

Christ's Compassion Supplies A Miraculous Meal

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 0 0] Good evening, a very warm welcome to you all to our service this evening from Stornoway Free Church. Thank you once again for joining us, participating in this time of worship, and it is a time of worship, although we're not able to be together physically in the one place as we usually would and would prefer. Nevertheless, let's not think that we're not able to worship God. We are bound together by the Spirit of God, and it's in that binding of the Spirit of God that we're given the Spirit of worship together. Before we come to the worship, let me just give one or two intimations out. For the work of street pastors, we're dependent on having new street pastors appointed from time to time. It's a very valuable work locally and elsewhere throughout the country. This coming Friday evening, four new street pastors will be appointed, and there will be a service on Zoom associated with that. That's at seven o'clock this coming Friday. Now, if you'd like to join that particular service, if you send me an email, I can send you the Zoom login details if you're interested in that.

But in any case, if you're not, please just pray for it anyway and pray for the four new street pastors who will be appointed on Friday. Can I also remind you that there's an important vote due in the Scottish Parliament this coming Wednesday. It's in regard to the Hate Crime Bill. A number of amendments have been proposed, and we're asked to pray that these amendments will actually be passed so as to improve the bill, at least from a Christian standpoint, so that if the second part of the bill, as one amendment asks to be rejected, if it's not rejected, there are other amendments that will hopefully improve the bill. We want to particularly protect freedom of speech, not only in general terms, but from our point of view, in Christian terms as well, so that we don't face the possibility of being taken to law just because we have to sometimes denounce certain practices, relationships, whatever, in being true to the Gospel. We want the liberty to be able to speak about those things, and for others to have the liberty to speak about alternative things. But we want that liberty protected, and we pray that God will actually do that in answer to our prayers.

So let's begin our worship tonight. We'll sing from Psalm 93, and we're singing in the same psalm's version, Psalm 93. You'll find it on page 123 of the Blue Psalm books.

We're going to sing Tultun Richmond. The Lord is King. His throne endures, majestic in its height. The Lord is robed in majesty, and armed with strength and might. The world is founded, firm and sure, removed it cannot be.

Your throne is strong, and you are God from all eternity. The Lord is King. His throne endures, majestic in its height.

[3 : 2 7] The Lord is robed in majesty, and armed with strength and might. The Lord is robed in majesty, and armed with strength and might.

The world is founded, firm and strong, removed it cannot be.

Your throne endures, majestic in its height. The Lord is God from all eternity. The Seas and Guard have lifted up, they lifted up their voice. The Seas have lifted up their wings, and made a mighty noise.

The Lord is throne on highest throne, more powerful is He. The Lord is throne on highest throne, more powerful is He.

than thunder of the ocean's waves, or breakers of the sea.

[5 : 1 0] Your royal statutes, Lord, stand firm and changing is your word. And holiness adorns your house for endless days, O Lord.

O Lord. We're going to read God's word now from the Gospel of Mark and chapter 6. The Gospel of Mark chapter 6, firstly verses 7 to 13, and then from verse 30 down as far as 44.

Mark chapter 6, first verse 7. And Jesus called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff, no bread, no bag, no money in their belts, but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.

And he said to them, whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you, and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.

[6 : 41] So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

And if we jump to verse 30, we'll read from verse 30. The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.

For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. Many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.

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 when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, this is a desolate place, and the hour is now late.

Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat. But he answered them, you give them something to eat.

[7 : 52] And they said to him, shall we go and buy 200 denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat? And he said to them, how many loaves do you have? Go and see.

And when they had found out, they said, five and two fish. Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups by hundreds and by fifties.

And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples to set before the people.

And he divided the two fish among them all. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish.

And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men. We pray God will again follow with his blessing our reading of his word.

[8 : 52] Let's now call upon him in prayer. Let's join together in prayer. Lord, our gracious God, as we come together to worship you this evening, we do so conscious that you are the same of whom we have been reading.

The same God, the same saviour, the same miracle worker, the same in power and might and majesty and glory. We pray that you would manifest that to us this evening.

Lord, we give thanks that as you worked that miracle long ago in the feeding of the five thousand, you are able to break down the bread of life to us through the gospel and share it with us, even though we are separate from each other.

We thank you, Lord, that your spirit is able to take those portions of your truth and make them cogent and understandable to us and apply them to our hearts with great power.

We pray that that will be our experience, O Lord, this evening as we come together in this way.

Lord, we bring before you our own needs and the needs of our time. As far as we are able to and as they are known to us.

