

Meet Jesus: As he communicates God's love

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[0 : 0 0] Amen. So we're carrying on our series from Mark's Gospel and if you'd like to turn that up it's on page 841 in the Visitor's Bibles and I'll read from Mark chapter 6 verse 30 to verse 34.

Mark chapter 6 from verse 30.

And he 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. And they said to him shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?

[1 : 2 8] 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. Well that passage is all about identity.

It's all about identity. And we've got two points. Our first point is Jesus reveals who he is. And our second point is the apostles realise who they're not.

[2 : 3 1] So our first point is Jesus reveals who he is. And chapter 1 verse 1 you might remember that from Mark's gospel. We're given Jesus' identity up front aren't we?

It's as if Mark's setting out his stall and he's saying Jesus he is your long awaited king and saviour from the Old Testament. The Hebrew word is what?

It's Messiah. Isn't it? And the term Messiah carries a lot of freight from the Old Testament. You know it's been piled up over the years. I get the train in these days and often I'm standing in the platform on the train station and a goods train goes by.

They're very long aren't they goods trains? I counted 19 carriages today at 10.40 at Johnston station when one went past. And the Old Testament, think about this, the Old Testament messianic goods train.

It has wagons called priest, king, prophet, servant, shepherd, saviour, teacher, son of God, anointed one.

[3 : 41] There's all these wagons on the Old Testament messianic goods train. And the Messiah is the collective name or rather his collective name for those wagon loads of identity we get from the Old Testament.

So really, if you think about the first century, he should be unmistakable, shouldn't he? When you see Jesus Christ in action, when you hear him speaking. And as we look at Jesus through Mark's Gospel, that's the question.

Is he the Messiah? Is this him? Does he fit the bill? And at this point in Mark's Gospel about Jesus revealing himself, we'll look at two points.

We'll look at two points and we'll have them as subcategories of our first point. So the first point is Jesus' identity as king. 2 Samuel chapter 7.

And it's about a king in the line of David. You might like to turn it up. It's on page 259. 2 Samuel chapter 7. It's an important chapter in the Old Testament.

[4 : 51] An important promise from God. Chapter 7 verses 12 and 13. 2 Samuel chapter 7 verse 12. When your days are fulfilled, says God to David, and you lie down with your fathers, what will he do?

I will raise up your offspring after you. Who shall come from your body. And I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom.

Do you see how long it's for the end, that last word? Forever. It's an eternal kingdom, isn't it? God's promising in the Davidic line. A kingdom. A throne.

An eternal monarchy. What a promise that is. You know, you can just sort of picture the first century scene. Roman soldiers walking around Jerusalem.

And the Jewish people muttering to each other that promise. It's probably echoing around the prayer meetings, isn't it? Where's our king? Is it King Herod?

[5 : 53] Could it be... Could King Herod be the promised king, they ask themselves? Let's put ourselves in first century Jewish shoes.

And Mark is portraying Jesus as king. Not King Herod. But Jesus was born where? In a stable. Wasn't he? Mark chapter 6 verse 3, they say to him, Is this not the carpenter?

Is this not the carpenter, they exclaim? So they're asking themselves, Could he really be God's promised king, this Jesus Christ?

Surely Herod. He's a more likely contender, isn't he? So Mark, he brings these kings together for a head-to-head. You know, in our minds as we read through his gospel.

And here's the evidence, is what Mark's saying. Choose your king. Do you remember last week we were looking at King Herod? Do you remember the banquet? Mark sort of shoehorned that into the passage so that we can decide who is king, who is the Messiah.

[7 : 03] He shoehorned that little piece into our narrative here. So these two kings, they have two banquets, don't they? We were looking last week at that. And what a banquet Herod's was.

I was surprised when Dick said that Herodias' daughter, she was effectively lap dancing in this banquet that Herod had put on. And they're all drunk, aren't they? Worse for wear.

And did you see the guest list? Look back at chapter 6 verse 21. Look at the guest list at Herod's banquet. But an opportunity came when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet for his...

Who's invited? His nobles, his military commanders, and the leading men of Galilee. Do you see? The elite. Contrast our passage that we've just read.

The shores of Galilee. Verse 33. Not the elite. Who's invited in verse 33? Do you see? Now many saw them going and recognised them. And they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of him.

[8 : 06] Yes, with Jesus, friends, you can come as you are to his banquet. So it's a decision Mark is presenting to his readers in his gospel.

