

Jesus, Miracle Worker

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Preacher: Martin Pakula

[0 : 00] And it could be illness, it doesn't have to be. I've certainly seen Christians much younger than me who have suffered sadly from depression and will get to a point where they feel overwhelmed.

Or it might be other situations, a long-standing unwanted singleness. There's various things that Christians struggle with and get to the point of feeling overwhelmed.

I think Christian ministry as well, serving God can actually get you to a point where you feel overwhelmed. I don't know if you're like me, but every now and then if I'm walking through a crowded place like the city or particularly when I was at the Olympics in Sydney and you're amongst thousands of people and you look at all those people and you think all those people need to hear the good news of Jesus.

How many of these people are going to hell? I should be telling them the good news of Jesus. And as you start thinking, I should be shouting it out from the rooftops, there's no way that you're going to do that.

You sort of give up before you even start. I think sometimes it can be like that. If you think about that, we need to tell our family and friends and workmates and neighbours about Jesus and you see that need for them to hear the gospel and just thinking about it sometimes can overwhelm you.

[1 : 16] So, you actually give up before you even try. I don't know if that's just me. Is that what it's like for you? Well, I once was young and keen and I'm not knocking it at all.

I think it's a very good thing to do. And I was in my first year of the Ministry Training Strategy, MTS, which our own Matt Schaefer is doing this year.

And I didn't give up before I tried. I was going nuts. I went nuts telling people the gospel. I went nuts meeting up with people one-to-one for Bible study, running Bible study groups.

But again, and I'm sure this won't happen to Matt, but I got to this point where I felt overwhelmed. There were hundreds of Christians who needed to be built up in their faith. There were thousands of non-Christians who needed to hear the gospel and I felt overwhelmed by that.

How was I going to meet all these people's needs? For those who are on the ministry staff here, I think I'm pretty sure they must know what I mean. And hopefully, for many of us also, you'll know what I mean by feeling overwhelmed by people's needs in the service of God.

[2 : 25] I would say that I suspect if you don't know what that feels like, again, it might be because you've given up before you've even started or tried. But I'm sure you'll feel like you know what it feels to be overwhelmed at different times, whether that's the case for you in your service of God or not.

There are times where we will feel overwhelmed with normal life. It might be a deadline for you at school or at university that you've got assignments coming up and you're feeling the pressure or at work, you're starting to feel the pressure of that deadline coming.

And again, you're wondering, will you make it? Well, if this is you, I hope that tonight the Word of God will encourage you and encourage you particularly in a way forward as a Christian.

And for those few of you left who are young and powering along without a care in the world, I think that's great and I mean that. But listen carefully because the time will come for you as well where you will feel overwhelmed by life or by your service to God and then hopefully this Word of God in Matthew will help you.

So tonight I hope we'll see what a difference Jesus makes to us when life threatens to overwhelm us. Now we're looking here at two of the classic miracles of Jesus.

[3 : 45] They don't come much bigger than this. Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 is in all four Gospels, so it must be important. And His walking on water is in three of the four Gospels.

So these are two of the biggest miracles that Jesus does and I'm sure there are some big lessons for us to learn from them. So let's have a look. The first lesson, if you look with me at the Bible there, chapter 14, verse 13.

Now when Jesus heard this, He withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by Himself. What did Jesus hear when He heard this?

Well, as Matt pointed out in Matthew's Gospel there, just above what we're reading there on the page, is the death of John the Baptist in verses 3 to 12.

Although that's actually a flashback to the death of John the Baptist. And it's probably not what Jesus heard, but in fact verses 1 and 2 of chapter 14 are probably referring to what Jesus has heard, which is saying that Herod has heard about the sort of miracles Jesus has already been doing and Herod starts taking an interest in Him.

[4 : 58] And that causes Matthew to then go back to that flashback of John the Baptist's death. But as Jesus hears that Herod has heard about Him, is taking an interest in Him, knowing what happened to John the Baptist, Jesus' time has not yet come.

And so He withdraws. And He withdraws, it says, to a deserted place, which is literally a desert place, which is an important phrase, but we'll come back to that.

