

Embraced and Rejected (Matthew 14:1-12)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 December 2023

Preacher: William HC

[0 : 0 0] We're going to start reading our Bible passage for today. I know it says Matthew 14, 1-12, but for a little bit of context, we will start from Matthew 13, 53.

So follow along in your Bibles or Christopher will hopefully put it on the PowerPoint. When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there.

Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue and they were amazed. Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? They asked.

Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary? And aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us?

Where then did this man get all these things? And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor except in his own town.

[0 : 5 7] And in his own home. And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith. At that time, Herod the Tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus.

And he said to his attendants, This is John the Baptist. He was risen from the dead. This is why miraculous powers are at work in him. Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife.

For John had been saying to him, It is not lawful for you to have her. Herod wanted to kill John, But he was afraid of the people because they considered John a prophet.

On Herod's birthday, The daughter of Herodias danced for the guests and pleased Herod so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. Prompted by her mother, she said, Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.

The king was distressed, But because of his oaths and his dinner guests, He ordered that her request be granted. And had John beheaded in the prison. His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, Who carried it to her mother.

[2 : 1 2] John's disciple came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus. Oh, Lily. Thank you, Fran.

And thank you, Worship Music Team. Keep your Bibles open. That is the passage that God has for us today. So, yeah, feel free to have it open in your phones.

If you do need a paper version, There's a box behind the piano. And you're welcome to help yourself to one of the NIVs there as well. But before we hear and respond to God's Word, Shall we pray together and ask for God's help?

Father, we thank you that this is your Word. We thank you that even at the last day of the year, That we get to hear from your Word. But your Word is sometimes challenging. Sometimes it comes from a different culture and world.

And so do help us to pay attention To what matters to us today, Here in the last day of the year. We pray all these things In the name of our Lord Jesus.

[3 : 1 5] Amen. Black Manta seeks revenge on Aquaman for his father's death. And to defend Atlantis, Aquaman forges an alliance with his imprisoned brother To protect his kingdom.

With dreams of opening a shop in the city, Renowned for its chocolate, A young and poor Willy Wonka Discovers that the industry is run by a cartel of greedy chocolate makers.

A young Coriolanus snow follows the path to becoming the tyrannical leader of Panem. This summer, as you can tell, Our cinema screens are full of heroes and villains.

And I don't know, Maybe some of you will buy a ticket or two To indulge yourself in a movie, Some movie magic. There's something timeless in there, right? Just to enter into a world where it's not like your world.

It's not like your normal life. It's where you can escape into a space where good battles evil and always seems to win. Or superstars wear very impractical costumes. Or all the world's problems get solved in a run time of two hours, right?

[4 : 23] After a dramatic fight scene. So movies, right? Movies and stories. Movies and stories. And at first glance then, When we compare that to a passage that Fran just read, It may just seem a little bit underwhelming.

A crazy king beheads a beloved prophet. Where's the movie magic in that kind of plot? And yet, PCBC, What if this tragic account has a lot to say to our hopes and fears?

More than we realize. Our birthday parties may not be as deadly, But how often have we felt pressured by guests at a party? How often have we been filled with regret after a big one?

The same author that is behind this story here, Matthew 14, Is the author of your story and mine too. And so, I think we can pay attention. We can hear what God has to say to us today.

Now, Matthew probably didn't expect to be writing a best-selling biography. That day he was sitting at the tax collector's booth. And when Jesus of Nazareth came up to him and said, Follow me.

[5 : 34] But follow, he did. And we're grateful. What a ride he's had so far, right? And we have Matthew's gospel for this reason. Going back to TV, Over the past 10 years, If you are a fan of the royal family in the UK, You will have loved this show, right?

Or if you're someone who's bored on Netflix, You might have even tuned in and binged a little bit, right? This season, I have no idea what's going on this season. It's season six, I'm sure. They've been saying it's the last one.

And for some people, it's like, What a relief. And for some people, It's, We want to know what happens after. Well, you can look at the news, of course, But not everyone wants to do that. Look, here at PCBC English, though, We have been going through our own crown-related seasons.

I don't even remember. But in the spring of 2020, Wow, four years ago now, right? We saw how Matthew announced the promised king. And he was worshipped by wise men, Baptized by his cousin John.

We're going to hear more about him in a moment. And then Jesus enters the scene. As the king. He says, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven draws near.

[6 : 45] What happens in season two? We take a deeper dive into the king's speech, right? That sermon on the mount. Right? And this was during a time when we were hearing 1 p.m. updates all year.

