

Jesus Provides, Jesus Astounds and Jesus Restores

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[0 : 00] So we want to look tonight to the Gospel of Mark and to Mark chapter 6 and just to look at these three miracles that we have read together.

Somebody has described the Gospel of Mark as breathless. It's a very short, very compact account of the life and ministry of Jesus.

It's the shortest Gospel, it's only 16 chapters. It's very straight to the point, it's very fast moving.

Mark often uses words such as immediately and suddenly as the narrative moves very quickly.

The word immediately is used 77 times in the New Testament and almost half of those occasions they are used in Mark. By the middle of chapter 1 we have Jesus declaring that the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe the Gospel. There is almost no time given to the narrative of Christ's birth and there is very little time at the end really given to the resurrection.

[1 : 17] It is a very straight to the point account of Jesus' life and ministry. And when we come to chapter 6 we see that this theme of the cost of discipleship is beginning to hit home to the disciples.

You'll see at the start of chapter 6 that he teaches in his hometown of Nazareth where he receives much opposition and much offence.

He sends out the 12 apostles and then we have the beheading of John the Baptist which no doubt the disciples would have heard about. And suddenly for the first time perhaps it was coming home to the cost of discipleship.

There was many things about Jesus that were exciting, the miracles and the parables and so on.

But suddenly for the disciples the cost of discipleship was finally beginning to come home.

And we see at the start of these verses that we've read that the apostles, the disciples gather for a leadership retreat.

[2 : 28] They want to come together because we were told that they didn't even have time to eat. They were so busy with taking the Gospel out around the region.

And as Jesus takes them through this rather unusual picnic and through a storm and then on a healing tour, Jesus wants to confront his disciples and he wants to confront us tonight with these two very simple questions.

Who is Jesus and why did he come? Who is Jesus and why did he come? And we want to look at three things briefly this afternoon.

We want to see Jesus as the good shepherd who loves and leads in the feeding of the 5,000. We want to see Jesus revealed as the eternal God who astounds and assures in the account of the storm.

And then we want to see Jesus as the great restorer who offers hope and healing in this account of his healing tour. So first of all, in verses 30 to 44, we want to see Jesus, the good shepherd who loves and leads.

[3 : 44] And before we just go on to that, perhaps we could just take a notice. I don't want to overemphasise this point, but it's interesting to notice that the shepherd gathers his sheep in a remote or a desert place.

It's repeated twice in verses 31 and 32. And I think it's just worth noting, as I was praying, that I think there's a biblical pattern that sometimes God meets us in unusual places.

Isn't it a theme of scripture how often the Lord meets his people in desolate and isolated places?

We can think of Hagar in Beersheba. We can think of Jacob at Bethel. We can think of Moses at Horeb. We can think of the Exodus journey or we can think of the prophets like Hosea.

He talks about alluring Israel out into the desert to speak tenderly to her. We can think of John the Baptist himself. God very often works in the wilderness.

[4 : 53] And immediately in chapter 6 of Mark, we are being taken in terms of imagery back to the Exodus journey. And what do we see in the wilderness with regard to the Exodus journey?

Well, we see the faithlessness of the people of God. We see the failure of their leadership. And we see Moses again and again pointing to a better and more perfect leader.

What does the Lord say to Moses in Deuteronomy 18? I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among your brothers. I will put my words in his mouth and he will tell them everything I command them.

Now, of course, that's immediately talking about Joshua. But it's also pointing forward to the Lord Jesus Christ. And now Jesus meets with a huge group of people in the wilderness.

They are hungry. They are lost. And they desperately need a leader to love them, to lead them, and to provide for them. So how does Jesus respond?

[6 : 01] Well, we see in verse 34 that the good shepherd loves his sheep. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd.

And he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. And he began to teach them many things. And he began to teach them many things. This is in verse 34, one of the most beautiful verses of the Bible.

The disciples were all set for a rest. They were all set for a leadership retreat. And suddenly they were confronted with all these people. And again, they were forced to care.

They were forced to respond with pity and compassion. And they were forced to respond with pity and compassion. And as the disciples inwardly groan, what does Jesus do?

We're told that Jesus is moved with compassion. This is a very strong word in the Greek. It's more than just passing pity. It's more than Facebook compassion.

[7 : 10] Jesus' very strong word in the Greek. It's more than just passing pity. Jesus' very inner being was moved with compassion towards these people. It's related to that word that we sometimes see in the AV, the bowels of mercy.

His innermost organs were moved with regard to these people because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And the truth was that the children of Israel had had many shepherds.

