

Jesus is our provider and rescuer!

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 March 2026

Preacher: Sandy Fitton

[0:00] Let's just bow our heads and pray. Nicholas was blessed us this morning by bringing a verse that said, consecrate yourselves and! see that the Lord will do a wonderful thing.

He said that particularly for last night that he got that and for today. And I sometimes think that we just rush, as Michelle said earlier, to come to church and then go home and we don't actually relax into the Lord.

So I pray today, Lord, that we relax into you, that we relax into your word, and that we hear you clearly speaking to us.

Speak, O Lord. Let us hear you. In Jesus' name. Amen. So by now you should have your Bibles ready. It's John 6, 1 to 21.

And it's Jesus feeds the 5,000. Sometime after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee, that is, the Sea of Tiberias.

[1:06] And a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed healing the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples.

The Jewish Passover festival was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said, Philip, where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?

He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip answered him, It would take more than a half year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite.

Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up. Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish. But how far will they go among so many?

Jesus said, Have the people sit down. There was plenty of grass in that place. And they sat down, and about 5,000 men were there. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted.

[2:12] He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.

So they gathered them and filled 12 baskets with the pieces of five barley loaves, left over by those who had eaten. After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, Surely this is the prophet who is to come into the world.

Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. Jesus walks on the water.

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat, and he set off the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them.

A strong wind was blowing, and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water, and they were frightened.

[3:17] But he said to them, It is I. Don't be afraid. Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore, where they were heading.

Bless this word to us, Lord, in Jesus' name. I'm going to move my hair out of the way. So this I'm going to speak about today is about Jesus being a provider and a rescuer.

So what does a great big miracle meal have to do with a squally storm? Well, these two accounts are tightly linked and woven together so that Jesus could show the people that he was speaking to at the big miracle meal, and his disciples at the same time, as well as the disciples in that boat.

He was teaching them that he was with them as their saviour. Both of these accounts were tests and opportunities, because don't ever think that when God's testing you, he's not giving you an opportunity to know more about him, an opportunity to understand more about his love for you. People often didn't understand, even when Jesus was put on the cross and crucified, and when he rose from the grave, they didn't understand who he was. And when he rose from the grave, they actually thought he was a gardener, a stranger, or a traveler.

[4:42] And he had to call them by name. He had to say Mary before Mary recognized him. He had to reveal his wounds to Thomas before he recognized him. And he even had to break bread with them before Cleopas and his friend, companion on the road to Emmaus, recognized who was speaking the very word to them.

I'm reading from John, but these accounts are all in all Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And like I said, the first account is about provision. And in Genesis 22, 14, God is called Jehovah Jireh.

That means the Lord will provide. Not maybe, not perhaps, but will provide. This crowd weren't thinking of the provider.

They weren't thinking of God. They were thinking of Jesus as a prophet or a king, somebody to provide in an earthly way. The miracle meal was an added bonus that they hadn't expected. And much like the boy in this story that I'm going to tell you now from Whitby, they didn't quite get who the provider was. And the story goes like this. A father and a small son traveled to Whitby.

[5:55] The son said he was hungry, and so the father bought his son a bag full of piping hot and delicious fish and chips. Makes you hungry just thinking of it, doesn't it? They're gorgeous fish and chips in Whitby.

The boy's face brightened with delight, and he was hungry. Now the father loved to see his son eat heartily. And the two sat on a bench together overlooking the sea while the boy munched away on his fish and chips.

Now the father did something that all fathers do. He reached over and pinched a chip. And the little boy looked at him in disgust and snapped at his father and said, Dad, what do you do that for?

These are mine. Go get your own. The father was saddened by his son's reaction, and on the drive home he thought, I gave my son every chip he had, and all I wanted was one.

My son doesn't understand something. He doesn't know that I could make all those chips go away in an instant. Or, if I felt it best for him, I could add to that bag of fish and chips so abundantly that he'd be overwhelmed by them.

[7:03] He thinks that they are his. How did he forget who bought them and who brought them to him? And this story of that little boy and that father illustrates how easy it is to miss who provides everything we have.

Everything. Philippians 4.19 and the King James Version says, But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Now let me rephrase that last bit. According to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now we enter this account with Jesus deeply saddened.

Deeply saddened. His cousin, John the Baptist, had just been murdered brutally. And his body displayed brutally. His heart was broken. The disciples' hearts were broken.

And when he'd heard that this had happened, all he wanted to do was withdraw to a place where he could be with his father and pray and be healed. We need that, don't we, when we've lost someone.

[8:08] But this was extraordinarily sad. But he didn't get that time away. He wanted to withdraw, but the crowds had gathered all around him. The surrounding towns released all their crowds and they followed him.

And it ended up being the opposite of solitude. It ended up being a massive crowd of about 5,000 men. But Matthew said that the women and the children with him were with them.

And we know that because a little boy provided the wherewithal for their lunch. So that made round about 20,000 people that were there. That's a big crowd.

We've got about 100 here. So double that and double that again and then double it a bit more. So Jesus gave up willingly his time of solitude because he had compassion on the people that were seeking him.

Now his compassion wasn't about their hunger, although he realizes that we have a basic need for the things in life like clothes and food and water. He knows that. His compassion was because he knew they were seeking an answer to a question they didn't quite understand yet.

[9:20] They needed to know who Jesus was. They were drawn to him. Are you sitting here today drawn to Jesus and you don't know why? Well, keep on listening.

He's drawing you because you are being called to hear him. Now this great crowd of people followed him because they wanted to see Jesus perform miracles. He was a provider of miracles and we understand that.

But have you ever wondered about the little boy? Isn't it incredible that there was a little boy and his bread and his fish was chosen to provide a meal for everyone? Did he come up that day?

Was he on his own? Was he with his family? We don't know. But, you know, five loaves of bread and that many fish, was it a lot for him or was it enough for a family?

We don't know. But we do know that this family meal or his meal was increased by 500% to feed more than 20,000 people.

[10:23] And it was more than half a year's wages. In today's terms, it's anywhere between 20,000 and 30,000 pounds. Now, make sure you understand this. There were no burger vans there.

No Deliveroo. Jesus brought it. Jesus provided it as a miracle. And I always think that if we give to God, like that little boy gave to Jesus that day, watch what Jesus does with it.

Watch what God does with your little giving. And it's not for you to be expanded, for it to be given back to you in tenfold, although he promises he will give you more abundantly than you give him. It's about what you will do with what you give him. When we do the collection, it isn't about us. It's about what God will do with it for the people that need to be reached.

And on this occasion, Jesus did give them as much as they wanted, not as much as they needed. And we know that because there was a lot left over, 12 baskets full.

[11:23] So he provided over and abundantly more than they could imagine. And he says that he'll do the same for us. In Ephesians 3, 20. But before they got their meal, Jesus gave them one command, and it was to sit down.

They were hungry. They didn't understand why they must sit down. They'd been spoken to by Jesus. He'd spoken to them. But he didn't know that they were going to get a meal.

They hadn't heard the discussion between Jesus and the disciples about this meal. And sitting down gives you an impression that they're expecting something to happen. They were never going to...

It would blow their minds to find out that it was going to be a miracle meal like this. And the Bible says that all who were seated were fed. I wouldn't want to be the one that decided not to sit down. I want to be the ones that sat there and waited for Jesus. And in a sense, Jesus saying sit down makes sense. Because how will the people at the back see if everybody stood up?

[12:28] There'd be children there and smaller people. So sitting down gave them a better chance to see Jesus and possibly hear him. A man called George Whitefield, an 18th century Anglican preacher, was noted to preaching crowds of 30,000 or more.

And he could be heard two miles down river. We all know about George Blessed. I think we do. He's a very, very loud man. When he speaks, you can hear him and you can hear him clearly. He probably wouldn't need a microphone. But the Bible doesn't speak of Jesus having an extraordinarily loud voice, does it? And this account doesn't speak about him shouting either. We know the large crowd sat down and listened to him and would have heard him clearly. But whatever you do, don't let your mind detract from the miraculous that was taking place. Jesus didn't need a PA system or a loud voice.

His words could be heard to impact hearts and minds. Just like Cleophas and his friend when they were walking on the road to Emmaus. When Jesus spoke, hearts would have burned as he spoke about who he was.

[13:42] Can you imagine addressing 20,000 people? Scrawling babies, noisy kids, yacking husbands, distracted mothers, yapping dogs.

It'd be very, very noisy, wouldn't it? Just in less than half of Newcastle's football ground, it would have been loud. And he wouldn't have been shouting away the lads. The noise would have been tremendous.

But I imagine when Jesus started speaking, and Mark said he was saying many things, the silence would have been golden. The atmosphere, the presence and the holiness of God, tangible.

Jesus fed them, but later when they crossed to the other side of the sea, Jesus told them, I am the bread of life and if you believe in me, you will never again be spiritually hungry or thirsty.

John 6.35 tells us that. John 1.1 describes Jesus as the word. And it blew me away when I thought, Jesus, the living word was living with them and speaking to them.

[14:47] Can you imagine that? Jesus standing here and speaking to you instead of me. Ah, my heart races within me as I think of him calmly speaking to a mass audience of people.

And the silence that they would have had before they had the miracle meal. They saw and heard their Savior. Our Savior.

He's ours too. And he wouldn't have needed to shout and every ear would have heard. And some would have responded just like Mike did when he was in Keswick Convention. It was in 1980.

He was sat in this crowd of 6,000 people and he said, I felt like I was in a bubble with God. And God was calling me to mission. Me to ministry. And he said, Me?

Out of all these 6,000 people, you're calling me? Well, I wonder who he called that day. I wonder who that day felt their hearts burning inside them.

[15:48] Sadly, not every ear would have responded. And the same happens today. Not everyone would have recognized who Jesus was and who gave them their supper and provided the supper.

Just like the son who spoke in the fish and chip story earlier, it seems easy to take for granted what we have and ignore the provider in the first place. Especially when things just land in our lap.

They had a very clear indication who provided the meal because Jesus always pointed to God. He raised the bread to the heavens and he said, and gave thanks and he broke it.

Some would have missed this completely and some would have thought, well, you know what? This is tradition. We always break bread this way and thank you, God. They don't give God a second thought. They didn't give Jesus a second thought.

A second thought that was going to show them who the provider of the meal was and who was the provider of their salvation. This account of Jesus' miracles isn't about fish and bread or even the miracles that Jesus performed after that.

[17:01] This was about the provision of a savior. And you will see by this account that Jesus provided miracles, but when you read the whole Bible, you will see he's much more than that.

Having seen Jesus' miracle and experienced his vision, they were calling Jesus a prophet or a king. They wanted to make him king. They were thinking in the worldly sense, a worldly prophet or a worldly king.

Jesus' kingship is not for this world. It is for the eternal world yet to come. John 18, 36 tells us that.

They came to hear him because they thought they were going to see some signs, a bit like the Israelites wandering around in the desert of their own making.

They were doing the same because they were looking for the wrong king. They didn't understand the savior that the prophet Isaiah spoke of in Isaiah 9, 6.

They didn't understand that he was right there with them. Their Messiah, their savior, was right there with them. They were looking at him. They could touch him.

[18:11] And some even touched the hem of his garment that day to be healed. So what this passage, this part of the passage is teaching us is this, that we need more than physical food to live.

It's important. We need to eat. We need to drink. And we need to look after our health. That's important. But we need spiritual food to live. Specifically, the word of God.

That is Jesus because he is the bread of life. He is eternal life. He is the only way we're going to have that eternal life with him in heaven.

Do we need to sit down and listen to what God says about Jesus? We're sitting down. But are we hearing? The next part of the scripture is about Jesus walking on water.

Strange or a strange thing that people have mimicked with a little board under the water, but they haven't been able to actually do it. Not like Jesus did. So at the end of this epic day, Jesus did finally get to his mountain to pray and be alone with God.

[19:19] And he sent his disciples off. But he will have gone there in that agony and pain of losing John the Baptist. He felt grief.

He felt grief when Lazarus died. He wept. And we weren't told that he wept when he learned about John, but I imagine he would have. He was his cousin. But he also knew that John knew who he was.

Right from when John was in the womb of his mother, Elizabeth's stomach. Womb, not stomach. Definitely not. Right then, if you recall, John actually leapt in Elizabeth's womb when Mary walked in pregnant with Jesus.

And John 1.29 says this. John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, Look, the Lamb of God who takes the sin of the world. That's it in a nutshell. So he takes the sin of the world away from us should we repent of it and go to him and ask for forgiveness.

And right in the middle of these two passages is a little verse that says the Jewish Passover festival was near. Just a standalone statement.

[20:33] But it has significance because this was the penultimate Passover before Jesus was going to be crucified. This was the time before he would be crucified and he would die and he would rise from the grave victorious because he defeated hell and death.

So with this sign, everyone there and here would know they have Jesus as their Savior. And that is the sign that we all need to focus on because that leads us to who he is.

Before Jesus went to the mountain to pray, as I said earlier, he instructed his disciples to go across the Sea of Galilee ahead of him. He knew food would be needed for the miracle meal, but he also knew that the disciples would need him as a squally sea was about to rise.

In Matthew's Gospel, it says they got a good buffeting. Now that's a good Yorkshire term, isn't it? A good buffeting. But Mark's Gospel said that they were struggling against their oars all night because of this buffeting, because of a head wind that was against them.

And it says in Matthew 14 that Jesus saw from the mountaintop that the disciples were in a spot of bother. That's putting it mildly. Late that night. But he left it until dawn to go and help them.

[21:59] Now note this, that Jesus, according to John's Gospel, didn't call out to Jesus for help. Even with all the food miracles and everything that happened around and walking with Jesus for two years, they didn't call on him.

They just paddled in their own steam all night and got nowhere fast. You know, sometimes it feels like God is leaving things an awfully long time before he rescues us, isn't it?

Perhaps, though, we don't ask like the disciples. Perhaps we think our problem is insignificant or unworthy. Well, I'm going to tell you this.

Nothing is insignificant and nothing is unworthy to God. He wants to hear everything. And he wants to hear it from your heart. Paul wrote, whilst in prison, Philippians 4, 6 to 7, do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God and the peace of God that transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

This tells me, this tells you, that every prayer that you pray is important to God. And remember when Jesus said, let nothing be wasted when the disciples were collecting the basket loads of scraps that were left over.

[23:24] Well, it reminded me that when we think we are the scrap of life, when we think that our prayers to God are just scraps and he's not interested and he doesn't want to hear us, I'm here to tell you today that that's not true.

You are not a scrap of life. Your prayers are not scraps to be thrown away. He cares for you. And in fact, 1 Peter 5, 7, it says, do not be anxious about anything.

That's hard. We do get anxious, don't we? But it says, cast your anxiety on the Lord for he cares for you. Do you know that God cares for you?

He does. Well, perhaps there are times when we're under such great stress, we really don't expect a miracle. Those times where you're so bogged down, it's like not seeing the wood for the trees. Well, the advice from this passage is actually stop battling. Stop pushing against a headwind. Stop paddling in your own steam.

[24:30] Start praying. Because Jesus cares for you. The disciples were paddling away, not calling Jesus, and yet Jesus came anyway.

He cared so much, he had compassion on his disciples, that he walked three to four miles, because that's as far as they got, on that choppy water to get to them. Here's a thought.

Does the creator of the waves, of the universe, go up and down on those choppy waves, or do the water smooth as he's walking through them? I would think the latter, because he controls creation, and creation doesn't control him.

Colossians 1.17 says he holds all things together. And I remember this. He came right at the right time. They needed to be rescued, but they didn't know to call on the one that would rescue them. Now I can guarantee that every single one of us did not know we needed to be rescued until we were rescued into salvation. I didn't know.

[25:32] I didn't know that I needed God in my life until he touched my heart. And when he touched my heart, and I opened my heart to him, and he rescued me, it was when I looked back, I thought, I needed rescuing.

So if you're sitting here now, and you don't know Jesus, you need rescuing. I can tell you that. In John's account, we weren't told that they were afraid of the storm.

In fact, they were more afraid of Jesus walking toward them on the water. In Matthew and Mark's account, they thought he was a ghost. We try and make something out of nothing all the time, don't we?

But they were exhausted, emotionally and physically, because they had lost John the Baptist as well. And they were in the middle of a squally sea, and they had been paddling all night. But having seen miracles, and having worked with Jesus for two years, I thought to myself, how many miracles and signs do they need to understand who Jesus was?

Same question applies to us. How many miracles and signs do we need to understand who Jesus is to us? If anyone is looking for another sign to make a decision about Jesus, that, respectfully, is the wrong way around.

[26:51] You need Jesus, and then you will understand the signs and the miracles from the one who provides them in the first place. You need to get to know the one who provides the miracles. Then you will understand what a miracle is, which is a gift from God.

As Jesus approached him, he said, do not fear. He says that a lot. And it is scary when he says that, because generally it is scary.

It is tough stuff you're going to see and go through. But I love that Matthew recalls in his account, that Jesus says, take courage. Now Matthew speaks of Peter climbing out of the boat, and Mark and John both say that Jesus simply got into the boat.

Quite frankly, it takes courage to do both, to walk out in a choppy sea towards Jesus or let Jesus in. It takes courage to accept Jesus as your Savior and conviction to let him in your life.

The disciples let him into their boat, and that particular battle ended. There were to be many more, but Jesus would be with them every single time.

[27:58] And they knew that. And when they let Jesus in the boat, he landed them safely ashore. This is a significant lesson to us. I say to you today, take courage in every aspect of your life.

Surrender it to God. Trust him with all your heart, and he will bring you through it. Now I realize that all of us at some point, we find that we face something just too hard to bear, and we feel that our faith may falter.

But that's the time that Whitby Christian Fellowship will surround you and hold you up with prayer. We will hold you fast, but so will God.

Heath and Christian Getty sang, When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast. When the tempter would prevail, he will hold me fast. That's Jesus.

I could never keep my hold through life's fearful path, for my love is often cold. He must hold me fast. You see, having landed safely ashore, the disciples were where Jesus needed them to be.

[29:05] That was in Gennesaret. There was another crowd of people waiting for their miracle, waiting for their Savior, waiting for their sign. You know, there will always be a need for healing of the sick.

There will always be a need for provision of food. But there is a profound and deeper need to know the provider and the rescuer. Wren Collective puts it this way.

He's our rescuer. There is good news for the captive. Is that you? Are you held captive by something? There is good news for the shamed.

Do you feel shamed by guilt and sin? There is good news for the one that walked away. Did you walk away from Jesus and you're coming back and you don't know why? There is good news for the doubter.

Do you doubt that Jesus is who he is? Are you the one that religion failed? Well, the good Lord has come to seek and save because he is our rescuer.

[30:08] Jesus said, take courage. Do not fear. It is I who will be your provider. and your rescuer. Thank you. Thank you.