

# 'A King Worth Following'

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Let's pray. Lord God, as we come to your word, we ask that you will help us to understand and hear it well.

and on hearing and understanding, would you help us to be obedient so that we live our lives in light of it. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, over the last few weeks, we've been traveling through the first part of Mark's gospel. And as we've done so, the recurring question that's been put before us is, who is Jesus?

Now, while Mark wants to keep that question in front of us, there's no suspense as to what his answer to the question will be.

The very first verse of the whole book tells us the beginning of the good news of Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God.

[ 1 : 1 0 ] There is no doubt Mark sees Jesus as the Messiah, the King. He is the Son of God, even.

Now, the clicker on. So, over the last few weeks, we've seen him as that King.

The powerful King and the King who calls his disciples to follow him in ministry and even in suffering.

Now, today, we're going to look at a couple of stories. And those stories give us depth of insight into who Jesus is, what kind of King he is.

They actually help us to see Jesus as the powerful and compassionate Son of God. And they show that he really is worth following.

[ 2 : 3 1 ] So, let's start in Mark chapter 6, verse 30. Now, earlier in chapter 6, Jesus had sent out his disciples on mission with the power and the authority that he himself had.

We aren't told how long that mission took. But some scholars have estimated it may have been a matter of some months. So, here in verse 30, the disciples have just come back from their mission trip.

And as you can imagine, they had stories to tell. They had things they wanted to share with Jesus about how it went and what happened and what happened next.

And the problem was, there were people everywhere. They didn't even get a chance to eat, let alone debrief their experiences.

So, Jesus suggested they go away to a quiet place. And so, they took a boat and went to a place that was known to be out in the bush, a solitary place.

[ 3 : 5 2 ] But wouldn't you know it? The crowd followed them on land. They saw where they were going and raced around on land while the boat went that way. They went that way and got there ahead of them.

You can almost read into the story the shoulder slump that that was. They're tired. They're hungry. They're hungry. And they just want to be left alone. But here's this crowd. Bigger than ever. Their mission had been almost too successful.

But that isn't the way Jesus saw it. When Jesus landed and saw the large crowd, he had compassion on them. Because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

So, he began teaching them many things. Jesus saw them and had compassion. He looked at them and saw their spiritual state.

[ 4 : 5 8 ] Like sheep without a shepherd. Now, as we've heard from our Old Testament reading in Ezekiel, sheep without a shepherd is not a random image.

In fact, this is an image that recurs throughout the Old Testament. Israel, God's people, are like sheep. And God has appointed leaders over his people to tend them, to care for them, to provide for them.

And when those leaders didn't fulfill that role, God's people were like sheep without a shepherd. Just as Jesus sees here.

And when Jesus saw that, he had compassion. He felt for them. And that compassion led him to do something about their need.

He taught them many things. Now, the rest of this story, from verses 35 down to verse 34, can be also understood in the light of this image of sheep without a shepherd.

[ 6 : 16 ] You see, because the sheep also had another need. A physical need. They're hungry.

And the disciples point this out to Jesus. Their solution was to drive the sheep away. To let them go and fend for themselves. Find their own food. But Jesus challenged that, of course.

Remember that the disciples are people to whom Jesus had given authority and power to do all the things that he did. In teaching and in miracles.

And they'd come back from a concerted time of practicing that power and that authority.

And they were full of their experiences. So, Jesus' challenge to them here is a challenge to their faith. Just how far did they think Jesus' power and authority really went?

[ 7 : 31 ] Is it up to satisfying the hunger of this huge crowd of people? Well, it obviously was not.

As we see from the rest of verse 37. That would take such a huge amount of money. You're joking. And where would we go?

Where would we find it? Even if we had the money, where would we buy it in this remote place? That's just not possible.

So, Jesus took over. And he showed them that he was not only capable of meeting the need. But he did it in abundance.

How many loaves do you have? He asked. Go and see. So, they went and found out and said, five. And two fish. Then Jesus directed them.

[ 8 : 34 ] Have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So, they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish.

And looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all.

And they ate and were satisfied. And the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken bread and fish. The number of men who had eaten was five thousand.

It's not stated how big the crowd was, but just the men was five thousand. But notice, as we went through that, that actually, it was the disciples who ended up doing a lot of the work.

Jesus asked them, how many loaves do you have? He said, go and see. You go and find out. Your job.