The banquet of King Herod or the banquet of King Jesus? Which do you want to go to? Mark lays them out side by side in his gospel. The question is, will you come to the banquet?

Will you share in Jesus' banquet? There's a lovely passage in Isaiah. I'll read it to you. It's Isaiah chapter 55. It's beautiful, poetic language.

The Bible often speaks of banquets. You listen to this. Come everyone who thirsts. Come to the waters. And he who has no money, come buy and eat. Come buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money? For that which is not bread. And your labour for that which does not satisfy. Listen diligently to me and eat what is good. And delight yourselves in rich food.

[9 : 09] Incline your ear and come to me. Hear that your soul may live. And I will make with you an everlasting covenant. That's that eternal covenant again, isn't it?

My steadfast, sure love promise to who? To David. Isaiah is looking ahead from around 700 years before Jesus came. So, two kings.

Are you with me? We've got two kings, two banquets. And who's your king? Who will you be with for all of eternity? I was at a funeral this morning.

And it was my wife's granny. I saw her a few months back. And she was really a bunch of bones and hardly speaking. And she passed away last week.

But she's at that banquet, isn't she? The Lord's invited her home. Well done. Good and faithful servant. And the minister reminded us today at the funeral that we all passed the way of death.

[10 : 09] So, it's something we all need to think about, isn't it? So, the Lord could return in the interim. So, that was looking at Jesus' identity as king.

And now we'll look at his identity as shepherd. And you remember that we're thinking about messianic expectation from the Old Testament.

And I'll read you just a couple of verses from Ezekiel. It's Ezekiel chapter 34. Just listen to this. For thus says the Lord God, Behold, I, I myself, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out.

As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep. So, the banquet's set, isn't it, on the shores of the Lake of Galilee.

And Jesus is fulfilling that prophecy. Just look at verse 34 of our passage. Just look there at verse 34. Jesus is bringing it to life.

[11 : 13] He's sort of incarnating it, isn't he? Verse 34. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were what? They were like sheep without a shepherd.

And he began to teach them many things. So, that's Jesus' identity as shepherd. And think about this. He's only our shepherd if we're listening to him, isn't he?

Listening to his teaching. Without him, just think, without Jesus as shepherd. Think it through. We find our own way, don't we?

Like lost sheep. It's called self-referencing. So, we wander around on the planet, not sure where we're heading, not sure where we've come from, not sure what we're doing here on this planet, not sure why we were born.

Or we, like sheep, have gone astray. He's like, everyone, to his own way, says Isaiah, doesn't he? Chapter 53. Perhaps, friends, you might be like me, and you've spent much of your life wandering around like a lost sheep, looking at what the world offers.

[12 : 23] Mark's saying here, he says that Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things. And that's what's happening when we come to church, isn't it?

When we meet Christians, when we get the Bible open. So, as we open his word, we too hear Jesus teach us many things.

So, that was Jesus revealing who he is. And we looked at his kingship, and we looked how he fulfilled the prophecies about being the shepherd of his sheep.

And our second point is the disciples realise who they're not. Verse 30, they come back and they're full of beans, aren't they? Do you remember verse 30? Look at verse 30.

The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that, notice that they had done, as if Jesus wasn't in these things, all that they had done and taught.

[13 : 19] And notice the order. Normally Jesus is teaching first, and miracles secondary. But with these disciples, they're so excited about all the miracles, all the things that they've done and taught.

So, they're full of beans. And think about it, it's one of the best jobs in the world, isn't it? These apostles here, it's one of the most exciting things that they could be doing. Teaching with the authority of Jesus, casting out spirits, healing people.

You know, just think if you could do that sort of thing in the Western, here in Glasgow, to be astonished, wouldn't it? Instantly healing people. They leap up from the beds.

We look at the front entrance of the hospital, and there's hundreds of people in their pyjamas, walking out of the Western, queuing up for taxes. It would be an amazing thing, wouldn't it? Patients there in the pyjamas.

The press would be there, Kieran at the back would be taking photographs. For the New York Times, it would be absolutely sensational. So, the apostles, they're rightly overjoyed, aren't they?

[14 : 23] It's spectacular. They're saying to Jesus, this is absolutely amazing, verse 30. Aren't they? So, Jesus, what does he do?

He wants to take them away for a rest, doesn't he? To reflect. But soon, do you remember how many have joined the party? Running around the shores, 5,000 people have joined them.

