

The Missionary King Mk 6:30-56

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We're following along from the passage we looked at last week.

Last week Jesus was coaching his disciples to do ministry.

We saw that the people who thought they knew Jesus

the people from his own home town

weren't interested in accepting him for who he is.

"This is just the local carpenter.

How could he be God's long awaited leader for his people?"

We saw that other people were hostile to God's call on their lives,

because they don't like their immorality being questioned -

that's Herodias,

or they have someone else shouting in their ear to ignore Jesus -

that's Herod.

But into that non responsive world,

Jesus sent the twelve to preach repentance and faith in Jesus.

And he gave them the power to do the work he gave them to do.

There's nothing worse than being given a job

and not being given the tools to complete the job.

But Jesus always gives his disciples

the tools to complete the job he gives them.

And so we come to today's passage.

Jesus is continuing to coach his disciples in ministry.

Think back to the last time you saw a crowd of people.

How did you feel about the people in the crowd?

I saw the kids at Hastings Primary getting on the bus on Tuesday,
they were off to the city to see a show.

It was a beautiful sunny day and everyone was happy.

And I felt happy for them that they could have a lovely excursion.

I went to the cricket at the Boxing Day Test.

At the end of the day thousands of people surge from the MCG
to Richmond station to catch the train home.

How do I feel about them?

Slightly embarrassed, slightly protective of my children
with the yobos who have got themselves very drunk at the cricket
making complete fools of themselves.

And truth be told,

I'm probably feeling slightly superior too.

'Look kids, this is not how we behave,
we're better than that.'

How does Jesus feel when he sees a crowd?

As our reading begins today,

Jesus and his disciples are exhausted.

The people are crowding them

wanting non-stop attention.

They didn't even have a chance to grab a bite to eat.

It was full on.

Jesus tried to slip away with his disciples to a quiet place.

They took a boat and went to a solitary place.

And when they got there,

they were mobbed by the crowds again.

How is Jesus going to be feeling?

How would you be feeling?

Don't these people recognise basic decency?

Can't they just let Jesus speak to them when he is ready?

You wouldn't go around to the doctors house after hours

and demand that the doctor see you now, would you?

But these people wouldn't give Jesus a moment's rest.

So how does Jesus feel about that?

v34 tells us,

"When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd,

he had compassion on them,

because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

So he began to teach them many things."

Jesus had compassion.

That word compassion is a key word.

It's a very strong word.

It means his guts were churned.

That word for compassion is only ever used in the Bible about Jesus.

No one else displays that strong cut churned compassion.

And Jesus is only ever described

with that compassion when he sees a crowd.

What moved Jesus so much about the crowd?

They were like sheep without a shepherd.

They were vulnerable without anyone to lead them or look after them.

The prophet Ezekiel had prophesied about a shepherd who would come,

"As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them,

so I will look after my sheep."

Jesus is that prophesied shepherd,

and when he sees a crowd who are like sheep without a shepherd,

he feels great compassion for them.

Why?

Because they are lost.

They are people who are made in the image of their creator,

but who are completely blind to their need for a relationship with him.

They busy themselves with all manner of activities.

But they miss what is most important.

And Jesus' heart goes out to them.

He's filled with compassion because he wants to see them saved.

He wants them to be gathered with all God's people in heaven.

Well I wonder if we have that kind of a heart for the lost?

We want to be effective in mission for Jesus.

Our mission statement as a church is,

"Helping people discover Jesus and his purpose for our lives".

Are we burdened by the state of the lost?

Are our hearts filled with compassion like Jesus' heart?

Because I don't think we will be effective in achieving our mission

if we don't feel the urgency.

Jesus feels the urgency.

What does he do about it?

3:34 tells us,

"He began teaching them many things."

Jesus perceives that the great need of the crowd is to be taught the truth about God.

All kinds of things can trigger our compassion.

My heart goes out to children who grow up with messed up lives because their parents don't care for them properly.

You might have other things that trigger your compassion.

There are lots of good reasons to feel compassion.

But we have to make sure

that people's ignorance of the living God triggers our compassion.

That's what triggers Jesus' compassion.

In fact it triggered Jesus' compassion so much that he lost track of time, and kept teaching the crowd until it was too late for them to go for food.