[ 9 : 45 ] And then, he directed them to organize the people. Get them to sit down. They got them to sit down in their hundreds and fifties. And it must have taken a little bit of work.

And then, when he'd broken the bread and the fish, he gave it to the disciples to distribute. And then afterwards, it was the disciples who picked up the leftovers.

Jesus gets the disciples to do work after all. He provides as the good shepherd, but his disciples who work as undershepherds, if you like.

Jesus wants to share his work, his ministry, with his disciples.

He did that by sending them. And here he does it by involving them in something that they didn't think they were capable of themselves. So, what can we learn from that?

[ 11 : 04 ] What's the application? First of all, Jesus is more powerful than we give him credit for very often. He is...

He exceeds our expectation in power. Secondly, Jesus is compassionate.

He's the compassionate good shepherd. He provides for the sheep, first and primarily for their spiritual needs, but also physical needs. There is nothing too hard for him.

And he loves to do it because he loves his people. And he is the shepherd who God said he would be.

Remember the reading from Ezekiel? God said that he would shepherd the people. And here it is Jesus doing it.

[ 12 : 09 ] He is... He takes the place of God. He is God. He is definitely a shepherd worth following.

And as the good shepherd, he gives his followers authority to be his undershepherds. We, as his undershepherds, have a privilege and a responsibility.

The privilege is the power and authority, but the responsibility is looking after his people, his sheep.

And that's not restricted to just our pastors and leaders in the church. It's the task of all his disciples, all his people.

And we can look for ways to show Jesus' compassion for his church in practical ways.

[13:08] Look at these verses from 1 John. This is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.

That's the depth of Jesus' compassion. Not just that he looks at us and says, oh, aren't they nice? Aren't they sweet? No.

He cares enough that he laid down his life for us. To bring us to God.

That's the gospel. But it doesn't stop there. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

[14:16] Practical ways we can care for God's sheep. And I love the way so many in this church show practical love to others when they're going through a hard time.

We see that in so many ways. It's so beautiful to see. Let's keep doing that. Let's be sensitive to how each other are traveling. To know when those hard times come.

To know when there's struggles in life. It means letting others know when you could use some support as well. Being open with each other is a big part of it.

Welcoming people who we haven't seen here before. Making a point of welcoming.

Praying for each other. Even when it's awkward to do so. Or it seems awkward or uncomfortable.

You know, it's easy to say when you hear of something, Oh, I'll pray for you.

[15:36] And it's also very easy to forget that you've said that. I know. So why can't we just pray there and then? I'll pray for you.

Can I pray for you now? Sharing encouraging words from scripture that we've read during the week. That can be so uplifting. So helpful. So encouraging. And caring. There are many, many practical ways. It doesn't take having one of these things on to do it.

We can all be involved. But actually, this story of the feeding of the 5,000 is the only event in Jesus' ministry before his death and resurrection that's recorded in all four Gospels.

And it is a story that is rich in Old Testament imagery. We've seen that from the sheep and the shepherd image, imagery and the way that that is woven through the story.

[17:02] But there's other Old Testament themes that are there. And the one that we can't miss is the theme of, or the imagery drawn from Moses and the Exodus.

And John's Gospel, when he tells this story, he brings that out very vividly. But it's certainly here in Mark's Gospel as well.

First, we see that the action takes place in the wilderness. In the Old Testament, the wilderness was the place where God traditionally met with and tested and blessed his people.

And none more so than during the Exodus. And that's emphasised. They went by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

And when they got there, the disciples said, this is a remote place. It's being emphasised. This is the wilderness. And of course, Jesus, in the wilderness, like Moses, taught truths from God in the wilderness.

[18:23] But of course, one of the big stories of the Exodus was that God provided food from heaven for his people in the wilderness.

So also, Jesus provides food where there wasn't food in the wilderness. But notice that in providing food for the people, Jesus is no longer taking the role of Moses.

He's doing what God does, actually providing food that wasn't there before. Jesus in this miracle is showing that he is God.

Not just by showing that he's the good shepherd who God promised, as we read in Ezekiel, but by doing the things that only God could do in Exodus.

And we see that again in the next story, the one that immediately follows, the story of Jesus walking on the water.

[19:42] And the Exodus theme is extended. Again, showing some really profound things about Jesus. You see, this story takes our minds to Exodus chapter 33.