And while Jacinda and Chippy were speaking from the podium of truth, Jesus sits on the mountain, And his truth matters most. He tells us what a blessed life we have in God's upside-down kingdom.

He says, Blessed are you when others revile you, persecute you, make fun of you, Utter all kinds of evil against you on account of him. Like John the Baptist, Like Jesus' followers at the mount, We are to rejoice and be glad for our heavenly reward.

That's the upside-down kingdom that we heard about. And then season three was released in August 2021. And that one felt like a bit of a drag, let's be honest, right?

Because I think we jumped into that season, And then suddenly we had this thing called the Delta lockdown, And then we had to stare at each other on the screen again. Yeah, it wasn't so fun. It was our chance to go deeper into following Jesus, though.

[7 : 56] To look at the king closely. The king with power to heal. He's mighty to save. He is gentle and lowly in heart. And yet he calls us to seek him seriously.

Seriously. And then that summer, right, All kinds of restrictions were lifted, kind of. We had a thing called traffic lights. But we did also have a holiday special, right?

We went through the parables, the stories of Matthew 13. And while cults like Shincheonji will try to brainwash you otherwise, Let us hear from God's word.

Jesus is the only promised one that you need. And he explains the parables very directly and perfectly. And we heard from Matthew 13, In story form, that the kingdom of heaven that Jesus brings, There will be a mixed response to it.

The kingdom of heaven, as Jesus tells it, It will start small but become the biggest blessing. The kingdom of heaven, it won't always be obvious who's in it until the very end.

[9 : 03] And the kingdom of heaven is actually priceless, Like a pearl, Worth giving up everything for. And Jesus ended those stories, those parables, By saying, You'll know who are the ones among us who understand heaven's kingdom.

Because every scribe trained for the kingdom of heaven Is like a master of the house who brings out treasures old and new. Do you feel like masters of the house yet?

I know I don't. But if you've joined our church in the last two years, Then all this might be new to you, right? These earlier chapters of Matthew's gospel. And that's okay. I want to encourage you to look back, Perhaps at these seasons over the summer.

There's a catchphrase, Binge Jesus. I'm not sure if it's true or not. But here in God's word, You have the chance to listen and follow in Jesus' footsteps From someone who was there when it all happened.

So you can search PCBC English sermons And you'll find all 165 episodes and counting. All four seasons of the Crown Bible edition. But you do want to pay attention.

[10 : 11] You do want to understand what's going on Because we are launching into a new series, right? Over the summer, we are back in Matthew's gospel In order to experience first-hand action, Jesus.

Matthew's 14 to 16 is packed full of Jesus' words and deeds. You will see how he serves and speaks. We will see how he brings forth a world where sin is forgiven.

The hungry are fed. The seas obey his command. The unclean are cleansed. And just like every good superhero story, There's a climactic moment where his true identity is revealed For the very first time in the end of chapter 16 As the cross-bearing saviour of this world.

And so my prayer is that over the summer, right? That we will come away each week More convinced that Jesus is the hero That you and I need for this life and the life to come.

And so let's look at this 12 verses of chapter 14. So a nice short section, alright? And I've divided them into three points. First, I want us to see the boldness of John Before a fearful king.

[11 : 21] The boldness of John before a fearful king. So have a look again, verse 1 At that time, Herod the Tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus And he said to his attendants, This is John the Baptist. He is risen from the dead.

That is why miraculous powers are at work in him. In 2001, another movie magic moment Was called the film Shrek.

A green-skinned hero of the story Must face off against a vertically challenged prince. His name is Lord Farquaad, I think. Wannabe ruler. Can't really control his own destiny.

Has to get other people to save the princess. Just like every good movie contrasts the hero with a villain, Matthew is starting this section of the Gospels With a bit of a villain, right?

Another king who contrasts King Jesus In almost every single way, right? Have a look again, right? This is Herod, the Tetrarch, verse 1 Tetrarch means ruler of a quarter.

[12 : 25] So you'll know of King Herod in Matthew's Gospel. We talk about him in Christmas time, don't we? Right? History remembers this father as this undisputed ruler Over all of Judea.

Herod the Great, they called him. Wise men from the east came to him Looking for the baby Jesus. And now 30 years on, his son, Herod Antipas He only gets to rule over the Galilee region Of first century Israel, right?

If Herod the Great was like the Lion King Herod Antipas is kind of like the Lion King 2 DVD edition Subpar kind of person And so there's no surprise, right?