[10 : 08] And we pray, O Lord, especially that our great spiritual need will be addressed by you through your truth this evening. The spiritual need that your word speaks of so frequently, so eloquently.

The need of our souls, the need of eternal life, the need of our sin to be forgiven. Lord, we are unworthy ever to come into your presence.

That we come to you tonight, Lord, knowing that the worthiness of Jesus Christ is the ground upon which our sin is forgiven. We pray that as you would look to his worthiness and so apply to us the redemption that he has purchased.

That, Lord, we would say that he is worthy to be praised and magnified for all that he is and all that he has done. We thank you tonight for the gospel, the gospel that has brought hope into this perishing world.

And the gospel that holds out hope in its message of eternal life. And we thank you, Lord, that it is superior to any mere human philosophy.

[11 : 18] It is your word. It is your salvation. It is your gospel, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank you that as it has been blessed down through the centuries, we ask that you would continue to bless it in our own day.

Blessed Lord in this time of our predicament, the time of our need with regard to the situation in our nation. We think especially of the ongoing COVID crisis.

We thank you for the ongoing care that you give to your people. And we thank you for the way that you promise that you will be with them. We pray that that care will be extended, O Lord, by your blessing to those that we pray for who may not tonight know you as their savior or want you.

But we are given the privilege of praying for them, praying for our nation, for our towns, our districts, our cities, our countrysides, for our governments, for those who are in places of authority and influence in our land.

For our teachers, for our medical staff, for all, O Lord, who have a specific and important role in the working out of the affairs of the nation.

[12 : 31] We ask, Lord, that you would bless us so that we once again come under the light of your truth in a powerful way. We pray, too, that you would bless, Lord, locally those tonight who have specific needs as they have been brought before us.

We ask that your blessing will be with the street pastors, especially those who are going to be newly appointed this coming week. We pray for them and we pray for all, O Lord, locally and internationally who engage in the work of street pastors seeking to help those that you meet on the streets from time to time.

Some in dire need, but all in some need or other. We pray that you bless them. We ask that you bless our Scottish Parliament, our MSPs in this coming week.

We pray, Lord, in relation to the Hate Crime Bill as it is examined, as amendments are considered, we pray, Lord, that the outcome will be one that will be truly beneficial to the Gospel.

That we'll be honouring to the speech that we value so much and liberty of speech throughout our land. Lord, we pray that you would enable this, O Lord, by your blessing and give people in Parliament the mind to protect our precious freedoms so that we may continue to enjoy them.

[13 : 54] For we know that many of them have been provided for us at great cost in times gone by. And we commend this to you, O Lord, and ask your blessing for them.

We pray that you would bless locally too those who are presently involved in COVID outbreaks. We pray for the Stonway Primary School, for the staff there, for all the teachers and ancillary staff, and all those who are involved in the upkeep of the school, those in the canteen and in every other way. We pray that you'd bless them and the children involved when their life has been somewhat disrupted over the past week. We pray, Lord, that that will soon be over for them, that they will be able to return to school work and to engaging with the work that they have been given to do.

We pray too that you would, Lord, grant your blessing to our bus drivers, those especially who've had to isolate over this past week. We pray that those who have tested positive will also know your blessing.

We ask that you'd make us thankful for all who are involved in our public services and who give up their time, not only so willingly, but also at risk to their own health, especially in times like these.

[15 : 15] And we ask that you would grant your blessing, Lord, to be with them. Bless also those who provide for us locally in other ways as well. We think of those who are involved in pregnancy crisis work.

We pray that you would bless those involved in reaching out to those with debt and those who are involved in association with Christians Against Poverty in our own local needs, O Lord.

We pray that you would bless them. We pray for those involved in recovery, working with those with addiction. We ask that you would bless them and continue to provide for them.

We pray that you would encourage them and help them in their work, Lord, to continue to look to you and to your provision. We pray too for our own children in the congregation.

We give thanks for the provision made for them each Lord's Day, both in Sunday school work, in twinnies and the teaching they receive at home. For younger ones too, we pray that you'd bless them and also those older ones in youth fellowship.

[16:17] Lord, bless them, we pray, and bless those who are engaged in leadership and who are so valued by us, Lord, in these teaching roles that they have within the congregation.

Bless them, we pray, along with Marianne, our youth leader. We give thanks also for her. We pray for those families who have infants in the congregation, who may by this time have been expecting them, hoping they would be baptized.

We pray, Lord, that you would bless them as they wait and as we wait for an opening up of the situation to enable us to return to these activities that we have so special amongst us.

We ask, O Lord, that you would continue to bless them meantime. We pray that your covenant blessings will yet be extended to them, even if they need to wait at this time until the covenant mark is placed upon them in their baptism.