But these shepherds had not fed them well. They had not led them well. And they had not loved them well. And Jesus was the great shepherd that they had all been looking for.

Jesus was the shepherd that the Old Testament had been speaking about and pointing towards in types and shadows. The great shepherd was now on the shore of Lake Galilee.

Jesus came to love. As Thomas Goodwin said, Christ is love covered over in flesh.

[8 : 19] Christ is love covered over in flesh. Christ's ministry was to love his people. We must see this incident with first century eyes.

These are the descendants of Moses. This section of Mark. The two bookends are the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000. The feeding of the 5,000, there is lots of Jewish imagery. There is this imagery of the desert of Moses. Whereas the feeding of the 4,000 is much more towards Gentiles. But we think that the feeding of the 5,000 was mainly Jewish people.

So there is this imagery around Moses. These are the descendants of Moses. And as Moses said in Numbers 27, These sheep, for many occasions, have had no shepherd or very poor shepherds. If you've been following the McShane reading plan, you'll have been reading through Judges and Mark over the last few weeks. And what do we see in Judges?

[9 : 44] We see dreadful, at times dreadful leaders of the children of Israel. We see unfaithful leaders. We see poor shepherds. But Jesus is saying, The great shepherd is finally here.

And I am here to love my people. He is fulfilling thousands of years of prophecy. And he stands before them as the great and the good shepherd.

Jesus came to be the good shepherd. Why did he come? He came to love sinners and sufferers.

One greater than Moses, one greater than David, one greater than Joshua is now before them.

His love for his people would take him all the way to the cross to lay down his life for his sheep. The great shepherd loves his sheep.

How can we apply this to our own lives? Surely what we see in Christ is an example of love for others. Christ's love for others constantly cost him.

[10:57] It caused him disruption. It caused him discomfort. He wanted to rest, but he was disrupted. He was interrupted. And surely that is the life that we are called to as Christ's followers. True Christ-like love can often be disruptive and uncomfortable. It can often stretch us beyond our comfort zone. Jesus practiced the discipline of the interrupted life.

Imagine the effect on Galilee back in chapter 1 or chapter 2, is it? Where Jesus, for the first time, sees a leper.

And we're told that he stretches out his hand and he touches him. If you know anything about leprosy in the Old Testament, you know how unclean people with leprosy were.

But we're told that Jesus not only healed him, but he touched him. Imagine the effect on Galilee when people heard that this man had touched a leper.

[12:05] When the disciples groaned, Jesus was moved with compassion. And surely this is challenging us to have Christ-like love for the lost.

How often do we allow our lives to be interrupted by broken and by confused people? Before lockdown, were our homes open and our tables occupied by the people that Jesus calls us to love? Are we just content to have in our circle of friends the people that we like and the people that like us? Or are we willing to have Christ-like love for those in the margins of society?

Imagine the gospel transformation in Scotland if we loved our communities like Christ loves them. Imagine the gospel transformation if we had a Christ-like love and if we practice what Christ practiced, the discipline of the interrupted life.

And then thirdly under this heading of the Good Shepherd Loves and Leads, we see that the Good Shepherd Leads His Sheep. The Good Shepherd Leads His Sheep. Jesus looks out on this large group of people in love.

[13:37] And what does he do? He teaches them. He teaches them. Luke tells us in Luke chapter 9, he teaches them about the kingdom of God.

You remember that this is the only miracle that's taught in every gospel apart from the resurrection. The feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle that's taught in all four gospels.

And there's another account in Luke chapter 9. And we're told that Jesus teaches them about the kingdom of God. You see, miracles alone are not a sign of divinity.

That's where so many people today get confused. There are many people who perform miracles even in the Bible. Moses, Elijah, Elisha.

Miracles corroborate Christ's divinity, but they were not alone a sign of divinity. They were signs towards the breaking in of the kingdom.

[14:44] And the great problem today is, of course, people get stuck on the signs. They get stuck on the signs and the wonders, and they want more of these things. But the signs and the wonders were all pointing towards Christ himself.

And now we have Christ in all his glory. We have the canon of scripture closed. But Jesus gives them what they really need. What do lost sheep need?

They need truth. They need the living word of God. Why? Because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

And you see, the problem is that their shepherds had been feeding them popcorn. But Jesus was giving them the bread of life himself. Is it any coincidence in John's account of the feeding of the 5,000 that this takes place when the Passover is near?

That's why there were perhaps so many people around. The Passover was about to take place. And surely there is the imagery as Jesus breaks the bread and gives thanks.