And verse 13 continues, But when the crowds heard it, they followed Him on foot from the towns. Now, Matthew doesn't tell us exactly where this is happening. We know from the other Gospels that somewhere to the north of Lake Galilee, so around the top of Lake Galilee in the north of Israel, Jesus and His disciples get into a boat.

They're out on the lake, making their way to a deserted place, a wilderness place. And the crowds hear about it and they run across on land to get there before Jesus and His disciples.

And verse 14, When Jesus went ashore, He saw a great crowd and He had compassion for them and cured their sick. So, Jesus sees the great crowd of people, He has mercy on them and He heals them.

[6 : 16] I mean, no doubt many in the crowd believed in Him, no doubt many didn't. But nevertheless, He has mercy on them and heals many of them. And our Mark's Gospel tells us also that He taught them, taught them about the Kingdom of God.

But, verse 15, evening was approaching. When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, This is a deserted place and the hour is now late.

Send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves. So, it was about to get dark. The crowds of people need to eat. They're in the middle of nowhere, a remote place outside of the towns.

And so, the disciples say, send them away. They're in the middle of nowhere. They need to go to the towns to get something to eat. Again, notice that phrase a second time now that they say this is a desert place, a wilderness, which is a funny thing to say because if you look down at verse 19, it says that Jesus has them sit down on the green grass.

So, it's actually not a desert. But again, we'll come back to that. It will be important. But the disciples have pointed out to Jesus they're in the middle of nowhere. The crowds need to go and get dinner and Jesus says to them in verse 16, there's no need for them to do that.

[7 : 33] You give them some food. Now, if you were listening when Matt read this passage to us and you had your brain switched on, that's actually a bit ridiculous.

How are the disciples going to get food for 5,000 people? Verse 21 says, there are 5,000 men plus women and children. So, it's actually more than 5,000.

People think that it's probably about 15,000 to 20,000 people. So, it's actually not quite right when we often say the feeding of the 5,000. It should be the feeding of the 20,000 or something like that.

And Jesus says to the disciples, well, you feed them. And the disciples reply, verse 17, we've got nothing here but five loaves and two fish. They're saying, you've got to be kidding Jesus.

How on earth are we going to provide food for all these people? It's overwhelming. Here they are with resources that are pathetically small, facing the needs of thousands and thousands of people and it's impossible.

[8 : 37] They can't meet their needs. How can Jesus ask them then to do the impossible? For that matter, how can Jesus ask you to do the impossible?

How can he ask you to be the only Christian witness at your workplace? Or for that matter, how can he ask you to struggle with illness if that's the case for you or depression?

Well, the disciples see the needs in front of them and they are overwhelmed. They can't do it and of course, either can we. But the point of this passage is that Jesus can. In verse 18, he says, bring them here to me, the fish and the loaves that they have and have a good look at what he does in verse 19.

He ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

So, Jesus gave the food to the disciples so they in turn could feed the people. Jesus is the one who can feed the crowds, who can meet their needs but he does it through the disciples.

[9 : 52] And of course, if you're familiar with this passage, you can kind of miss it after a while. This is actually an amazing and outstanding miracle. Verse 20, they all ate and were filled and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, 12 basketfuls.

All the people, thousands of them, ate, were satisfied and there's bread left over. So, Jesus heals them, he teaches, he meets their needs, he feeds them and he does it abundantly.

He pours out his blessings on them so that not only are they satisfied but there's food left over. He can provide for their needs and he does provide for their needs.

Now, this is a real miracle. Like I said, it's an outstanding miracle but I think there's actually even then more to it than that. I think that this miracle and the next one of walking on the water actually have more significance to them than just a miracle.

It's not like I think Jesus got to a certain point in his life and thought I'll do some huge cosmic party trick and that should somehow show people who I am. It's not a miracle for the sake of a miracle.

[11 : 03] I think it's interesting, the previous page if you look back to chapter 13 there's Jesus' teaching in parables there and the parables are such that they're not immediately obvious and you actually have to mull over them to get their full significance.