In that chapter, Moses made two really bold requests of God. First of all, that his presence would go with his people.

And secondly, that God would show him, Moses, his glory. And so God gives his answers to Moses.

The Lord replied, my presence will go with you. I will give you, and I will give you rest. I will be with you. Answer to the first question.

And a few verses later, in Exodus 33, 19, the Lord said, I will cause my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, or Yahweh, in your presence.

[ 21 : 01 ] I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. Then again, a few verses later, that's exactly what happens. The Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, Yahweh, the Lord.

And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, Yahweh, Yahweh, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

So what does that have to do with Jesus walking on the water? Well, first of all, as the transition between the two stories happens, Jesus gets the disciples into the boat and they go on ahead of him.

He goes by himself up a mountain to pray, just like Moses in Exodus chapter 33, goes up a mountain to pray. Moses walked through the sea, Jesus walks on the water.

But then, when Jesus does walk, is about to go out on the lake, the boat's in trouble.

[ 22 : 29 ] They're straining at the oars, the wind's against them. And so Jesus went out, walking on the lake. And this is really surprising.

He was about to pass them by. They're in trouble, in the middle of the lake, and he's got the power to be able to walk out to them, but he doesn't.

He's about to pass them by. But remember what God did with Moses. He passed him by.

Again, Jesus is not taking the place of Moses in this story. He takes the place of God himself. And when he does talk to them, look at what he says.

They saw him walking on the lake. They thought it was a ghost. They cried out because they saw and were terrified. Immediately, he spoke to them and said, take courage, it is I.

[ 23 : 33 ] Don't be afraid. Those words, it is I, are actually, I am. Yahweh. Don't be afraid.

In effect, he's saying, take courage. I am God. Don't be afraid. God passed by and declared his name to Moses.

Jesus was about to pass by and declared his name to his disciples, Yahweh.

And then, again, surprisingly, he climbed into the boat with him. He was walking on the water. He didn't need a boat at this stage. Why did he get into the boat?

Because he was to get into the boat with them. His presence was with them. See, all these things add up to show again that Jesus is God himself.

[ 24 : 48 ] He has authority and he is king. He's surely a king that we should worship and most certainly one we can follow.

But although the disciples were amazed at this and that's probably a great understatement, they had a heap of emotions going on in them, of course.

They were terrified. They were relieved that the storm had stopped and they are amazed. But they still don't get it. They don't understand what the incident of the loaves had taught them about who Jesus is and they seemingly had missed it here as well.

They failed to learn from the feeding of the 5,000 that Jesus had more power than he thought and he was actually God himself. And they're missing it here too.

Now, the disciples just think back earlier that afternoon at the start of this story back in verse 30 when they're gathering around Jesus.

[ 26 : 14 ] they were excited about what they've been doing in ministry. They were tired from it. They were interested and excited because Jesus had given them power and authority and they'd seen it in action in ministry over that time when they were on mission.

But by the end of the day, they are in that boat flabbergasted because of Jesus' power and authority and claims of who he is that far exceeds anything that they had understood up to that point.

They weren't ready for it. They have just been bombarded by these two incidents that Jesus is not only the Messiah, God's King, but God himself.

and it's all too much for them. Does Jesus still astound us?

Does the fact that he was and is God Almighty become human astound you?

[ 27 : 39 ] Flummox you? excite you? Maybe we can pray that God would spark more of that excitement, wonder, and appreciation of who Jesus is by his spirit in us.

And how would that view of Jesus affect our prayers? What impact would it have knowing who Jesus really is?

Having a grasp that his power and authority is that of God himself? wouldn't it infuse our prayer life with a sense of trust and rest and excitement?

Let's pray that it does. Jesus is the powerful and compassionate son of God.

God, he really is worth following. He's totally worthy of our praise and allegiance in all things.

[ 29 : 01 ] the fact of who he is should cause us to delight in the fact that he invites us to be under shepherds in what he's doing in this world.

Lovingly administering his word to each other and seeking practical ways to care for each other. Let me pray.

Lord God, our Heavenly Father, we thank you for Jesus. Thank you for who he is. Thank you that he is your Messiah, your King.

He is our Shepherd. He is our Savior and our Redeemer. He is the Son of God himself. we praise and worship him and you.

In Jesus' name, Amen. that he is who who who who who who!

[ 30 : 23 ]