

Jesus Came to Enact the True and Greater Rescue

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[0 : 00] Good afternoon and welcome to our lunchtime Bible talk. Please do make use of the sandwiches and lunches on offer at the back after the service if you have time.

Please do stay behind and get to know us so we can meet and greet you and get chatting to you afterwards. But now we continue to look at Mark's gospel, some of the things that Jesus came to do.

So we'll be continuing to look at different sections in Mark. Perhaps you could turn up to Mark chapter 6 as I pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can gather together in the middle of the week here so that we can hear your words, so that we can hear you speak to us through your living and active words.

Help us to put off the distractions and all the pulls at us this week and to focus now on your words. That we might hear you speak to us and so be encouraged to walk in your ways by the strength of your grace.

That we might see King Jesus and be utterly astounded by who he is and why he came. For we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

[1 : 16] Please do have Mark chapter 6 from verse 30 ready to read. It's on page 841 on the Bible.

It will be on your seat. Mark chapter 6, reading from verse 30 through to 52. 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.

Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of him. 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.

[2 : 30] But he answered them, You give them something to eat. 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. And 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.

Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

[3 : 33] And when evening came, the boat was out in the sea and he was alone on the land. And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night, he came to them walking on the sea.

He meant to pass by them. But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out, for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, take heart, it is I.

Do not be afraid. And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased, and they were utterly astounded. For they did not understand about the loaves. But their hearts were hardened. In my house growing up, Star Wars was a favorite film of myself and my brothers. The original films were fantastic, full of wonderful ideas, like the galactic battle between good and evil. The dark side against the light side. This small, weak-looking group that resolved not to be defeated by the world around them. So I was delighted that only a couple of years ago, some more films in the series were released.

[4 : 45] Excitedly, I headed to the cinema to see the first one. And it did not disappoint. But something was obvious. The story was very similar to the original.

A great threat to the whole galaxy looms. And the mission to stop it ended up taking a very similar shape to the original film. Only this one was bigger, and it was better.

And I was even able to see it this time in greater definition than the originals. In Mark's gospel, we're introduced to the king, the long-promised king that has finally arrived. And his arrival signals the next installment in the great gospel story.

Jesus has come to renew his people and expose those who have never belonged to Israel. He has come to build up his true people and will reject those who reject the true faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And he has also come to bring about the true and better exodus for his people. The true and better rescue from slavery. The next installment in the story echoes what has gone before.

[5 : 58] But it is better. It is Exodus 2.0. The return of the Exodus. When God established his people at Mount Sinai, they were truly his people through faith, as they expressed their obedience by putting blood on the doors.

They were truly rescued to be God's very own. But now Jesus has come to bring the truer and greater rescue for his renewed people. Mark draws our attention to this through two episodes that we've read today.

They're very familiar. We'll know them well. In the first episode, where Jesus feeds 5,000, Mark is showing us that Jesus is the shepherd king of true Israel.

The long-awaited king that has been promised. He has arrived. Israel have a king again. God has given a king to his people. And in the second episode, when Jesus walks on water, it tells us that the king is God himself come to rescue.

So firstly, verses 31 to 44, Jesus is the compassionate king of all who belong to God. Jesus is the compassionate king of all who belong to God.

[7 : 16] Jesus looks around at the crowds that have gathered to hear him. And verse 34, he has compassion on them. He looks at the mega crowd in front of him, and he sees that they are lost.

They are sheep without a shepherd. Now Mark uses lots of clues to point us back to what might be going on in this passage. To stick with the Star Wars theme, when someone says the phrase, a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, people will tend to know that that is about Star Wars.

Or if someone mentions 1966, most people will know what is being referred to. It is loaded with meaning. That is when England won the World Cup. Or 9-11.

Instantly people can twig, ah yes, I know what is being referred to. People know the back story to these phrases. Mark uses lots of these throughout these two episodes that would have caused his original readers to instantly twig that an Old Testament event is in mind.

So saying that the crowd are like sheep without a shepherd is loaded with meaning. A shepherd is a ritual Testament image used of Israel's leaders, Israel's king.

[8 : 34] We find that same phrase used in 1 Kings 22. Under the reign of evil King Ahab, Israel are described as sheep that have no shepherd. The king is not a king at all.

The king is failing in shepherding his people. Similarly, turn with me to Ezekiel chapter 34. That is on page 722.

The shepherds of Israel here have been failing the people of Israel. They haven't been feeding the sheep. So chapter 34 verse 6.