That so much of Herod Antipas' life And his choices in life are complicated Right? Historians have dug up wells And kind of like artifacts Where he just seems like a really religious guy Building all kinds of things And at the same time He is recorded in history as being bloodthirsty Kills off members of his family To stay in power No surprise, right?

That we read this section And we just see someone Who is trying to grab and keep power Marrying his brother's wife Listening to her persuasion And then seizing John Throwing him into prison This is the sort of stuff that you find in TV shows, don't you?

[13 : 48] And yet notice Herod's reaction to the fame of Jesus, right? Verse 1 and 2 There is shock behind his words He imagines this man that he's already executed To be John the Baptist Sorry He imagines this man that he's hearing about To be John the Baptist The man he's just executed And you want to notice too Matthew's description of how Herod feels in verse 5 This is a character study as it were And though he wanted to put him to death He feared the people Because they held him to be a prophet You and I aren't Herod Antipas But we may know this too If you lust for power You lust for pleasure You lust for whatever's out there in life You can get what you want By any means possible But just like his dad once was greatly troubled Here Herod Antipas is ruled by fear There are just some things he cannot control He's paralyzed between who to please, right?

Whether it's Herodias or whether it's the people He despises John the Baptist's godly counsel But actually in Mark's parallel accounts We learn how Herod would often go to John To prison, to listen to him He liked hearing his words Just not obeying them And if you're anything like me I know that each of you will struggle With this dilemma too I like coming to church I like seeing people And yet I struggle to listen to Jesus For a holy life I enjoy God's words now, right?

Sounds fun, right? And then I disobey it later Sounds something like I'll put away We too are like puppet kings Little Lord Farcards We are unable to rule our hearts Our minds Our souls and our own strength Do we not need a better vision Of a better king?

I don't know PCBC What fears have you been driven by To disobey God's word this past year? And what fears drive you today even? Do you run through life With a fear of losing a loved one?

Is fear what's making you mock Or bully people in your life? Is it fear of missing out on something? Right?

[16 : 09] That is making you grab and covet Something that doesn't belong to you Because I want to draw our attention To John as well John the Baptist While Jesus will take center stage After this scene Right?

Here Matthew points us to John the Baptist And actually ironically John is truly free Not Herod John The one in prison Is the one who is free To speak his mind To truly Share what's true John is behind bars He's about to be killed Yet he speaks more freely More forcefully More powerfully Than actually most preachers Perhaps today Matthew reminds us You can bind a man Or a woman And yet the word of God Is not bound You can murder God's prophets You can persecute them You can ignore them But their words often survive them Don't they?

So Brothers and sisters Don't pity John He is not the one we should pity In this story Think about the end of the book of Acts We went through the book of Acts last year How did it end?

Do you remember? Who was in prison? Paul That's right The apostle Paul He is in prison And we might start to think Oh what a sad end to the story That's no way to end A hit TV series right?

Someone in prison Hang on Paul was free To preach the gospel Without hindrance Those are the last words Of the book of Acts We want to change our mindset here It's not the one in prison That we need to pity As Simo Ralevic A Serbian Christian Shared Christians in the west I wish you persecution Then you'll know the sweetness of Christ Outside of Christ is only death And Christ is life That's the paradox isn't it?

[18 : 00] Imprisoned but free Or as Wang Yi A Chinese house church pastor Puts it He puts it this way Once you realize that missions Is actually missions In a labor camp Or that missions Includes suffering You will not be confused When you suffer In service of the Lord To be a church on mission for Jesus To be people of God Who speak hard truths About sin About power About who you should And shouldn't marry It will mean being publicly persecuted It will mean being actively Malign and marginalized It will mean being openly despised By the puppet kings Of our world And yes PCBC You and I may not get thrown in prison Today But like John the Baptist Your godliness Your holiness May feel unrewarded Here and now Right?