Really? Is that what happened?

Of course not.

Jesus doesn't lose track of time.

Jesus engineered the situation where the crowd was hungry.

It was a training opportunity for his disciples.

Jesus went on teaching.

The disciples were getting anxious.

"Hey Jesus! Isn't it about time to wind it up now?"

"We've got a bit of a situation developing here.

And you are continuing on oblivious."

"Umm Jesus, look at your watch,

check the time."

They started in a whisper talking to one another.

Then eventually it got to the point where they thought,

"We've gotta do something.

We've going to be reading about it

on the front page of the Jerusalem Post in the morning.

'Crowd members perish through hunger

as charismatic preacher goes on into the night.'"

So they approached Jesus and had a quiet word.

And what was his answer?

Verse 37,

"You give them something to eat."

The crowds are like sheep without a shepherd.

They need to be taught the truth about God.

Jesus has been giving them spiritual food.

But that job is going to be passed on to the disciples.

They will inherit the job of giving spiritual food to the crowds.

So "You give them something to eat."

Now of course the disciples have no way
to give the crowds something to eat.

They splutter about the cost.

Clearly they don't have half a year's wages sitting in their wallets.

And even if they did, there are no shops open to buy food.

So what is Jesus doing?

Is he just trying to make them feel inadequate,
so he can show them up by doing a miracle?

No. Jesus isn't shaming his disciples.

He doesn't have a low self esteem

that needs to put other people down to bolster himself.

Jesus is teaching his disciples.

What is he teaching them?

He's teaching them that when God commands you to feed his people
that you can't feed them from your own resources.

You can only feed them from the food that God gives.

And so notice what happens after Jesus does the miracle.

The disciples fed the crowd.

Verse 41.

Jesus gave the food to the disciples to distribute to the people.

"You give them something to eat."

They did but only after Jesus provided it for them.

And so too as Jesus disciples,

we can only provide the food that Jesus gives.

It's a temptation and a dead end,
to try to feed God's people from your own resources.
God has provided the food.
It's his word.
Nothing else will feed his people.
And until we recognise that,
we will get ourselves all worried about the people starving
because we don't have the resources in ourselves to feed them.

Notice a couple of other details from the passage.

In verse 39,

'Jesus directed the people to sit down in groups on the green grass.'

Now Mark is very economical with giving out details.

If he gives you a detail it's for a reason.

These people are like sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus has come to be their shepherd.

What do we know about the good shepherd from the Old Testament?

The Lord is my shepherd.

And he leads me into green pastures.

Mark is pointing to Jesus as the fulfilment of Psalm 23.

In verse 40,

the people sit down on the grass in groups of hundreds and fifties.

Where do we find groups of hundreds and fifties in the Old Testament?

In Exodus 18, when Moses is appointing leaders over the people.

He breaks them into hundreds and fifties

and appoints leaders to be their judges.

So Mark is painting Jesus as the new Moses,

and the disciples as the new judges over God's people.

And the twelve baskets over in verse 43.

That points to God's bountiful provision.

There was more left over at the end,

than there was to begin with.

And it points to the feast in heaven.

Where we see God's overflowing generosity and love for his people.

Well straight after he fed 5000 men, maybe 15000 people,
Jesus sent his disciples off in a boat to Bethsaida.

But he went off up a mountain by himself to pray.

Three times in Mark's gospel Jesus goes off up a mountain to pray.
Ch1, Ch6 and Ch 14.

Each time it's because people want to make him king.

You can't read it in Mark,

but in John after the feeding of the 5000,
the people want to make him king.

And so Jesus disappears for some quiet time in prayer.

He's praying that the Father will give him strength to take the hard road,
instead of the easy road.

The road of suffering and the cross before being glorified by the Father
rather than the road of seizing glory for himself.

When Jesus has finished his prayer time,

he catches up with the disciples

who are busy rowing into a head wind on the lake.

How does he catch up with them?

He goes walking on the water.

It's quite easy to catch up with a rowing boat paddling into the wind
if you can walk on water.

But you have to be able to walk on water,
that's the tricky part.

Jesus is the only person who can do that,
apart from some tricky magicians

who put Perspex sheets just under the surface of the water

and post videos of them supposedly walking on the water on Youtube.