Nevertheless, Lord, we pray for those parents and those children and families and ask for your blessing for them. We ask now that you would continue to be with us here and help us as we wait upon you to know the guidance and the direction and the power of your spirit and receive our thanks, cleansing us from all our sin for Jesus' sake.

[17:36] Amen. Now, children, I'd like to speak to you again tonight from the Book of Psalms, looking at Psalms that mention work that Jesus has done or something about himself, even if his name as such is not mentioned.

I want to point you tonight to Psalm 2, Psalm number 2. It's one of the kingship psalms in the Book of Psalms, especially verse 6.

As for me, God is saying, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill. Zion in the Old Testament very often stood for the church.

Zion was the mountain outside Jerusalem on which the temple was placed. And very often it just stood for the people of God, that God would bless Zion, that he would bless his own cause and bless his own people.

Here he is saying, God is saying, as for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill. I have set Jesus. It's about Jesus. This verse is frequently used in the New Testament.

[18:44] For example, Acts chapter 4, verse 25. You can look that up afterwards. Acts chapter 4 and verse 25. So really, it's very obvious from that, that this is a verse about Jesus.

That is a verse telling us about Jesus when he would come into the world, that he would be the king of his church, the king of the world, in fact. And as you can see, the psalm begins by other kings that are raging against God.

Why do the nations rage and the people plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, against his anointed, saying, let us burst their bonds apart, cast away their cords from us.

And what that is really saying is that when the psalmist wrote this, he was aware of other kings that weren't at all to do with Israel and that hated the laws of God.

They did not like God's laws. And so they wanted to be rid of God's laws. Sadly, you'll find people today who don't like God's laws, who don't like the Ten Commandments, certainly many of them, especially when they restrict the kind of life that they would want to live themselves.

[20:04] And here is a picture of many kings setting themselves against the Lord, fighting against God, trying to get rid of God's bonds, God's laws, God's restrictive measures, the laws that God has given to us as human beings to keep our lives in proper order.

And against that, God is saying, as for me, I have set my king on Zion. Tonight, I want you to remember, as young folk, however much you see in the world of people fighting against God and people expressing a hatred for God's laws and people expressing doubt as to whether the Bible is really true or worth following or believing.

Remember what God is saying, remember what God is saying, despite all of that and above all of that, this is still true. Jesus is king and God has set him upon Zion, upon the church, upon my holy hill, God is saying.

It is the rule of Jesus. There's only one king, ultimately, one king above all kings, and that's been so all the way down through history, King Jesus.

And verses 8 and 9 tell us that King Jesus will ultimately, eventually, defeat all his enemies.

Remember that Jesus is coming back in judgment at the last day.

[21:32] That judgment will involve showing his people to be righteous and friends of his, and they will follow him to heaven. And those who are not will be sent away, and they'll be sent away to what

the Bible calls hell.

It's a terrible thing to think about, but this is God's word. It's telling us that this will be true. Matthew chapter 25 is one of the places where that's told us in the New Testament.

So remember that Jesus has anger as well as love. We very rightly think of God being love and of Jesus being love, and of course that is true.

We want to always emphasize that, but not in such a way that we would lose sight or not believe that God also has anger, what the Bible calls anger.

And so that's why you find here the anger of Jesus actually mentioned in these verses 8 and 9, how he's going to come and conquer his enemies and show that he is the king.

[22 : 44] So that's when he says then, near the end of the psalm, now therefore, O kings, be wise. He's really saying to all those of us in the world as human beings, be wise, especially those who are rulers of the earth.

And in verse 12 he says, kiss the son lest he be angry and you perish in the way. How can we kiss Jesus as king? Well remember in the olden days, and sometimes it still happens in the world, if you came to meet a king or a queen in the olden days, they would stretch out their hand like this.

And you'd be expected to come up and just kiss that hand as you knelt on your knees before them. And that showed that you accepted their authority, that you accepted them as your king or your queen.

And Jesus, in the gospel, in a sense, is reaching out his hand to us. And what you're doing in accepting Jesus is actually giving him that kiss of acceptance.

Whereby you honour him as king, saying, I want you to be my king, I accept you as my king. And that's really the theme of the psalm.

[23 : 56] That's what the psalm is really about. It's the kingship of Jesus and how wonderful it is for his people, how he protects them, how he will lead them at last to be in heaven with himself.

Because it says, blessed are all who take refuge in him. On the other hand, there's the anger of Jesus as well, which we always have to take note of, as well as his love.

And later on in the sermon, we'll be talking about his compassion. So tonight, for you as young folks, I hope that you know Jesus as your king. The one who rules your life.