Who's giving you a prize Or a queen's service medal For showing up to church For running away from temptation No one Perhaps you are faithfully waiting For a Christian partner Because you know It's the right thing to do And everyone else around you Is just Find a pulse Marry them Perhaps you're the lone employee At your job That will not cut corners You will not lie to the customer You'll tell the truth And everyone else around you Is getting promoted Because they will shave off Their timesheets They will do whatever it takes To get ahead And you might think My godliness is not being rewarded Perhaps John the Baptist's situation Sums up your question In your heart Is it worth it To live like this For the Lord Yet remember Matthew's gospel reminds us In the upside down kingdom Blessed are the poor in spirit

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven Blessed are the persecuted Right They will see God That's the poor in spirit Those who mourn It's upside down isn't it But they Inherent Everything that matters When Jesus Christ Returns to rule And to judge All our present Sufferings And struggles They will seem Just light And momentary J.C. Ryle An author He puts it this way Let all true Christians Remember That the best things Are yet to come And press on Brothers and sisters The kings of this world This is the reality They are trapped in fear So let's be bold Let's keep going Into the new year The boldness of John Before a fearful king Is what we see In these first few verses Let's keep going With the story Verse 6 onwards We're going to see The death of John Before a very sorry king King Verse 6 On Herod's birthday The daughter of Herodias Danced with them And pleased Herod so much

That he promised With an oath To give her Whatever she asked Verse 6 Everyone loves A good birthday party But when you are A king Right You get to throw A massive birthday party Don't you And so here He throws one For himself Matthew's focus though Isn't on his guest list The celebrities That get invited All the hot gossip That happened In that venue No Quite likely This was probably One of the wildest parties In that area Ever And to add To Herod's evil Here he parades His unlawfully wedded Wife's young daughter As a dancing trophy Before his guest This has Me Too Written all over it The puppet king Then makes a bold promise In verse 7 Right Whatever you ask I'll give you I don't know If you've ever made A bad New Year's resolution This one At least it's not as bad As I've resolved To give My wife's daughter

Whatever she might ask Okay That's a rash vow You can't take back Especially when you do it publicly Before Hundreds of guests And then verse 8 What happens When Herodias' daughter Runs in And she demands John's head on a plate His balancing act Of the king Alright Trying to please everyone Starts to tumble down All this time Herod has been caught Trying to please Herodias And pleasing the crowds Around him And now there's no way out Okay He tried to control Both John and his wife But now he has to kill John Otherwise he's going to look Very powerless And humiliated Before his guests Right Now we talk about Losing face In some cultures This would be a big loss of face If he wasn't able to do What he promised And so he has to Reluctantly send Verse 11 For John's execution We tried a few things At home for Christmas Like different foods My amazing wife

[23 : 02] She managed to do Some roast duck And then I was like Googling Or going on YouTube How do we cut this thing You know like I'm not a peaking duck master I have no idea What I'm doing Alright Sadly In Herod's court There are professional executions And this is far less appetizing Isn't it In fact it's meant To be gruesome And shocking We actually hear Jesus was crucified Very Very demurely We get a lot of detail here We're meant to feel The yuck The disgust The shock But notice Who I think Is the most humiliated here It's Herod Isn't it It's not John It's Herod's conscience That Will carry the weight Of his sinful actions Not John And you know what Without repentance When heaven's kingdom Fully appears When Jesus returns Herod can only expect As we hear A greater judgment day

Separated from the goodness Of God forever He needs to repent From what he has done Matthew you see Is telling history Like it truly is If you read the history books About people like Herod You're only going to get The history that they tell Right Winners tell history usually But here We get the real juice And Matthew is doing this Compare and contrast Because he is Wanting us to Ask the question Who's the better king Who are you going to Model your life like You're going to go after Herod Or are you going to look For a better king instead Some of you here You might be You might be interested In people Hanging out with people Getting to know friends here That's why you come to church Some people You're here because You're not sure But this is a nice place To be on a Sunday afternoon You're welcome here It's so good to see you here But this is the question For you too

Especially if you have not Made a commitment To follow Jesus As your king Who is your king? Who is your king? Who is the one Who rules your life?

How are you ruling your life If you are The master of your own ship? How's it going? Will you end up rewarded Or humiliated When everything Is counted up?

I want to challenge you If you do not know The Lord Jesus If you do not know Of a better king What he's like There's one more day In this year To find out But there are 366 days next year To discover This king Jesus So let's go briefly To our final verse together Alright Which speaks of The response of John's disciples Before A much better king John's disciples Came And took his body And buried it And then they went And told Jesus It's New Year's Eve And as we look back As Fran has already Prompted us to There are sure to be Joys And there are sure to be Regrets I have them too And I don't know What sorrows and scars That you intend to bring Into 2024 Can I ask that

