seen throughout history and see happening today.

Our situation is less brutal but no less sinister. Nonbelievers are still taken captive by the devil to do his will and, if he can't imprison or kill you, he will persecute you.

While he is mounting direct assaults, the devil is also working to undermine you in more subtle ways. You have to believe he is always strategizing to destroy things like your reputation, your marriage, your family, and your testimony.

It sounds serious, and it is. What can be done?

It's simple, really - so simple that we often neglect it. Keep yourself in the love of God by spending time with The Lord, by walking in obedience, by fellowshiping with His saints, by serving others for His sake. The simple, everyday Christian life will be all the defense you need.

Don't get me wrong - you **will** be assaulted. But when the storm comes, you'll withstand it because you've been building on the Rock that is Christ.

Let me therefore say this one more time: Right now there are sinister, savage plans against you, to rob, kill and destroy your life. Some of those plans have yet to be put into motion, but they will be. Don't help out the devil by neglecting your spiritual life.

## #2 There Is Always A Spiritual Plan To Utilize You As God's Messenger

(v12-21)

Satan isn't the only one with a plan. God has a plan for you, too, and we see that in the feeding of the five thousand.

**Mat 14:12** Then his disciples came and took away the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus

I'm not sure what John's disciples were doing for the several months while he was in prison. Whatever it was, it wasn't easy. It reminds us that serving The Lord can be rather demanding.

I wonder if Satan throws tantrums when things like this happen? He had John killed and, instead of hindering John's disciples, they risked their own lives to give him a proper burial; and then they went and joined-up with Jesus.

In other words, the devil's worst brought out their best. Not to forget, too, that John was in Paradise, hanging-out with Abraham, David and the rest of the Old Testament saints.



Mat 14:13 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.

Jesus "departed." It was a strategic move; not one born out of fear. Having been rejected by the religious elite, Jesus had been explaining to His disciples what was going to occur between His first coming and His Second Coming. He had been preparing them for His absence - for when they would carry-on His work on the earth as messengers of the Gospel.

His withdrawal was an object lesson. Or, I should say, it provided the opportunity for His lesson, seeing that "multitudes followed Him."

Mat 14:14 And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.

If there were such a thing as Jesus Goggles, when you put them on, this is what you'd see. The mass of humanity, "sick" with the dreadful, deadly disease of sin, on the verge of physical death that will mean, for them, eternal suffering in Hell separated from God, Who loves them, Who is not willing that any should perish, but all come to eternal life.

Do **we** "see" them? The test for whether or not we see them is whether or not we are "moved with compassion for them." And the evidence we are moved with compassion for them is that we do something to help them.

Let's take a situation we see everyday - the homeless. It seems there are at least two extremes:

1. Thinking "they" are all con artists who could be working if they really wanted rather than mooching off of "us."
2. Or, throwing money and resources at them without any accountability in order to ease our guilty consciences.

With Jesus Goggles, we see real human beings who need Jesus Christ - even if they are being less than honest. And we act to assist them in ways consistent with treating them with dignity but also expecting accountability.

Here comes the object lesson. Bear in mind Jesus withdrew on purpose to prep His disciples for their work in between His two comings.

Mat 14:15 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."

Mat 14:16 But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.

"Mat 14:17 And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish."

Mat 14:18 He said, "Bring them here to Me."

Mat 14:19 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.

Mat 14:20 So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained.

Mat 14:21 Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

It was a crowd of maybe twenty thousand people. Their needs were overwhelming; no way they could be met with the physical resources available to the disciples. Practicality, logic - call it what you will - said, "send [them] away."

Ah, *but where is the compassion in that?* There isn't any. **Get compassion** is lesson one.

The disciples went to Jesus, but with their own plan, which was born out of a lack of compassion and which discounted the supernatural.

One of the biggest problems in the life of a church is the lack of reliance on The Lord to do above and beyond what we ask or think. It is having begun in the Spirit only to end up relying on our own ideas and resources. It is to concentrate on the physical rather than the spiritual - the natural rather than the supernatural.

Having said that, please notice what The Lord immediately said: "**You** give them something to eat." The disciples thought their resources insufficient when, in fact, they had all they needed to accomplish the task.

They only had to give The Lord the five loaves and two fishes, and He would multiply it. It's not a matter of stretching your resources by being more frugal. It's that God acts in ways that are beyond your asking or thinking.

In their case, they had to give everything that was available to them. We are rarely called upon by God to literally give everything. But we *are* called upon to give, and to do so regularly and sacrificially.

I've quoted stats before that show the majority of Christians give nothing or almost nothing to the work of the Gospel. If we sow sparingly, we're going to reap sparingly.

The Lord took what He was given and "looking up to Heaven, He blessed and broke" and gave it to the disciples. He gave them loaves and fishes sufficient for the need.

This doesn't mean you won't ever have to go grocery shopping; or that God will always provide physical resources in abundance. It means that you are to discover, by looking to Heaven, what is God's plan to minister to the people He puts before you.

"The disciples gave to the multitudes." Do the math. If there were twenty thousand people, each of the twelve disciples would be responsible for distributing food to over sixteen hundred people. That's a lot of work!

In all this talk about Heaven's plan and provision don't forget that being a messenger is hard work - even exhausting work.

"So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained." Twelve disciples; twelve baskets. If this was for the disciples, it teaches us that God doesn't neglect His servants - although you should expect to be the last one to be served.

This section ends with the final count - five thousand men, plus women and children, giving us the number we've been using, twenty thousand.

There are a bunch more lessons in this episode, but we don't want to miss the forest for the trees. Jesus had told a series of parables describing the ministry of His disciples during His absence in between His two comings. They were to go throughout the world sharing the Gospel as His messengers.

We are His messengers who live between His two comings.

Messengers of the Gospel can expect nonbelievers to try to silence them. The devil is loose, taking captive nonbelievers to do His will. He is a liar, a thief, and a murderer, so you can expect subtle, sinister, but savage, plans are being formed against you.

God has plans for you, too. You discover them when you look upon the world the way Jesus always does - with compassion.

Compassion isn't real unless it manifests itself in acts of compassion as you give of your resources, regularly and sacrificially, to minister to others. When you do, God multiplies your ministry as He sees fit.