That you have come willingly to say to him, Lord, here is my life. I give it to you. I ask you to rule over me, to protect me as my king.

To lead me, to take me finally into your palace in heaven. So that I live with you there forever. What a wonderful thought that is. Despite everything that happens in the world, Jesus is the king.

[24 : 58] And as he's the king of our lives, he looks after every single one of us individually, whatever the world thinks, whatever happens in the world. So let's pray the Lord's Prayer together.

Let's say the Lord's Prayer. Amen. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen. Let's turn now to the chapter we read in Mark's Gospel, in Mark chapter 6.

I'm going to look for a short time this evening at this miracle. We find it's described in verses 30 to 44. Where Jesus works this miracle of feeding the 5,000.

[26 : 02] We might ask the question, though there's no ready answer to it because we're not actually probably in a good position as human beings with our finite minds to just come to answer this question.

Which of Christ's miracles was the greatest? Some of you and I myself might say, well, surely the miracles where he raised dead people to life. There are three of those recorded in the Gospels, the most famous probably being Lazarus in John chapter 11, where being four days dead, nevertheless he raised Lazarus back from the dead.

You might say, surely that's the greatest miracle that Jesus performed. Well, in a sense, of course, that's true. Because taking the dead back to life is utterly remarkable and miraculous.

And yet there's a sense in which this miracle is as great, at least, because there's no voice of Jesus mentioned like there was to the dead body of Lazarus.

Lazarus come forth. There's no obvious sight of his power as there was in calling Lazarus back from the grave. There's just this quiet, unnoticed, and yet certain multiplying of the food so that what

was there to begin with such a tiny amount actually fed this crowd of 5,000.

[27 : 28] Now, we're not told how that happened. We're not led into an explanation of how that food was multiplied. But it is an incredible event.

It's a wonderful, miraculous event. It really happened because this is the Word of God that's telling us. And it is, therefore, on that level, it's an amazingly great miracle.

All the miracles are amazing and they're great. But here is one that's as great as any other.

Because this just happens as the disciples gave out the bread and the fish that Jesus had blessed. It just kept on multiplying. And, you know, one of the questions I'd like to ask the disciples when we get to heaven is, what was it like taking that food that Jesus blessed and giving it out to the crowd? I mean, how actually did you see it multiplying? What really happened in your experience? Can't answer that just now. Maybe we'll be able to ask them in heaven itself.

[28 : 39] But this miracle is in all four Gospels. So there's a significance to it as far as the Gospel writers were concerned. And it's significant, especially at this point in the ministry of Jesus.

And we learn that especially from John's Gospel, because we know that in John's Gospel we find an account of a breakaway from many of those who were following him.

They stopped following him when he came to teach them about the meaning of this miracle. So, in fact, this miracle was really not just for the disciples, but for those who were listening of the crowd. It was a miracle for teaching and for testing. For teaching and for testing. As I said, you see both of these in John's Gospel, because Jesus taught the people, all those who were following him as disciples, he taught them about the bread of life.

It reminded them of the manna that came down in the desert under the leadership of Moses. God provided manna during these years going through the wilderness. And that's what they latched on to when Jesus did this miracle.

[29 : 47] Are you greater than our father Moses? Was he greater than the Moses who had led them out of the desert? Was this Moses again brought to them? All these questions were being asked about Jesus.

But they associated him with Moses and with the miracle of, this miracle with the manna that came down from heaven. And what Jesus taught them was that he was the manna.

He was the true bread. He was the bread which came down, which if we ate of it, we would live forever. We would have eternal life. And that's when, in the view of the majority of the people, that was unacceptable.

He couldn't accept that he was God, that he was the son of God, that he had come to give his life, and that through his life he would give life to the world. Many then walked no more with him.

They turned away. And here Mark is telling us about that event. And, of course, he's using it. Differences in the Gospels are not contradictory.

[30 : 55] They're just differences for one thing, because each of these Gospel writers is addressing his Gospel to a different audience, or has a different purpose in writing as he does.

And we expect, therefore, there to be differences. If they'd all been exactly alike, those who are critics of the Bible would have said, well, that shows you they just copied each other.

It's not like that. There are these necessary differences. So let's see what we can find in this one here. Three words I'm going to use to try and guide us through it. Three words as our headings.

Firstly, protection, protection, and then perception, and then provision. Protection, firstly, how Jesus cared for the apostles, the disciples here, the twelve apostles, and then perception, how Jesus saw this crowd.

How did he see them? What were his thoughts as he looked out over this vast crowd? And thirdly, provision, how Jesus met the need for food, and how that was such a spiritually important form of teaching.