[26 : 37] How do you plan To deal with them How do you plan To deal with the hurts That you are feeling Right now Over this past year And there may be many You're going to Indulge yourself Would that Medicate your grief I'll just treat myself To this Or that Or you just Bury your disappointments That never happened Right Just cross out that year Looking forward now New resolutions New dreams New goals Can I challenge you though To consider how John's disciples Must have felt They lost their bold Faithful teacher And baptizer For here at a birthday Right After months of unjust Treatment And imprisonment And yet what do they do They take the body They give him A proper burial And then they went And told Jesus There's no greater truth

Told in just Six words For us today Go and tell Jesus It's as simple as that Go and tell Jesus When you look back On your Yeah Look Too often Right We try to Cover up our mistakes Or we try to Push it aside Just start By going to tell Jesus About it When I look back On my ear Too often I try to Challenge Right And push something When When some Problem comes up Too often This is my sin I go I'll fix this I'll sort it out Right If my wife Or my kids They say You know There's something wrong I'll say Alright Do this then That's the challenge Isn't it Like Herod Our fears and sorrows They master us We think that We have to Solve them Ourselves And even if we Solve them Then that just Makes us

Kings In our own eyes We can't solve them We'll turn And try something else We're still thinking Me Me Me But if you're here And your griefs And your sorrows Are tempting you To respond in unbelief And despair The better option Is this Verse 12 Go and tell Jesus Jesus is the prophet Who will increase In the story As John the Baptist Decreases Jesus He's the king Much more powerful Than Herod Could ever be If you scrolled up To that passage Section That Fran read Right End of Matthew 13 You have discovered Jesus was rejected By his own family If you've ever felt rejected If that's your struggle That you're bringing Into the new year Mistreated by your family The closest ones Around you Your best option

Is not to feel sorry For yourself Or to get bitter Or get sinful revenge What can you do? Start by What we see here Go and tell Jesus You too Lord And our Lord will say Yes My child Me too And if we scroll forwards In Matthew's gospel If we keep reading on In the next few weeks This is what we'll see We'll see Jesus Not saying Take revenge Start a revolution He will not do any of that And he will not say Something like Do nothing Forget this world And all of its problems Our Lord Jesus Is so balanced He gets into action But in ways That will blow our minds He's the one Who has embraced And rejected himself And we will see that Jesus is the one Who gets angry at sin And hypocrisy At the Pharisees And yet he is Compassionate To the crowds That need him

Have no other option Jesus is the one Who turns from John's innocent death here And he himself Is going to host A different kind Of feast For thousands He's going to display A different kind of power Because he is here To bring a different Kind of kingdom For you And for me That's a gospel Isn't it That's the gospel Out of tragedy Will come triumph Out of sorrow Comes salvation If you're here And you say Does God even care About my suffering Let me say this Yes He does Go tell Jesus Look at his life He carried the sins Of the world Upon the cross He suffered For everything That we have done wrong So he knows Your suffering He cares He feels you If I worshipped Any other religion Right I would not be able To say God cared About my suffering Right

[31 : 41] I talked to A neighbor He's a Muslim And he said Well God will judge He will sort things out He's talking about Allah by the way Right Very distant A different conception Of God To didn't come down To earth That's blasphemy For them Or maybe there's Other religions Where if there is a God We can't know anything About him Not Jesus If you and I Worship Jesus We have The God Who came To suffer With us And for us The good news Is that he too Suffered an innocent death From wicked people So go and tell him Tell him all your struggles Your sorrows Your fears Tell him all your Disappointments This year He knows every Unfulfilled dream That you had This past year Jesus he never got To travel beyond His country Did he He never got married He never got a promotion In his life Just go tell him You too

Jesus Go tell him Your sins He was tempted In every way Just like we are Yet without sin
So he is worth Bringing all your Struggles to Confess to him Jesus is not A puppet king
He's not a tyrant king He is a servant King The one we need Ready to heal And forgive
you There are superheroes Out there They will come and go Santa photo booths Are
packed away No more superhero Santa There's franchises That come out In the movies
And they'll just Come and go Who can keep up With them right And yet the throne Of
grace Where there is One superhero One action king That's always open 24-7 Let's go to
him Let's go to our king Jesus Let's do that now In prayer And let's continue To do that In
song Next Lord Jesus We reflect

And we give thanks At all that you are Compared To the kings Of this world Lord forgive
us Forgive us Where we have Looked to other gods Other dreams Other hopes To fulfill
us Thank you so much That you are ready To heal and forgive us To welcome us Where
we are failing And thank you That Lord Jesus We can sing We can remind each other Of
your goodness That is all that we need We thank you For being the far better king That we
need We pray all these things In your mighty name