And I wonder whether these miracles coming after chapter 13 are actually like that that you need to mull over them to get their full significance more and particularly that you have to have your Old Testament hat on to see the full significance.

In the Old Testament God's people Israel were in the desert in the wilderness and God fed them with bread from heaven fed them with bread with manna through Moses and here are God's people again in the wilderness in a desert place which Matthew has said twice as I pointed out and here's Israel in the wilderness being fed by the Son of God the one greater than Moses who feeds them in the desert who has compassion on his people who teaches them heals them feeds them provides for their needs he can provide and he does the disciples definitely can't provide for their needs themselves their resources are pathetic they can't provide but Jesus can and does now the greatest need that those people have and Jesus of course was well aware of it is the forgiveness of their sins and Jesus knew that he would die on the cross to meet their greatest need and pay for their sins by dying in their place and of course the greatest need people have now is the same of forgiveness of sins but the needs are so overwhelming when you take a really good look at the endless amount of people who need to hear the gospel from you and from me and the needs are so massive that it can get overwhelming but we should not be overwhelmed because though our resources and power are pathetic

Jesus's are not and he is the Lord who can meet people's needs and he does it through us so we need not get overwhelmed as we seek to share the gospel with our family our friends our workmates we need to rely on Jesus that he is the one who can meet their needs I think the second miracle Jesus does here is also a little bit like a visual parable a real miracle and again astounding in itself but there is more to it than meets the eye if we start again if you look at verse 22 we start at the beginning immediately it says Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he dismissed the crowds now it says there he made the disciples get into the boat and take off the original language is that he compelled them he forced them if you like to get in the boat and go off on the lake without him now Matthew's making a point there he doesn't tell us why Jesus compels the disciples to go off in the boat by themselves but it's clear that he did it on purpose you could guess verse 23 says that he prays and maybe he wanted to pray by himself maybe he wants to do this miracle maybe that's why he's done it on purpose be that as it may night has fallen the evening has come and verse 24 tells us the disciples are now by themselves in the boat rowing away far from the land being battered by the waves because the wind it says was against them so it's a bit like Matthew chapter 8 where again they were on the lake and a furious storm came up but here they are without Jesus and here's the miracle verse 25 early in the morning Jesus came walking towards them on the sea early in the morning there by the way is literally in the original language at the fourth watch of the night which is

Roman time keeping and people think it's somewhere between three and six in the morning so right at the end of the night Jesus comes out to them and again you don't want to miss it if you're too familiar with the story it's an incredible miracle unbelievable except that it's actually true Jesus goes out to them walking on liquid waves on water as if it's solid he walks on water now I think this is a story that most Aussies know I doubt most Aussies have read it but people know that Jesus walked on water and if somebody's done something incredible like they just got their most number of goals scored in the football game this afternoon then you'll say that they're such a legend that they walk on water you know of course they don't walk on water because not literally because nobody can although here Jesus actually did walk on water but again a bit like the feeding of the 5,000 it's an outstanding miracle in itself but I think there's more to it than just a miracle for the sake of doing a miracle again there's a significance to it and for if you have your

[16 : 22] Old Testament hat on there's something to see about what's going on here what does the Old Testament say what does it say about who walks on water well Job speaks about it in Job chapter 9 verse 8 Job speaking about God says that God alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea God alone walks on the water which kind of makes sense God's the creator he made everything he made the sea of course God could walk on the sea if he chose to and here is Jesus walking on the water he's trying to teach the disciples something he's trying to show them he is the Lord of the universe because if they understand that they may not get so overwhelmed but they are overwhelmed their reaction is there in verse 26 they're terrified when the disciples saw

Jesus walking on the sea they were terrified saying it's a ghost and they cried out in fear the disciples give way to their fear now I don't think it's like people were more stupid or gullible than us 2,000 years ago and actually believe that people can walk on water they know very well that people can't walk on water and they haven't been drinking so their only other explanation they've got left is it can't possibly be a real person they think it's a ghost and so they're terrified but immediately Jesus seeks to calm their fears he says to them take heart it is I don't be afraid don't be afraid Jesus says don't be overwhelmed it's me it's Jesus in fact he doesn't actually say exactly it is I he says literally I am which is a clue again for those with their Old Testament hats on when Moses asked God in Exodus chapter 3 who God is