[32 : 04] First of all, then, his protection, how Jesus cared for the apostles. Now, we read verses 7 to 13, where he sent them out. He called the twelve and sent them out two by two, and he gave them this authority, told them various things.

And so they went out, we're told, and proclaimed that people should repent. That was their ministry. That was the emphasis in their ministry, similar to John the Baptist, that people should repent. They should repent of sin, turn to God, express their sorrow over sin, ask God's forgiveness.

That's still a primary emphasis in the gospel, a prominent emphasis in the gospel. It's not just asking us, or calling on us to believe in Christ, to place our trust in Christ.

That's always accompanied by repentance, by a turning from our sinful ways into the ways of God's righteousness and holiness. And that was the message that they took then to the world.

And when they came back, in verse 30, they told Jesus all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while, for many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.

[33 : 15] Now, it's interesting that although Jesus, as we'll see, had a great concern for this crowd, yet he had a care for his disciples so that they would actually take time out and find a time to rest.

They needed time for refreshment, trying to gather strength again. They were actually being crowded by the number of people that came. And of course, it says so much about Jesus himself that he couldn't find a time very often where he would take rest or where he would go and pray for a while.

He was just being pursued so much. You can just picture it. It's really similar to what you find in today's world when celebs are followed by the paparazzi and people who are interested in taking their photos or getting an interview.

It was like that with Jesus as well. He couldn't find a place where he was free of the crowds, not at least for any length of time. Here he is taking care of his disciples.

He's saying, come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while. He may also have a thought that perhaps what they had actually been able to do by his power, casting out unclean spirits and seeing a response to the gospel that they were preaching in repentance, people repenting, maybe Jesus was concerned that that would somehow or other take up their thoughts, that he would glory in those things as we all are liable to rather than seeing that it is only by the power of Christ we can do that anyway, preaching the gospel or in those days casting out demons.

[34 : 53] But in any case, his concern was that they rest. Now this is the principle that you find in the rest of the Lord's day, the rest of the Lord's day is designed for.

The Old Testament had it as a Sabbath, of course, since the New Testament we tend to think of it as the Lord's day. But the word Sabbath actually contains the meaning of rest.

It means rest, Sabbath. And that is really the principle of the Lord's day. It's a day of rest. And you know, one of the things that's so, so sad and one of the things we have to try and get across to people who don't want to observe the Lord's day as a day of rest is that because they'll come and say to you, well, this is a very negative way of life, really, because the Lord's day, isn't it all about not doing this and not doing that and actually having the kind of day that doesn't engage in so much that you do at other times?

Well, there is that element to it, but the Lord's day emphasis has to be on the positive. It has to be on the benefits of the Lord's day for human beings. That's why God designed it.

That's why I want to stress to people this Lord's day, this Sabbath rest, is for your benefit. It's for your mind's rest. It's for your body's rest. It's for your soul's rest.

[36 : 19] It's for you to take into your soul, into your mind, the things that God has provided as an alternative to material things. That's why it's so important for us to keep this Lord's day as a day of proper spiritual and mental and physical rest.

The more you do that, the more I do that, the more equipped, the more prepared, the more ready, the more empowered we will be to do the work that we need to do on the other days.

I'm not going to widen out on that. There's a whole area of study there, of course. So here's Christ's protection. He was protecting in his care of the apostles, protecting them so as to give them a time of rest.

Secondly, there's a perception here on his part. Perception in the sense of how he saw the crowd. Many of them, many saw them going and recognized them and they ran there on foot.

In other words, when he took away the disciples in the boat, across the water, many recognized them and they ran on foot. They went round the edge of the lake there and came to the place where they were going to land and they ran on foot.

[37 : 35] They got there ahead of them and when Jesus went ashore and saw a great crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd and he began to teach them many things.

That's a really significant description of how Jesus saw the crowds. He was not annoyed the crowds kept following him. That's itself a telling thing.

In Luke's Gospel, chapter 9, verse 11, it actually says that he welcomed them. Imagine that. He welcomed them. Here they were pursuing him. He couldn't get rest. He had to try and take his disciples away so they would get rest together for a wee while and yet when they landed, the crowds were there already before them.

He welcomed them. Doesn't that tell you something? Absolutely wonderful, magnificent about the heart of Jesus, about the love of Jesus, the concern of Jesus, the primary concern of Jesus for human beings.

He welcomed them because they were there that he might teach them and that's what he did. He began to teach them many things.