There were no Perspex sheets this time.

Jesus just did another miracle.

But why?

I get why he fed the 5000.

They were hungry.

Jesus had been feeding the spiritually for hours,
but he wasn't going to let them starve physically.
But why did he need to walk on water.
It does sound a lot more like the miracles of a showman,
than the miracles of the Son of God,
who usually directed his miracles to meeting human need.
The key to understanding this miracle
is in the surprising detail in verse 48.
"He was about to pass by them."
Like "Hi guys,
I'm just going for a stroll.
I'll meet you on the other side of the lake."
Is that it?
No. That's not Jesus.
There are two times in the Old Testament,
where God passes by.
Once with Moses, once with Elijah.
It's when God has some particularly important servants
and he wants to show them a glimpse,
no more than a glimpse mind you,
any more would kill them.
He wants to show them a glimpse of his glory.
"Then the Lord said to Moses,
'When my glory passes by,
I will put you in a cleft in the rock
and cover you with my hand until I have passed by.
Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back;
but my face must not be seen.'"
Jesus is giving the disciples a similar glimpse of God's glory
as he passes by them.
It's to help them recognise that he is God the Son.
That everything the Father does he has entrusted to the Son.
And the disciples were terrified.
But in verse 50, Jesus said to them.
"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

Or a better translation, if it wasn't such bad English, would be,
"Take courage! I am. Don't be afraid."
What did God call himself
when he spoke to Moses from the burning bush?
I am.
Jesus shows his disciples his glory as he passes by them,
walking on the water,
just like the Father did for Moses and Elijah.
Jesus calls himself with the name of God
given to Moses at the burning bush.
This is not a random miracle.
This is a teaching miracle.
It's to reveal the identity of Jesus to his disciples.
They were a bit slow, you see.
Verse 52 tells us,
"They had not understood about the loaves;
their hearts were hardened."
What was it that they had not understood?
They knew that they had had a feed.
A good feed at that,
plenty of food left over.
They knew that the source of their feed was a miracle done by Jesus.
What had they not understood?
They had not understood the significance of the miracle.
They had not understood what the miracle was telling them about Jesus.
They had not understood from the miracle
that the man they were following was more than just a mighty prophet.
He was God the Son.
Why had they not understood?
Their hearts were hardened.
Sin clouds our spiritual vision.
It's not just about doing wrong things.
It's about failing to appreciate who Jesus is,
about failing to give him the honour and worship he is due.
When your heart is hardened,

you can't appreciate Jesus for who he is.
Which is why Jesus gave his disciples a clearer view on the lake.

Do you know people's hearts can be hardened in the same way today?

Some people see the feeding of the 5000
and they believe that the miracle happened.

They understand the facts.

That there were 5 loaves and 2 fish

and Jesus made more food to feed a large crowd of people.

But their hearts can still be hardened from recognising from the miracle
exactly who Jesus is and what they need to do about it.

If you are someone like that,

then you might look around the people here this morning,
and you might say to yourself,

"These people don't just believe this stuff to be true,
they are committed to it in a way that I am not.

They seem to really love Jesus.

Jesus seems to be the most important thing for them
whereas for me he's just another part of life."

If that's you,

then I have good news for you.

The good news is that is telling you, you aren't a Christian.

Why is that good news?

Because you can't do anything about a problem
until you recognise the problem is there.

But if you've recognised the problem,

then we can help you to do something about it.

We can help you to make Jesus the most important thing in your life.

We can help you to really love Jesus.

Do talk with me after the service

if you feel like you need some help with that.

Don't let the feeding of the 5000 just be about physical food.

It's got to be about bringing us into relationship with God.

Remember that Jesus began by teaching the crowds
for many hours about God.

That's how they got hungry in the first place.

So that's how we want to apply this passage.

If this passage has revealed to you
that you aren't yet a Christian,

then praise God and do something about it.

But if you are already a Christian,
take a leaf out of Jesus' book.

Develop compassion for the crowds who are helpless,
like sheep without a shepherd.

Recognise that we are given the task
of providing spiritual food for them.

Recognise that we cannot provide that food ourselves,
we don't have the resources.

But Jesus has given us the resources in his word.

That is where we find the food to give the crowds
who are starving hungry for God's Word.