God says he is the I am he is the living one the one who exists the one who is here is the Lord the I am who walks on the water if Jesus here is the Lord which he is the Lord of the universe then there's no need to fear there's no need to be overwhelmed well Matthew's gospel goes on to record something for us which the other gospels don't which is I think just fascinating and it's about Peter and Peter is his usual impetuous self it's very true to life Peter says verse 28 Lord if it's you command me to come to you on the water now again you might have missed that as you read over it when Matt read it for us before but that is outstanding faith on the part of Peter Peter actually as he often does every now and then he actually gets it here that Jesus is the Lord of the universe his fear is gone he sees

Jesus the Lord and he says if it's you or it would be better translated since since it's you Jesus you're the Lord of the universe since it is you command me to walk on the water and I know I will and Jesus does he commands Peter come and Peter does come Peter actually gets out of the boat and starts walking on the water which is really an even greater miracle because not only does Jesus walk on the water he can actually get others to walk on the water which is incredible now I'm not actually going to go in application and suggest that we should walk on water I'm sure Jesus could get us to walk on the water if he wanted to but again I don't think this is a miracle just for the sake of doing something spectacular or out there I don't think that's the point of this miracle it's fairly unique for a starter so this is the unique apostle Peter and Jesus is teaching him something here and there will be application for us but I think the point that's being made is about fear being overwhelmed as I'm suggesting or trusting in Jesus and here is Peter showing incredible trust in

Jesus walking on the water himself his fear is gone but but verse 30 when he noticed the strong wind he became frightened and so his great faith gives way to fear so why why does Peter get so overwhelmed why does he lose it at this point when he had such great trust well it's because verse 30 he noticed the strong wind it's because he took his eyes off Jesus and started focusing on his surroundings on the terrible chaos and the wind and the waves and the storm around him and it's not like anything has changed Jesus hasn't changed suddenly and his circumstances haven't suddenly changed the wind and the storm and the impossible and everything that was there it was all there just before just the same but he's taken his eyes off Jesus his doubts have started to rise his fear has started to rise and he's lost it

[21 : 43] I think there's a big lesson for us in that when I lost it earlier in the year when I was sick after my back operation a good Christian friend of mine suggested that I read Dr.

Martin Lloyd Jones book Spiritual Depression and I noticed in the briefing magazine that there's a review of it in this month's briefing and if you don't know what the briefing is I know some of you get it you should get it it's a great monthly magazine from Matthias Media anyway Martin Lloyd Jones in this book Spiritual Depression has various sermons on this passage and many others which encourage us gently but firmly as Christians not to focus on what will cause doubts and fears and threaten to overwhelm us but to focus on Jesus because Jesus is the Lord of the universe and Peter was doing so well here when he focused on Jesus but as he took his eyes off him and started focusing on his surroundings his troubles he lost it and Jesus said to him you of little faith why did you doubt he rebukes Peter as he no doubt rebukes us why did we doubt him why didn't we trust him more now of course we can't do it of course we can't walk on water of course we can't convert the world our family friends workmates neighbours whatever and just go nuts and see them all converted and of course we can't meet people's endless needs by ourselves but Jesus can because he is the Lord now I'm not actually saying that

Jesus will convert everyone through you or even that he will heal you if you're suffering from some illness at the moment or that he'll make you pass your course or anything else like that he might he certainly can but he might not but one thing is certain as these two great miracles show and it's that Jesus is the Lord of the universe who is in control of our world and is in control of our lives as well down to every detail of them and we also see here that he has compassion and that he loves us so if Jesus wants you to be in pain he has good reasons for it in his love if Jesus wants you to fail he has good reasons for it in his love if you finally do get up the courage and share the gospel with one of your workmates or with your neighbour or with that family member and they rebuke you they reject you for it they don't speak to you again perhaps if Jesus wants that to happen he's doing so in full control in his love