My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth with none to search or seek for them. But God promises to rescue his sheep and to judge the shepherds who have failed them.

Verse 10. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths. And verse 11. God says that he himself will search out the sheep, these sheep to rescue them.

[9 : 42] He promises them rich pasture, good grazing land, and the shepherd of all shepherds. Culminating in verse 23. He promises that they will get King David, the good shepherd of the people.

And David really was a great shepherd for Israel. God kept his promise to them. And for a time, God's people were ruled well.

But it didn't last. Jesus stood amongst these crowds. He had compassion on them because they had been failed by the religious leaders. Herod, the scribes, the Pharisees, were only leading these people astray.

Jesus had compassion because they needed to be rescued. They needed a king. They were waiting for a shepherd king to come and rescue them.

They have leaders that plot to kill the very Savior who would fulfill all that they're waiting for. They have leaders who know not the scriptures nor the power of God.

[10 : 45] They have leaders who neglect them. So who was going to be this rescuing king? Well, Mark leaves us in no doubt, and it is the Sunday school answer.

Jesus is the rescuing king. So using some of these looted phrases, Mark, leaves us in no doubt that Jesus is the answer to that question.

Look at verse 31, back in Mark chapter 6. They're in a desolate place. Verse 32. They went to a desolate place.

Verse 35. This is a desolate place. That phrase could also be translated as wilderness. Here is a crowd in the wilderness.

And Mark's readers would have known straight away, here is an Old Testament allusion. God's people have been here before. A wilderness that brings only frustration. A wilderness that leaves people longing for hope.

[11 : 43] And when we think about a large crowd being miraculously fed in the wilderness, then we can see that Mark is clearly pointing us back to Exodus. And he gives us another looted phrase in verse 40.

They're organized in groups. Now, we've got a fairly organized lunchtime routine here for Wednesday lunchtime Bible talks. But if we suddenly began to organize you as you come in, that you must sit in groups of five or ten, you might begin to think that's a little bit strange.

You might even be a little bit resistant to it. So when Mark says this in verse 40, it's not just a strange detail. It's not just incidental. But it is pointing back again to Exodus.

They're organized in groups of hundreds and fifties, just like under Moses and Jethro. God had miraculously provided food for his people in the wilderness. They'd been given manna and quails, provided food as a testimony to God's faithfulness to them for 40 years as they waited for the promised land.

But now God's people have no shepherd. And Mark tells us immediately that the rescuing king is here. Here is an astonishing miracle.

[13 : 03] Jesus, full of compassion, feeds thousands of people with just five loaves and two fish. But not only does he feed them all, there are 12 baskets left over, one for each of the lost tribes of Israel.

Look at verse 42. The host of lost sheep all ate and they were satisfied. Unlike the false shepherds of Israel who didn't feed the sheep, here was Jesus, the shepherd, the compassionate king, satisfying his people.

And remember from Ezekiel 34, they were promised rich pasture. Well, Mark says in verse 39, they sit and eat until they are satisfied on green grass.

Jesus is saying, you are a shepherdless people no more. I am here. I have come as a long promised rescuing king. And instantly he begins to do what his people needed.

He begins to feed them the food they lacked. He did what the failing shepherds didn't do. Verse 34, he begins to teach them. Jesus is great David's greater son.

[14 : 20] Jesus is the king that Israel has always needed. He's saying, I am the rescuer that Israel has been looking forward to for so long. No more will you be hungry and neglected by those who are meant to be shepherding you.

No longer will you be left to failing leaders. Jesus has come to bring the dawn of a new age. The shadowy blessing of the old test, old covenant is progressing into the fullness of new covenant fulfillment.

Exodus again, but better, grander, truer. The age of the great rescue has arrived. The age of the great king who will reign forever has come.

Christ is here and he's amazing. Jesus brings with him the greater realization of all the promises of God. The scope of what he's come to do, we see here, is huge.

Its significance is cosmic. He has arrived. And in this miracle, he is screaming to his people that he is the king that they've been waiting for. Here is a leader and a king who will not disappoint.

[15:27] Here is a king and a leader who we can joyfully follow and submit to. Here is a king and a leader who will not abuse you, neglect you, and distort the truth from you. Every king will ultimately feel his people, except Jesus.

Isn't he amazing? Isn't he completely unlike anyone ever? Jesus is the shepherd king who has love for his people.

He's angry when they're neglected and mistreated. So if you feel frustrated at the minute, if you feel close to giving up, if you don't know who to listen to in the world, if you feel abused and mistreated, Mark wants you to look at Jesus and see that he is the compassionate king come to rescue those who would be his.