[38 : 44] But you notice in verse 34 there, when he saw them, he had compassion on them. because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Far from being annoyed with them or being angry or disgruntled with them, he saw them as sheep without a shepherd so he had compassion on them.

Now that word is really a word of great inner motion. It's a word of real emotional strength. He was moved deep within himself when he saw this crowd.

He was really moved emotionally within his own soul. In other words, his heart really went out to these people. That's really essentially what it's saying. It wasn't a casual glance in their direction. It wasn't that he saw them and for a brief moment he thought of them as sheep without a shepherd. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd so he was intensely moved over them and for them. You think of sheep and how they need the care of the shepherd so frequently. And if you've ever seen sheep that have for some reason or other not been cared for, remember sometimes finding sheep that had been missed in the gatherings out on the moor when the sheep were taken from the moor back to the croft or whatever, maybe one or two would have been missed and they weren't found at the time and perhaps they weren't found till the next year and I've seen that very often.

[40 : 15] When you found them next year and you came across them they were in a terrible state. Of course their wool hadn't been clipped, they hadn't been cleaned, they hadn't been dipped, their feet hadn't been attended to, they were dirty, they were filthy, they were diseased, they were obvious not cared for.

And this is exactly what Jesus likened this crowd to. This is why his heart was so moved. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd. His first concern was not where am I going to get food for these people to eat physically.

His first concern was not their physical needs. He saw them as spiritually in need of care. That's why he began to teach them many things.

Before you ever read about his providing of food for them, he provided them with spiritual food. He began to teach them many things.

He saw that they were uncared for spiritually. They weren't properly taught. They weren't ever taken and taught the basics of God's truth.

[41 : 21] Even though many of them would have known it from going to the temple. But the priests and the scribes, the Pharisees, they weren't actually doing this. They were falling down on their work. And Jesus, of course, many times criticized them for that.

Just as the prophets in the Old Testament had done, Jeremiah and Isaiah and Ezekiel, who had compared these leaders of the people to shepherds.

But shepherds that had abandoned the sheep and not fulfilled their role as shepherds. He was Jesus seeing these people like sheep without a shepherd. Isn't that a telling description for ourselves as well?

He drew his heart out towards them because this is how he viewed them. That's how we should see so many millions of people in the world tonight who are like sheep without a shepherd.

They may be very well cared for materially. They may indeed be amongst the richest people in the world. They may have all the material things that you could wish for. They may have all the advantages in the world in terms of their level of importance in society.

[42 : 33] They may not lack for any of those things. But without Christ and without salvation, without the things that you get through the gospel, without what Jesus is able to give us and what our soul needs, they're like sheep without a shepherd.

They need to be ingathered. They need to be taken under the shepherding care of Jesus. That's what the gospel is about. That's what we're engaged in as under shepherds, if you like.

That's what every Christian in his witness to Christ is concerned to bring about by the blessing of God. Remember what Jesus said to the disciples. Go and make disciples of all nations.

Go and make disciples of them. and teaching them in his name. Making disciples.

Bringing people under the shepherding of Jesus by his truth. That's our role in life, not just ministers. That's your role as a Christian. That's your privilege as a Christian.

[43 : 39] that's Jesus placing you where nobody else can place you. A privilege that he gives to you to see the world in its lostness as sheep without a shepherd.

People made in the image of God. People not caring for God. People wanting to, as we saw in Psalm 2 with the children, casting away the bonds of God's law and rebelling against God and rebelling against his laws.

What are they? They're so proud. They're so righteous in their own eyes perhaps. They're so much given to thinking well of themselves and being so glad that they have the freedom in our situation and our nation to actually say these things and do these things against the gospel.

Friends, they're sheep without a shepherd. Spiritually unwashed, spiritually uncared for, spiritually in need of being gathered under the truth of God and Jesus and his view of the crowd, this perception that he had is our great example and it's not just people who have fallen on hard times, people who have addictions, people who have money problems, people who have had relationship problems, broken marriages, broken homes, broken families.

Of course, all of that is there and we pray for that and take regard of that but remember everybody without Jesus is a sheep, without a shepherd from the highest levels of society right through the layers of society.

[45 : 23] That's what Jesus is calling on us tonight to really take note of the perception that he had for this crowd. What a challenge that is to my own mind and to your own mind tonight that as we look out over the world instead of finding so much as we have to criticise and there's plenty there that we can criticise and it's not wrong always to criticise.

Sometimes you have to criticise in order to get people to see the truth of things. What of primary concern is not criticism but evangelism to bring people under the care of the shepherd to see people in the world without Christ as sheep without a shepherd.