Jesus made the disciples here get out into the boat go out into the lake into the wind and didn't come out to them until the fourth watch of the night why did he make them wait why did they have to suffer all that time I don't know it doesn't say and maybe with you and I as well he may not come and fix whatever we want him to fix at all or maybe not for a long time but if that is the case he's doing it for his own good reasons in his love he is the Lord of the universe sovereign and in control he controls the wind and the waves and he controls your life and mine if like Peter you and I do take our eyes off Jesus and start focusing on the terrible situation that we may be in if we start focusing on our trials and struggles then I think we will start giving way to doubts and to fears now life is going pretty well for me at the moment but sometimes as you will know it doesn't there are times when

I hate life there are times when things happen in life that are terrible beyond what I could have imagined there are times when I doubt God as I think all Christians do but we shouldn't doubt God and we shouldn't give way to fear and we shouldn't get to the point where our doubts and fears overwhelm us because Jesus is the Lord of the universe and the path away from doubts and fears is to focus on him and by focusing on him I mean focusing on his death and resurrection focusing on the fact that Jesus in his death on the cross loves us has died for us has saved us reading books on the atonement getting seriously into the Bible to focus on who Jesus is as we're doing in this sermon series and to look at what he's done for us focusing on Jesus is the path away from fear and doubt finally I want to finish with did you notice here what Jesus did when

[26 : 55] Peter gave way to fear and doubt well Peter himself cries out Lord save me so in his fear and doubt he still turns to Jesus as we should and Jesus reaches out his hand and saves him he doesn't smash him for having fears and doubts he loves him he reaches out his hand and saves him which he does also with you and with me he doesn't smash us for having fears and doubts thank God but still loves us and saves us Jesus and Peter get into the boat the wind ceases and the disciples worship Jesus saying truly you are the son of God and the chapter finishes there with a little story of the son of God healing many people who trust him to the extent that they think if they just touch the fringe the edge of his garment they'll be healed and because they're trusting in the right place in

Jesus they are healed because he is the Lord of the universe well I've talked tonight about not giving way to our fears and doubts in the light of Jesus being the Lord of the universe and if you haven't got to that point yet in your life that's good but there certainly will be times in your service of God and just in life in general where you will give way to fears and doubts and feel overwhelmed and to be honest I guess I wonder to be a bit harsh that if you and I got off our backsides and really did start telling people around us the gospel I wonder whether that in itself would just make us feel overwhelmed but whether it's that or whether it's whatever you're struggling with there are points where we get overwhelmed and what we need to remember as Matthew is showing us here is that Jesus really is the Lord of the universe in complete control of his creation in complete control of our lives he can provide for people's needs the 5,000 the 20,000 we can't provide for their needs and we'll never be able to but Jesus can and he does it through us and we will be tempted at many points in life in ministry in our service of God or in general life to give way to fear and doubt but not if we fix our eyes on

Jesus we need to not focus on our trials and our problems we need to not focus on our pathetic resources our inadequacies our weaknesses they'll always be there and we need to not focus on those but to focus on Jesus our Lord who is in control of the universe who feeds the 20,000 who walks on water and not to give way to fear or to get overwhelmed but to trust in our Lord and Saviour let me pray that God would help us to do that now heavenly father we do thank you so much that you sent Jesus our Lord to die in our place and pay for our sins we thank you that he is the Lord of the universe we thank you that we don't have to meet everybody's needs around us but that Jesus can do that we thank you that he is in control of each of our lives and of all things and so we pray that you would help us to fix our eyes on

Jesus we pray that you would help us in doubts and fears not to give way to them but to keep focusing on Jesus and his death and resurrection we pray that you would help us to go for it in evangelism and not to give way to our fears but to fix our eyes on Jesus and we ask you this in Jesus name amen how can we ask how can Jesus ask us to do what is impossible he asked it because he wants us to do it with him even though what we have all our resources and all of our GS2 and we would have to play this in person and so in person we put his name is it means he wants to give way to him a person who will talk to us and oh my God every lord you know it means we're okay to tell us that police you love me I'm sorry to give way to him in stone um as previously said about us so can we see catch up uh this is THIS

I think that we can motivate you you it means that we would