[15:54] And as these two little fishes and these five barley loaves feed thousands of people. Surely there is the imagery of Christ's body being broken.

In this amazing miracle, Jesus reverses the laws of nature. There was a shortage, but now there is a super abundance. And what we see in this miracle is that nothing limits Jesus.

He can make things from nothing. He is the creator. Therefore, some barley bread and some fish pose no challenge to him. And notice that Mark, John Mark, gives us the colour of the grass in this parable.

Have you ever noticed that before? He asks them to sit down on the green grass. And surely that is pointing us to the imagery of the green pastures.

Psalms 23. That the great shepherd, the good shepherd, loves and leads his children beside the green pastures. What is the imagery at the end of this miracle?

[17:02] The imagery is one of contentment. It's satisfaction. The people came empty. They became confused like sheep without a shepherd.

They came hungry. And now they are lying down in the green grass. And they are satisfied. And of course, John's gospel in John 6 ties this miracle.

Jesus goes on to do the teaching of him as the bread of life. And we see that link. He links it back to the feeding of the 5,000. That he is the bread of life that will always satisfy.

So the feeding of the 5,000 shows us that Jesus is the great shepherd who gathers his sheep in a desolate place, in a wilderness. He loves them.

He leads them to green pastures. And Jesus satisfies. Who is Jesus? The great shepherd. Why did he come?

[18:04] He came to love. He came to lead. He came to satisfy. But Jesus isn't just the good shepherd. He is also the eternal God.

And we're told that as they move away from the feeding of the 5,000, we see Mark's use of the word immediately in verse 45.

Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida. And we move on to our second point.

Jesus, the eternal God, astounds and assures. Jesus, the eternal God, astounds and assures.

Now, my biblical geography is not fantastic, but as far as we can tell, they're at the northern end of the Lake of Galilee.

Perhaps somewhere around the Jordan Delta. And as far as we can tell, they're perhaps on the west side of the Jordan. And he asks his disciples to go across to the other side, to Bethsaida.

[19:18] And then to move on ahead of him to Gennesaret. He plans to follow them. Why the great rush to move on?

Well, again, we have to go to John 6 for a clue for that. John tells us this little bit of extra information is that the people were so excited at the feeding of the 5,000 that they thought that Jesus was the much awaited Messiah King.

But they saw him as somebody that could be a military leader. They wanted to install him as King of the Jews and that they would perhaps free him from the tyranny of the Romans.

So Jesus was a very different kind of leader. He didn't want that. So he slips away, as Mark says, immediately.

And notice the different kind of leader that Jesus is. This is a great theme, of course, of the Gospels, that Jesus is constantly saying, this is the kind of leader that I am.

[20:31] And instead of getting the adulation or the adulation of the crowd, we're told that Jesus goes up to a mountain to pray. He didn't want the adulation of the people.

He wanted to be with his father in solitude and communion, which tells us an awful lot about Jesus. But first of all, under this heading of Jesus, the eternal God that astounds and assures us, we see that Christ astounds them.

As Jesus looks out from his mountain prayer spot, we're told that the disciples didn't make much progress. They're in the middle of the lake, perhaps three or four miles out.

And we're told that he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them.

So what does Jesus do? Well, rather curiously, we're told that Jesus walks out into the water.

And we're told that he meant to pass them by. He meant to pass them by. Why would Jesus pass by his disciples in a crisis?

[21:52] Well, a bit like the last miracle. We can't understand this miracle until we go back to the Old Testament. Where else do we read in the Old Testament about God passing by?

Well, of course, you remember in Moses, in Exodus 33 and Exodus 34. And of course, there are many similarities between Mark 6 and Exodus 33 and 34.

When God shows his glory to Moses, it was after a miraculous feeding in the wilderness. It was after instruction about the Sabbath.

It involved God's representative, Moses, talking with God on a mountain. And it concludes with God's people being terrified of, being calmed by, drawing near to, and then talking with God's representative as he comes down from the mountain.

And we see in Exodus 33 and Exodus 34 that God intended to pass by Moses on four occasions. And as he passed by, he revealed that his deepest glory was in fact in his grace and mercy.

[23 : 10] You see it also with Elijah in 1 Kings 19. The similarities with Mark 6 are striking. And what God did in wind and voice in Exodus, Christ is revealing in flesh and blood in Mark.

And what Jesus is saying, he is saying, I am the eternal creator. I am the great I am, passing by in all my glory.

Jesus was claiming the great I am of Exodus 3, the eternal pre-existent God.