So the protection in the care of his own people the perception how he saw the crowd and then thirdly the provision that he made when he met the need of the crowd the need for food especially as it got late in the day disciples having had Jesus preaching teaching them for such a long time that disciples said send them away to the surrounding countryside and villages to buy themselves something to eat and he answered you give them something to eat a remarkable thing isn't it here these disciples coming five thousand men besides women and children there before him been teaching them all this time they don't have food they've rushed through the way they rushed along to where he was going to land they hadn't any food with them they hadn't prepared for that no he says you give them something to eat and I can just imagine the disciples looking to each other and they say what's this all about where are we going to get this so they said shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them they realised how huge volume of food this required this was a need beyond human resources and that's one of the great points that this miracle and the details in the miracle is really setting before us because if you go to the other gospels you'll find other details in regard to that as well but

Matthew chapter 14 if I can just briefly turn you to that chapter chapter 14 of Matthew and verses 17 to 18 Jesus in verse 16 says it's the same instance of course they need not go away you give them something to eat they said to him we have only five loaves here and two fish and he said bring them here to me now that's really telling us something very important here are these human resources represented by we have only here these loaves and these two fish and then Jesus saying bring them here to me the word here is used twice in that sentence in these verses and the usage of it twice is important because the first here we have only here five loaves and two fish is the here of human ability and human resources the second here because it's talking about here with Jesus is the here of Christ's resources and Christ's ability it's a deliberate comparison and it's coming through here in Mark's version of it as well where Jesus says you give them something to eat they then of course discover as if they didn't know really but they're now really wrestling with the issue that the resources that are required are far greater than they themselves can manage or actually apply as John chapter 6 verse 9 says their disciples said well we have these few bits of food here but what are these among so many Jesus says you bring them here to me that's really in

many ways our own response as well isn't it when you see the need in the world around you and you look at yourselves and you look at ourselves as a church as a congregation what are we in relation to the vastness of the need what are three or four hundred people compared to the thousands in the town of Stornow even and the surrounding districts and the many in that that are like sheep without a shepherd how are we going to actually meet that great need what are these among so many aren't we so small aren't we so insignificant are our own human resources not actually inadequate yes they are

[50 : 04] Jesus is saying bring them here to me put them in my hands and see how what is very small to begin with then multiplies by his blessing so as to meet the need of the occasion and as we place ourselves and our witness and our words and our outreach and our activities and our strategies and our plans and our individual lives and our home lives as we place all of that as we must in the hands of Jesus well who knows what the result is going to be because in the hands of Jesus the little becomes the great the little becomes the sufficient to meet the needs of the crowd here is what we really all the time need to be coming back to to remind ourselves of it that whatever we do and there's very much to do in terms of planning and in terms of strategy and in terms of coming up with all of those things that we do from time to time and we're saying there is a need for that we need to do that we need to work things through God expects us to work things through but at the end of the day if we don't place it in his hands where are we going to get the blessing Jesus in verse 41 actually took this food and he put as he put it in his as he took it in his hands he looked up to heaven and said a blessing friends we've always got to place all our resources whether we think of them as small or great ourselves and everything I've mentioned put them in the hands of Christ and realize without his blessing it's not going to meet the need of our time with his blessing it is with his blessing it is it cannot fail to meet the need of the times if we place it in his hand and seek his blessing that's why prayer is so important that's why pleading with

Christ is so important not because he's reluctant but because we have to in our involvement in this as we'll see in a minute our involvement in the whole situation part of that involvement means presenting the need as far as we can to Jesus to God and saying Lord our resources by ourselves they're just not adequate we appeal to you please come and show your power show your might show your presence show your glory and not just for ourselves as a congregation but for our nation at this critical time as well we have to pray that God will use us we do pray that God will use this pandemic and this situation and overcome the danger that we associate with trusting in the vaccines themselves spiritually I mean we're grateful thankful for them they're a wonderful resource but they're not actually going to save us morally or spiritually only God can do that only the hands of Jesus can work that wonderful work of blessing by which the gospel will come to change lives friends that's what our privilege is that we take the little that belongs to us my strength your strength my ability intellectually your ability intellectually my understanding of the gospel your understanding of the gospel everything that we have together we together place it in the hands of Jesus tonight and every day we live and watch and wait for his blessing to multiply it that's one of the great lessons little small comes to be transformed to the benefit of the many and thirdly in regard to the provision there's the need that's beyond human resources there's this emphasis on bringing everything here to him and the difference that makes and there's thirdly the fact that the disciples were first given the bread that Jesus took and blessed and they were then to give it to the people and that's important Jesus could have fed that crowd without using the disciples at all he could have in different ways just bless this food so that people came and helped themselves to it and it just didn't diminish but he chose to use the disciples he was teaching you see for the future that what they would receive from him by way of blessing what they would actually receive from him and the use of the resources that God had given them by the Holy Spirit it was for distribution you when you receive the blessing of God it's for distribution yes of course it's for yourself it's for myself it's for your benefit it's for my benefit it's for our increase and our growth spiritually and morally but what God gives you he never gives for yourself alone it's always there to be shared it's something that is for distribution the blessing is his work the distribution is our work that's really what discipleship is about what evangelism is about that's what this point in the part and the in the miracle is actually telling us imagine we said at the beginning this this food as the disciples took it here is Jesus took the the loaves and the fish looked up to heaven said a blessing broke them and gave to the disciples I think from that it's it's that it was multiplied as

