

“A Call to Action”

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Sometimes the most challenging moments in our lives occur when we are the most tired and exhausted. Now when we worship Jesus and we read the stories of the New Testament, hear the Gospel messages about Jesus life, we can forget sometimes just how human Jesus was, and this story tells that.

When you look at the very first verse I read, I didn't even pick up on it quite until I just read it now: *Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat.* What was it that he heard? What he heard happened in the two previous stories at the end of Chapter 13 and beginning of Chapter 14. At the end of Chapter 13 we hear the story of when Jesus went to his own home town, Nazareth, where he was born and raised - the people who knew him, who supposedly loved him - and he shared the message of the Bible: the Hebrew Bible.

He got up, he read the story from Isaiah, and they chastised him, humiliated him. How could this carpenter's son be anything more than just a lowly peasant like the rest of us? How dare he claim any type of Messiah-ship? And, they chased him out! The people who raised you, who loved you - if they turned their back on you in such a dramatic way, how could it not hurt? Now Jesus - who as we Christians believe is fully God - but we must never forget that he was fully human. What human being would not be *devastated* by the way he was treated in his own home town, by his own family and dear friends?

That wasn't all. That alone would take a number of people down to their knees.

But then you turn to Chapter 14:1-12, and then you hear the story of John the Baptist. Now we know that John the Baptist and Jesus were close friends. They grew up together. John began this new ministry and baptized Jesus. John the Baptist went on to say that he was preparing the way for Jesus and so - in Chapter 14 - right on the heels of being chased out of town, here is John being beheaded at the hand of Herod.

Can you imagine, as any human being would, what that double blow would do to a human's psychic? We know that it impacted Jesus, because all Jesus wanted to do was get in the boat and get the heck out of Dodge. He needed to get away just for a moment. But by this time Jesus had performed enough miracles, so many exorcisms, and taught so beautifully in so many places, that he was being literally “paparazzi-ed” by the people who needed and wanted him so desperately.

Now we call it “The Feeding of the 5000,” but notice that it said “5000 men,” and then [also, the] women and children. There had to be - with the number of children they tried to have then - because it was a Biblical imperative to have as many children as you could to populate the world with the people of faith, the Jewish people. If there were 5000 men then that meant there were 5000-6000 women, and they each probably had 2-9 children, there could have been more than 20,000 people. Imagine that along the tiny shores of the Galilee. No wonder Jesus was running away. His best and closest friend had his head cut off. His own family and friends denied him and humiliated him, and he didn't get a moment's rest to try to deal with that situation.