Jesus was claiming the exclusivity of God alone, who as Job says, treads on the waves of the sea in Job 9.8. No wonder his disciples were astounded.

Christ once again ignores and disregards the laws of nature. Because they were put in place for creatures, not for the creator.

[24 : 22] So Jesus astounds them. But then also we see that Jesus assures them. Thankfully, Jesus doesn't remain outside the boat.

We read these wonderful words. And he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. Imagine these disciples toiling at the oars for hours and suddenly seeing a figure on the sea.

And now their friend, Jesus, is back with them in the boat. No wonder they were astounded. We're told that all is calm. Why? Because of the presence of Jesus.

It's an interesting point, though, isn't it? That Jesus, I'm sure, was as much praying for his disciples on the shore and on the mountain as he was in the boat.

But his presence, his nearness, makes all the difference to the disciples. It brings assurance. How do we apply this to ourselves?

[25 : 30] Well, surely what we all need is an assurance of Christ's presence with us in the many storms of life. And perhaps one of our feelings is that we talk a lot about our salvation, our glorious salvation, in the past, on the cross.

But we forget about the intercessory work of Christ. We're told in Hebrews 7, 25, that Christ never lives to make intercession for us.

As John Calvin says, Christ turns the Father's eyes to his own righteousness to avert his gaze from our sins. He also reconciles the Father's heart to us by his intercession.

He prepares a way and access for us to the Father's throne. What a beautiful thought, as Calvin says, that Christ turns the Father's eyes to his own righteousness to avert his gaze from our sins and his intercessory work.

After a great miracle, after a pinnacle of Christian experience, the disciples find themselves in a storm. Jesus is distant, but yet his eyes are always on his disciples.

[26 : 50] Jesus was in control of the waves as much on the shore as he was, as he walked on the waves. And surely we can say that graciously, Christ comes to us in the storms of life and reminds us that he is the great I Am, the creator, the sovereign Lord, who is in control of all of the storms of life.

We must always make the point here that Jesus doesn't stop the storm from happening, but he assures his disciples by his presence.

And Jesus offers us that same assurance in his intercessory work today. So, where have we got to so far?

Who is Jesus? He is the great shepherd. He is the eternal God, the creator of heaven and earth.

Why did he come? He came to give courage and assurance to his disciples.

So we've seen that Jesus is the great shepherd. We've seen that he is the eternal God. And now, lastly, we see Christ as the great restorer. Remember, in these last few verses, from verse 53, Jesus is the great restorer.

[28 : 12] We see throughout Christ's ministry that he was constantly restoring and redeeming. Christ as the second Adam was reversing the fall with all its terrible consequences.

And ultimately, we see that in the salvation, in the cross, as Christ reverses the judgment and curse of sin on sinners.

But in these last few verses of Mark 6, we see Jesus restores hope and offers healing. First of all, hope. If Jesus is the great restorer, we see him restoring hope to a hopeless world.

Remember, again, to put on our first century eyes, these people were an oppressed people. They were under the rule of the Romans.

They would have been a largely poor people. And they had been waiting for this Messiah for many years, but many of them had given up hope. And here comes this man ministering around Galilee, bringing hope to people, perhaps for the first time in many years.

[29 : 29] A man of compassion, a man who loves with no strings attached, a man who brings hope to a hopeless world. And we're told in our chapter that they immediately recognised him and ran through the whole region.

And surely there's something here about the heralding of hope. People were heralding that hope had arrived. People are excited there is finally a glimpse of hope in their hopeless world.

And that is what Jesus came to restore. He came to restore hope to our dark and to our broken world. And nothing has ever come close to the hope that Christ brought.

History shows us that politicians in every generation promise us a new beginning, a bright new dawn, a new utopia just around the corner. But if we study history, we see that that utopia never comes.

I've been reading on holiday the new book by Heritage Reform Books on the American Puritans. And it's wonderful to read these stories about the Puritans who went out to Boston and to Massachusetts and how they longed to set up a city on a hill.

[30 : 53] But sadly, as we read these accounts, we read that as with every society and as with every community, they are plagued with the same sins and the same issues that society has always been plagued with.

only Christ truly brings hope. Only Christ has ever brought true hope.

As Jonathan Edwards said, the love and grace that Christ has manifested does as much exceed all that which is in this world as the sun is brighter than a candle.

The hope and the love that Christ brings we can compare between the sun and a candle.

The world can never bring the hope that we need. Only Christ can truly offer hope in a hopeless world. And then lastly, we just see Christ's healing ministry.