Jesus gave it out to the disciples but they would have to pass it along imagine the time it took to reach the crowd and whatever way it happened we're not sure we can't say but there was more than enough there for the crowd as Jesus gave it to the disciples they then distributed to the crowd and imagine that's how it is for ourselves we receive from him and by his ongoing power what we distribute he is able to bless and to multiply and to use in such a way as far as as satisfies the souls of human beings and it's interesting that it says there verse 42 they all ate and were satisfied five thousand men besides some women and children they all ate and they were satisfied there was more than enough to go around from the tiny little bit they had to begin with you see God doesn't give out meager rations if you're looking for the blessing of God expect an abundance expect that God will be generous expect that expect that the distribution that comes through the hands of his disciples or whatever wherever it reaches you and whenever you're able to reach forth for God expect that it will not be meager rations just a minute you see God our God our great God our Savior is not a God who delights in minimums he's a God who delights in abundance in maximums a God who delights in eternal life life in its abundance I have come said Jesus in John's gospel I have come that they might have life and have it the more abundantly grace more abundantly rain grace more abundant than the power of sin God doesn't give meager rations and if you go to him and just ask for meager rations and if you go to him and just ask for meager rations you're dishonoring his name because that's not the kind of God we have there's a verse in one of Chris Tomlin's songs Chris Tomlin the Christian singer songwriter it's a song called satisfied and the codus of it I used to just going to use it to finish our study tonight I found it really so applicable to the points we've just mentioned and even the title of the song satisfy this is how the codus goes I'm sure many of you will know it

[59 : 19] I count my blessings one by one your goodness in my life how could I ask for more in you I'm satisfied if you are all I have I know that I will find that you are all I need in you I'm satisfied if I find he said that you are all I need in that I'm satisfied satisfied may it be so for you and for me tonight satisfied in Jesus satisfied with Jesus satisfied for Jesus because he is our king lord of god we thank you for the resources that you give us in the gospel we thank you for the wonderful agency of your spirit we thank you that you are able to take even such sinful small and frail creatures as we are and use us to your glory we thank you lord that throughout the history of your church this has been the case you have consistently regularly shown and that your blessing is not by way of human expectations but what we might imagine ourselves the case to be you take what is despised in the world you take what is small and insignificant in the eyes of the world you take even that which we ourselves would regard as so small and insufficient our own abilities our own persons and you use them to your glory we give thanks for that because that lord encourages us encourages us to do as we heard this morning to hold fast our confession knowing that we have such a high priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities therefore lord help us we pray to truly go forth as those who would dispense the gospel and distribute it to those around us we ask these things in christ's name amen now we'll conclude worship tonight singing psalm 63 in the scottish psalter psalm 63 we'll sing to the tune a base of harris on page 295 lord thee my god i'll early seek my soul the thirst for thee my flesh longs in a dry parched land within no waters be verses uh one two sorry verses two to eight it is that i thy power may behold and brightness of thy face that i thy thy power may behold and brightness of thy face as i have seen me here to fall within in thy holy place since better is thy love than light my lips the praise shall give i in thy name will lift my hands and bless thee while i live even as with marrow and with fat my soul shall fill it be then shall my mouth with joyful lips sing praises unto thee when i do thee upon my bed i remember i remember with delight and when on thee i meditated i meditated in watches of the night in shadow of thy wings my wings i'll joy for thou my help hast been my soul my soul thee follows heart and me thy right hand and all sustain now may the grace of the lord jesus christ the love of god the father and the communion of the holy spirit be with you now and evermore amen well thank you all sincerely for joining with us it's very encouraging for us to have your company during these uh online services and we're grateful to you for taking the time and i trust that and i trust that you will have been blessed as we came to god's word together and i pray that you will know that blessing continuing into this coming week and please do keep safe and may god bless you all thank you and i have been ableorde