He is the king like no other. And he goes on to tell us that Jesus is God come to bring the truer rescue from slavery.

Verses 45 to 52. Jesus is God come to bring the truer rescue from slavery. And the rescue is made clear once again. This is not just that Jesus is the greater David.

[16:47] He is a greater Moses. And much more now, we see that it is God himself who has come to his people to rescue them from captivity to sin, death, and Satan.

He's come to lead them forever. Immediately after the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus sends his disciples ahead of him and has some time alone. And we have another of these looted phrases. The first thing he does, verse 46, he goes up a mountain to pray. He goes up a mountain to speak to God. Then in verse 48, Jesus crosses a sea.

Verse 52, there are hardened hearts. There could barely be any more Exodus in these verses. A mountain to echo Sinai. Jesus up the mountain, talking with God.

No longer Moses doing that. Jesus walking on water to echo the crossing of the Red Sea.

Hardened hearts, just like Pharaoh. Jesus is making clear here that he is not only the greater son of the great King David, but he is the greater Moses, bringing the greater rescue.

[18:02] He has come to bring about the greater Exodus, the true rescue from slavery. Jesus is making clear here that his purpose entails a rescue of the size and scale of Israel's escape from Egypt, only better.

Pharaoh wouldn't release God's people when he was asked. He refused and made the enslavement more severe. But God wouldn't be thwarted then, and he won't be thwarted now.

The enslavement that God's people endure and experience now isn't being enslaved to a national power like Egypt. It's not enslavement that means we're going to be whipped or beaten for not working hard enough at our manual labor.

The enslavement isn't fully spilt out in this passage, but we're given a hint in verse 52. The disciples' hearts were hardened. The slavery that Jesus has come to rescue people from is a slavery to all the evil that flows out of hearts that reject God and rebel against him.

The slavery that means our hearts cause us to do all manner of things that are wrong, all manner of things that grieve God. That's what Mark moves on to next in chapter 7.

[19:19] The heart. But it's also the slavery that causes us to be blind to who God is. And that's what we see here as the loaded phrases continue.

Verse 48. Jesus passes by the disciples. Verse 50. It is I. Jesus passes by the disciples just as God passed by Moses in the cleft of the rock in Exodus.

Jesus says, It is I. I. To echo God speaking to Moses. I am. Mark is telling us that Jesus is God himself come to rescue.

The great rescue that Jesus has come to enact is a rescue that finally deals with the problem at the heart of everything. Jesus is God himself come to deliver people from blindness, from hearts that are hardened against God.

The disciples have just witnessed Jesus walking on water and Mark tells us that they are utterly astounded. Verse 52. Because they didn't understand about the bread.

[20 : 32] They've just seen a man walking on water and they're still thinking about the bread. God himself has come and he is faced with people who have hearts hardened against him because they cannot see who he is.

Mark is saying that if they could see that Jesus is the great David, the great Moses, if they could see that the greater Exodus, the true rescue is here, then they wouldn't be astounded by this crossing the sea.

They wouldn't be astounded that God himself was with them. They're frightened thinking it's a ghost. They're thinking about the bread. When Jesus is revealing himself as God himself amongst them.

God himself has come and he is faced with people who have hearts hardened against him because they cannot see who he is. The greater king is here.

The greater rescue has come. God himself has descended to deal with humanity's problem. No more do we need to be controlled by sin. No more does this world have to rule over us for it will fail us and starve us and ruin us.

[21 : 47] No, Jesus has come to enact a great, a true, a final rescue. He has come to bring freedom to his own. He has come to win lost sheep to himself, to open blind eyes and soften hard hearts.

We do not need to despair in this world. We're all around us. People feel. People hurt us. People neglect us.

And we can feel that everything is broken and falling apart. We may be caused to ask the question, who can we trust? We can trust Jesus.

He will never do those things. He is full of compassion to ultimately deal with all that is wrong in the world. So look at Jesus and see what he has come to do and listen and follow and serve him.

Because verse 42, Jesus is able to and will satisfy. Jesus came to give his life that his sheep might live.

[22 : 58] That the lost might be found. That the hungry might be satisfied. So look at Jesus and be astounded. Amen.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you that you have been so gracious to send us the Lord Jesus, that we have a king who is compassionate, who won't fail us.

Thank you that we have this better understanding, this better realization of all that you've promised in the gospel because of the Lord Jesus.

Encourage us, astound us as we look at him, that we might follow and serve him with all that we are. For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.