Imagine that on the shores of Loch Lomond. You pull up with the family in the car. You're having your ham and mustard sandwiches. And then suddenly 5,000 people converge on you.

They're knocking on the window, wanting to join in, and you're at your lunch break. You'd be overwhelmed. So, what do the disciples say? Send them away. Do you see verse 36? Do you see what their reaction is, the disciples?

Send them away, they say, verse 36, to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat. They're thinking, let's dissipate the crowd here, get rid of this responsibility.

[15 : 27] You know, Jesus, we're not into catering at large scale events. We just came for a break. That's all you invited us to. And you and I, friends, we can erect boundaries, can't we, to our service.

You know, we can stay within our comfort zones. Our prayers become unadventurous and deflated. A glance out to Glasgow, and we say, send them away.

Close the doors. An opportunity beckons in the office, and we put our heads down. And then comes the bolt out of the blue in this passage, like a missile finding its target.

Look at verse 37, what Jesus says. But he answered them, you give them something to eat. What a shot that must have been. So their shoulders drop, don't they?

What a task he's given them. Feed 5,000 people. How could you do that? If you could afford it, Greggs wouldn't have enough stock in, would they? The share price would go up.

[16 : 33] So they walk away, don't they? Their heads down, and they're sort of scraping the barrel. And the wind of verse 30, it's gone out of the sails, hasn't it? So they realise, don't they, that they're out of the depth with this one.

They realise, listen, who they're not. And Moses, Exodus chapter 3, is on Mount Horeb, isn't he? Do you remember? The burning bush. And he says to God, who am I?

Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt? And what does God say? He says, but I will be with you. And he's with these apostles here, isn't he?

And they return to their shepherd and king. Yes, this is the king's banquet. And they present their meagre offerings, don't they? Five loaves, a couple of fish.

It's a bit like your life, friend. Paul says, we have this treasure in jars of clay, doesn't he? Do you remember?

[17 : 38] To show that the surpassing power belongs to who? God. And not us. And so Jesus majestically multiplies their offering. You know, just picture the scene in your mind's eye.

There's a group sat down, isn't there? Jesus has arranged them in groups, so there'll be some banter going on. It's probably alive with banter and people eating.

Imagine what they're saying. Imagine what they're saying. You know, did you see how he looked up to heaven and said a blessing? Did you see that? And, you know, it reminds us of the manna, when it fell from heaven in Moses' day.

But Jesus was multiplying it in his hands. It's as if it's the incarnation. And they munch away, don't they?

They say, you know, apparently, apparently, God's people, they used to keep some of the manna in a jar in the Ark of the Covenant to remind us of God's provision for his people.

[18 : 38] Exodus chapter 16. I know we weren't there then, one says to another, but it does feel a bit Exodus-ish. And we realise, friends, don't we, that he is the King.

He is the Shepherd. And yes, he is the Messiah. And as our world deteriorates, listen, into something like Herod's banquet, we need him, don't we?

We need this Messiah. And we have the Exodus before us, don't we? We can follow our Shepherd, our King, our Messiah. We can follow him through death and into the new creation.

If you've been bereaved recently, isn't that good news to hear about those who trust in Christ? Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land.

I am what? Weak. And you are mighty. Hold me with thy powerful hand. Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me now and evermore. Feed me now and evermore.

[19 : 44] So here he is, the Messiah. Isn't that good news? Shall we pray? Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for all these allusions back to the Old Testament.

We thank you how your word has been put together, how it's integrated, how it's all of one, how we can look forward through the Old Testament to see the coming of your Son, and how we see that reality wrought in history.

We thank you that this is true, Father. We see that today is 2006 because the Roman Empire reset the dating system to his birth. We thank you for the reality of this.

And so therefore, Father, we thank you for the reality of our assurance that knowing your Son, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, we can look forward to an eternity with you in that Davidic kingdom.

And so, Father, we lift all our situations today wherever we are, whatever we're doing. And we pray that we'd radiate something of your Son, Jesus Christ.

[20 : 57] We pray that confidence would sort of, in a way, wash off us as we go about our work or as we go for a tea and coffee just now and we go home this evening.

We pray that we'd exemplify what it is to be yours, to be found by you, to be no more lost and to be in your kingdom for all of eternity.

And so we lift all these things to you and we ask in Christ's name. Amen.