[31 : 58] The great restorer brings healing. I think we can become so familiar with the New Testament narrative that we sometimes skip over Christ's healing ministry.

We perhaps become immune to the amazing ministry that Christ exercised with regard to healing. We perhaps fully understand its scale and its power and its extent.

We read here that Jesus visited villages, cities and right throughout the countryside they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment and as many as touched it were made well.

The scale and the extent of Jesus' healing ministry was incredible. To heal lepers, to heal people who were paralysed, even the touch of his garment can heal every sickness.

And again we see as with other two miracles that Jesus is able to reverse the laws of nature. He is able to reverse what happened in the fall as he heals and restores people.

[33 : 20] He doesn't heal them a little bit, he completely restores them. Imagine lepers, imagine the disabled, the destitute. There was no health service in those days, no hope and Jesus restores hope and health to people.

At every turn in these Gospels we are expected, we are expected to gasp and say who is this man, who is this man that can make sick people well?

All these people who came from all these hundreds, perhaps even thousands of people, they had a very limited understanding of who Jesus was but Jesus doesn't turn any of them away.

He loves making sick people well. We see the Restorer who brings hope and healing.

So just as we summarise our thoughts tonight, we're the miraculous ministry of Jesus had a very clear purpose. It was to usher in the kingdom and show us that Christ is the great restorer of both hope and health.

[34 : 42] But Jesus is always showing us through every miracle and through every parable who he is and why he has come. He has come to restore and redeem, to reverse the effects of the fall and to restore hope to a fallen world.

We see in this final miracle the power the Lord has over sickness and death and surely it makes us long for the day when Christ will finally restore a new heaven and a new earth and there will be no more sickness or death.

Don't you long for that day? doesn't this give you a glimpse of what Christ can and will ultimately do in that new heavens and new earth?

We said at the start that Mark is a breathless gospel. Mark takes us on a whistle stop tour of the person and work of Christ and it should leave us amazed at who Christ is and what he has done.

He shows us that Jesus is the great shepherd who came to love and to lead. Mark shows us that he is the eternal God who came to astound and assure and Mark shows us that he is the great restorer who came to bring hope and healing to a broken world.

[36 : 14] And the great question for us tonight is asked in Mark chapter 8 Who do you say that I am?

Who do you say that I am? That's a great question for all of us tonight isn't it? There were thousands of people who were around Jesus.

There were thousands of people who knew lots about Jesus. There were thousands of people who even saw his miracles. But many, many, many of them never came to a trusting faith in Christ. And the great question that Mark lays before us tonight is Who do you say that I am? Have you seen this Christ in all his glory?

Shepherding, assuring and restoring this people? Where are you tonight? Maybe you've been around Jesus for perhaps most of your life.

[37 : 21] Perhaps you've grown up in a Christian home where you have heard his name mentioned again and again. But maybe tonight you need to see Christ for yourself and put your faith and your hope in him in a very personal way.

Perhaps tonight you've been challenged to see Jesus in a new way and you've been asked, you're challenged to say why did he come? Jesus came as God to save.

And the great question for us tonight friends is have you come to him in faith tonight? Do you need the love and leading of the great shepherd?

We'll go to Jesus tonight. Do you need to have a glimpse of Christ in all his glory? Go to Jesus. Are you needing reassurance in the storms of life?

Go to Christ. Do you need fresh hope in this broken world? Jesus is enough. Let's pray. Our Father we thank you for the richness of your word.

[38 : 35] we thank you for the glory of your son. We thank you Lord that he is the great shepherd. We thank you that he is the eternal God.

And we thank you that he is the restorer of hope. And we pray Lord tonight that whatever storms we may be in in this life, that Lord you would restore to us calmness and reassurance.

And that we would see that the great I am is with us in the storm. The great I am who is over all the storms of life is with us.

We pray tonight Lord for any who are outside of Christ. We pray that Lord you would fill them not just with the glory of Christ but also with the irresistible beauty of Christ and that Lord you would draw them with the cords of gospel love.

We thank you Lord that Christ is love covered over with flesh. and we pray Lord that you would bless your word to us. Forgive us Lord that we do not study it more, that we do not live in it and live it out more in our lives.

[39 : 45] Bless us Lord as we go into this new week. Be with us we pray as we fight the good fight. Give us the victory over temptation Lord.

We pray that Lord you would keep us close to yourself. Help us to keep short accounts with you Lord and with others. Help us oh God to love you and to love others with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Bless Lord our meeting together. Follow with blessing all that has been done in your name today. For all we ask is in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen.