

# The Shepherd King

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Date: 23 February 2020

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[ 0 : 00 ] Gospel of Mark in church, which was just read for us, and in this gospel, Mark wants to introduce people to Jesus Christ. Of course, everybody today will have their opinion on Jesus, so if you were to ask, who is Jesus?

Everybody probably will have a different answer to that question. But in his gospel, Mark tells us the identity of Jesus right at the outset. So if you want to just flick back, Mark chapter 1, verse 1, a couple of pages.

He says the beginning of the good news about Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God. So right up front, he makes a big, bold claim about the identity of Jesus.

And so if we're here last week, we were looking at the earlier section about King Herod. And in that section, it's about Herod being a king, but the question of the identity of Jesus comes up in chapter 6, verse 14 and 15.

It's raised. But Mark doesn't give an answer to the question of who is Jesus there, 6, verse 14 and 15. Instead, what we get is the murder of John the Baptist. But the identity of Jesus becomes clear to us and to his disciples as we move through the gospel of Mark.

[ 1 : 13 ] So in what Jesus says, in what Jesus does, and in how Jesus does it, he is acting like God. Jesus is acting like God.

Well, there may be some of you here today who are wrestling with questions and doubts about Christianity, or you may have objections and doubts. You may be sceptical about the Christian faith, but you may be asking questions like, well, did Jesus ever actually say, I am God?

If you're claiming he is God, what did he say himself? Well, just think of it this way. Imagine you are at the side of the road and your car has broken down, so you open your bonnet and smoke is wafting off your engine.

But it's okay, because you've got breakdown cover. So you call for some roadside assistance. Let's just say you're a member of the AA, although alternative breakdown cover is available from other companies like RAC and whoever.

So just whoever you call your roadside assistance person. And they say to you, okay, we're 10 minutes away. We'll come and sort you out. So right on time, the AA, this familiar yellow van, pulls up.

[ 2 : 23 ] It's got the letters AA printed on the side, and then this flashing light is on top. And then out of the van jumps a man with a big yellow high-viz suit on, with a helmet, with a box of tools, with a badge on his top that says AA.

He opens up your car bonnet, he tinkers around with his tools, and then you're on your way happy, because he's fixed your car. And then later on, you tell your friend what happened to you that day, and they ask, did the man say he was from the AA?

And you think, well, he didn't specifically and explicitly say he was from the AA, but then he didn't need to. It was kind of obvious that he was from the AA by the way he came around, and he dealt with the problem, and he sorted it out.

And that's like what we see here with Jesus in the Gospel of Mark. In what Jesus says, in what Jesus does, and in how he does it, it's clear that Jesus has the power and the authority of God. And that's what Jesus wants his disciples to get from this miracle that we've just read. And he wants us to get it too. And so let's look at this miracle that's reading under four headings.

[ 3 : 38 ] First, the sheep. Second, the shepherd. Third, the scent. And fourth, the significance. Four S's. Sheep, shepherd, scent, significance.

First of all, the sheep. The sheep here are this huge crowd of people who can't get enough of Jesus. So, verse 30, we read, The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had

done and taught.

Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest. So, they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. So, there were so many people that Jesus and his disciples didn't even have time to eat.

So, what Jesus does is he enforces some R&R; for his disciples, taking them to this quiet place. The word here is desolate.

[ 4 : 41 ] And it's important to note because it's mentioned three times. There in verse 31 at the end, quiet place. Then verse 32, solitary place. And then again in verse 35, this is a remote place.

So, this word can also mean wilderness. So, desolate, solitary, quiet, wilderness, remote. So, just bear that in mind because we'll come back to it. But basically, this was a good day off for the disciples with Jesus, spoiled by this massive crowd.

And so, Jesus and his disciples sailed across the lake, but they're spotted. So, all the people run around the lake to meet them at the other side. Sounds like a massive park run.

Thousands of people running around. And then we get the number of them in verse 44. The number of men who had eaten was 5,000. 5,000 men, but presumably there were some women and some children as well.

And so, it's estimated by commentators there could have been about 50,000 to 20,000 people. And guess what? They're all desperate to get to Jesus. But why?

[ 5 : 49 ] Well, the answer is in the reaction of Jesus in verse 34. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

They were like sheep without a shepherd. In other words, they were needy and they were lost and they were looking for a leader. And perhaps that's why this miracle is next to the story of King Herod.

Because King Herod had failed in his responsibility as king to lead and shepherd and guide the people. And so, the people needed a true king who would lead them, who would care for them, and who would shepherd them.

And that's what Jesus came to do. And so, when you see the word compassion here in verse 34, it's a really strong word. Literally, Jesus was moved deep down in his guts.

Stirred deep inside with pity for all these people who were like lost sheep. I guess the closest that we come to is when we see people suffering, maybe on the news.

[ 6 : 56 ] It might be refugees fleeing for their lives or children starving because of famine. And we look at them and our stomach churns inside us because of their plight. This is far stronger than human pity.

This is divine compassion. Because actually, the word is only ever used of Jesus in the New Testament. That's how strong this compassion is. It's not a human compassion.

It is a godly compassion for people. So, he's stirred from within by this desperate, needy crowd who are like sheep without a shepherd. Now, the thing about sheep is that they need a shepherd.

I'm not a farmer. I'm a city boy. But sheep do need a shepherd. I discovered this one night as I was driving late in Islay. I was over there to conduct a wedding for John and Heather.

It was a great weekend. But on the Friday night after the wedding rehearsal, I was driving back and I nearly killed five sheep who had wandered across the road.

[ 7 : 59 ] And I seemed to be more distressed and disturbed about this incident than the sheep did. And so, what I did was I flashed my lights to get them to move and he just looked at me.

So, I honked my horn, tried to get them to move and he just looked at me. So, I got out of the car, I shouted and chased him and then he ran off. And that seemed to do the trick.

So, the point is, sheep need a shepherd, don't they? They need a shepherd to guide them. They need a shepherd to protect them. Because they easily stray into danger. They get themselves into all sorts of trouble.

And they don't even realise it. And that's what Jesus saw when he looked at these people. People who weren't aware of how desperate their situation was.

They were lost as they wandered through life. And, you know, we are no different today as human beings. Because the human condition basically means that we are hungry, deep down inside.

[ 8 : 59 ] And we yearn for satisfaction. It means that we're helpless. And we want protection. We want comfort. We want security. Everybody. And so, we too are like lost sheep.

And we might not even be aware of it. Just like sheep aren't always aware when they're lost. Or we might not even want to admit it. That this is how we feel. But deep down, if we're honest, we know it's true.

The deepest longings of our hearts. Our meaning, satisfaction, freedom, identity, and hope are there. In our hearts. And that's why Jesus has this gut-wrenching compassion for these people. And why our need is no different today. Jesus does have compassion for people who are lost without him. So, don't forget, if you walk out this door and don't remember anything else. Don't forget that Jesus has compassion for people. People like you. People like me. People whose lives are messed up and broken. Full of failure. Jesus has compassion.

[ 10 : 03 ] He sees what we're like. And he wants to come and meet us where we are. So, Jesus here is revealing himself as the true shepherd king. The shepherd king who comes and who came to give purpose.

To satisfy. To lead. To protect. And to give hope. So, that's the first point. The sheep. The sheep. And I'm including all of us in that category. Second point is the shepherd. Jesus is the shepherd. But did you notice the first thing that he does with the crowd? This is a miracle about feeding. Five thousand. But see what Jesus does first. Verse 34. He doesn't physically satisfy them with food.

Not yet. But verse 34 says, He began teaching them many things. So, the greatest need here wasn't just physical feeding. There was a spiritual hunger and a spiritual need that Jesus came to meet.

And so he teaches them. And this wasn't just some kind of quick devotional. It wasn't as short as one of my sermons. This was an extended time of teaching. Because Jesus taught them many things.

[ 11 : 09 ] They were starving. So, Jesus came to give them knowledge of God. To teach them about God. Because that's what he needed. He's a shepherd. And he's feeding the sheep.

Now, the phrase like sheep without a shepherd comes from the Old Testament part of the Bible. Which is the first two thirds of the Bible in your hands. And so this phrase, people refer to sheep. But shepherd refers to the leader of the people. Shepherd is a leader. And so these words echo a prayer of Moses. A man in the Old Testament. In the book of Numbers.

Where Moses prays for God to appoint a leader for the people. And in his prayer, he says he doesn't want the people to be like sheep without a shepherd. And so then Joshua comes. And he succeeds the people as the shepherd to lead them. Then later on in the Old Testament, David, who is sometimes known as Israel's shepherd king.

[ 12 : 09 ] He's the shepherd who, again, leads God's people. And then later on in the Bible, in Ezekiel 34, there's a really explicit reference to sheep and shepherds. Where, again, the people are described as sheep without a shepherd.

And so God condemns the leaders who've been bad shepherds for their failure. They failed to lead the people. They failed to feed the people. And so one day, in Ezekiel 34, God promises that he will shepherd the people himself.

He'll be their shepherd. He would search for his sheep. He would gather his sheep. He would look after his sheep. He would rescue them from all the places that they've been scattered. And then he'd feed them.

So all along in the Bible, there's this picture and this growing of what the shepherd would be like. And there's another illusion in the Old Testament. Because this miracle echoes another miracle that is full of significance for the people of God.

And so the people of God, the time of Moses, there was an exodus from Egypt where there were slaves. And in Exodus, God leads the people out of Egypt on the way to the promised land.

[ 13 : 21 ] And as he leads them out, they go through the wilderness. Desolate place. Solitary place. Quiet place. They go through the wilderness. And God feeds them in the wilderness.

He feeds them with manna in the desert. And so here again, in this desolate place, the food is coming from the hands of Jesus himself. So what's happening here?

Well, Jesus is acting just like God in the way he feeds these people. So all of these illusions from the background for Jesus being the one who fulfills all of the Old Testament.

He fulfills this role of the shepherd king, of the Messiah, who came to gather, to feed, to teach the people. To satisfy people and to protect them.

Not just for this life, but for all eternity. And that's why this description of the crowd in verse 34 as being like sheep without a shepherd is full of significance.

[14:23] It's because it's telling us Jesus is the shepherd king. And he's acting as the shepherd of God's people by shepherding as God himself.

And so Jesus is the fulfillment of the psalm that we sang earlier, Psalm 23. Where the opening words say, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside quiet waters. Isn't that exactly what Jesus is doing here? He makes the people sit down on green grass. Even the colour is mentioned.

And it's by water, the lake. And Jesus is the one who satisfies them. And so in what he does, Jesus is saying, I am the shepherd. I am the Lord who is the shepherd who came to lead and protect and guide my people.

So God has come amongst his people in Jesus. That's what Mark is saying to us by recording this miracle for us. He's saying Jesus is no ordinary man. This is God in human flesh entering into our world of space and time to come and be with the people that he's made.

[15:33] So that's the shepherd. The sheep first. Second, the shepherd. Thirdly, the sent. So verse 30, you notice the apostles gathered.

The word apostle basically means literally one who is sent out. One who is sent out. And so the apostles or the twelve or the disciples, they suggest a solution to this problem that they can see happening.

Verse 35. But this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. This is a remote place, they said, and it's already very late. Send the people away so that we can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy them something to eat.

Now that seems like a reasonable suggestion for your disciple, doesn't it? And yet it's not what Jesus had in mind. So verse 37. But he answered, that's Jesus.

You give them something to eat. So Jesus tells them to take care of the catering by asking them to throw together a meal for well over 5,000 people.

[16:35] And they're smart, so they'd already done the maths. Verse 37, the second half. They said to him, that would take more than half a year's wages. Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?

So in terms of wages, it mentions denarii in the footnote. A denarius apparently was a silver coin, and it was the equivalent of a day's wages.

So they are talking like a significant amount of money here to put together a meal. The disciples knew it was impossible for them to do this.

There's no way they'd be able to feed all these people. And yet that's the whole point of Jesus asking them and Jesus using them. Because only when they knew that what Jesus asked of them was impossible for them to do, only then were they ready to do it.

So see how Jesus uses them at each and every stage of this miracle. Jesus could have fed the crowd himself if he really wanted to.

[17:41] He could easily have made the food appear in their laps. Just like Dumbledore in Harry Potter. You remember Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone? Certainly in the movie, Dumbledore's there.

They're all seated around the tables. There's no food. And he says, let the feast begin. And all this beautiful food just appears on the table in front of them.

I wish that would happen with my cooking. But it doesn't. And yet, couldn't Jesus have done that? Just made the food appear? Of course he could. But he doesn't. What he does instead is he uses the disciples at every stage and gets them to do it.

And so they source out these five loaves and two fish, which is totally inadequate for everybody.

And then they distribute it. And then, miraculously, everybody is satisfied.

And then they go around and they pick up all the leftovers in these twelve baskets. So, Jesus performs a miracle. You've got to be sure of that.

[18:42] But, he performs it by sending out his disciples. So, let's just read it. It's 41. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves that he

gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people.

He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied. And the disciples picked up, filled basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. So, the disciples get a front row seat to watch what Jesus is doing here.

And so there's no doubt in their minds that this was a miracle performed by Jesus. He did it. In fact, it could be that Jesus did this miracle for their benefit.

Of course, it's amazing that he satisfies this crowd of thousands. But, just see how the camera is focused in on the disciples. Jesus clearly wants the disciples to get his identity.

He wants them to see who he is. And I say this because we discover that despite this miracle that they've seen, And despite another similar miracle, in chapter 8, verse 1 to 10, Jesus feeds 4,000.

[ 20 : 00 ] The disciples just don't understand. And their hearts are hardened. So, chapter 6, verse 52. What does it say? For they had not understood about the loaves.

Their hearts were hardened. And in chapter 8, verse 17 to 21, there's a discussion which ends with Jesus challenging them. In chapter 8, verse 21, do you still not understand?

So, their hearts were hardened. They didn't understand. Despite the fact that Jesus had performed these amazing miracles right before their very eyes. So, they were thinking that the miracle was about food.

But the food was actually a red herring. Because the miracle was about the identity of Jesus. And the disciples needed to grasp this because Jesus would use these disciples in his work.

So, they really needed to know who he is so that they could go out in his name. And so, here, they discover that while they're inadequate, they need to discover that Jesus is sufficient.

[ 21 : 08 ] Jesus wasn't just giving them a one-off job here. Jesus was going to send them out into the world to do an impossible work that they were not qualified for.

And so, they had to learn that despite their inadequacy, even because of their inadequacy, Jesus would do his work through them.

And so, it would take a miracle every night. Here, they were dishing out bread to a crowd. But later on, they would dispense the good use of Jesus to the world.

But as Jesus sent them out, he would do the miraculous work. Because only Jesus can satisfy lost sheep.

Only Jesus can save lost sheep. And so, as we apply this to ourselves, if we are those who have been chosen and called by Jesus Christ, and if we are following him, then if we've been sent out today, we need to realize our own inadequacy and be confident in Jesus' sufficiency.

[ 22 : 15 ] Because it is going to take a miracle for people to listen to the message of Jesus. It's not a sinful thing. And it's going to take a miracle of Jesus for people to respond to the message of Jesus and come to believe.

Because the human condition is such that we're like sheep without a shepherd. We're so lost, we're so needy, we're so helpless that we can't do anything about it ourselves.

We're so broken that it can only take a miracle of Jesus to restore our broken lives. Salvation is by grace alone.

It's what God does. It's not what we do. And that's why our mission here at Christ Church Glasgow might sometimes seem impossible. Because it is impossible for us.

And all we can see are difficulties, and all we seem to face are limitations, and we can feel inadequate, and we can feel unqualified, and yet it's only as we go out, knowing it's going to take a miracle for people to respond, that we go out anyway, and that's when Jesus does his work through us.

[ 23 : 27 ] So if you're thinking, I can't do it, then you're right. We can't do it, but Jesus can do it. And so he sends us out for him, knowing that we are inadequate, and insufficient, and unqualified, because he's going to do the work.

And we need to grasp this as we go out. And so it's our awareness of the impossibility of the task, by ourselves, and our weakness, that actually qualifies us for the work of being sent out in Jesus' name.

Okay, so we've got the sheep, we've got the shepherd, we've got the sent. Fourthly, the significance. The being of the 5,000 is significant. In fact, it's the only miracle that is performed by Jesus that's in each of the four Gospels about him.

There are resurrections in all the four Gospels, but only this miracle is. Why is it in all four? Well, it's because it's revealing to us the true identity of Jesus. Jesus is revealing it to his disciples, and to us. It's telling us that Jesus is God's Son, the Messiah. He is the King. Because what Jesus does echoes what God did for his people in the Old Testament.

[ 24 : 41 ] So this miracle is pointing to Jesus as the true shepherd, King, the one who provides for his people's deepest needs. So that is people lack nothing.

And so here we see his compassion on people. As he feeds them, first of all spiritually, but then physically. And what Jesus did for the crowd then is what he still does for people like you and me today.

Because Jesus Christ comes to every individual offering to fulfill our deepest desires by giving us true satisfaction. Which means that without Jesus Christ, we will go about seeking satisfaction. We will go around seeking to fulfill our desires in the wrong ways and in the wrong places. Which means we'll never find the satisfaction that we seek. Augustine, one of the early church fathers and greatest writers in Christian history, wrote a book called Confessions.

Confessions. And in it he says, you have made us for yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in you. So our hearts will always be restless until Jesus satisfies us.

[ 25 : 55 ] So if you're here today and you wouldn't call yourself a Christian and you're sensing something of that restlessness, of that dissatisfaction in your life, then these are signs of a need for Jesus Christ.

Even if you're not aware of it or recognise them as such. And so don't just keep wandering past Jesus Christ and looking to be satisfied in things like work or sex or career or money or anything else.

Go to Jesus Christ and receive what he offers. Salvation, satisfaction, meaning, freedom, identity, hope and a whole lot more besides.

Jesus came because we are lost sheep in need of a shepherd. And out of his compassion, he feeds us, he saves us, he protects us. So how did he do this for us?

It's because as the good shepherd, Jesus laid down his life for the sheep. So from this passage, Jesus is moving towards his death on a cross. And on the night before he died, Jesus shared another meal with his disciples called the Lord's Supper, which we'll share together in a moment.

[ 27 : 12 ] And on that night before he died, Jesus took bread, he blessed it and broke it and he gave it to his disciples. And in both accounts, here in the feeding of the 5,000 and then in the last supper, it's the same sequence.

Literally in the Greek, it says he blessed and broke. And then again, he blessed and broke. And so the significance is hard to miss, that this is pointing to the death of Jesus, of his body being broken for us on the cross.

Because Jesus, the night before he died, said, take it, this is my body. The body of Jesus broken for us, his blood shed and poured out.

And that's how Jesus saves us from sin, how he saves us from death, and the restlessness and the dissatisfaction of wandering through this life. And how he protects us now in this life, but for all eternity.

And he saves us so that we might feast with him in glory, in this new creation that he promises. And so the question is, as we bring this to an end, do you know Jesus as your shepherd king?

[ 28 : 26 ] Do you know him? We sang in Psalm 23, earlier in his service, the Lord is my shepherd. Is Jesus your shepherd? Because all these promises in that psalm, and all these promises that Jesus gives, can't be yours, unless you know him as your shepherd.

Being a Christian means going to Jesus to receive the salvation that we need, and the satisfaction that we crave. And when we've gone to Jesus, then we offer ourselves to him in all our inadequacy, so that he can send us out into a world that is full of lost and hungry people, to show them Jesus as the shepherd, who can be their king, who can look after them, so that they can find the satisfaction they seek in life, and so that they can find the security that we need in death.

Let me pray.