

Nourishment Unequaled

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, now we're going to return for a little while before celebrating the Lord's Supper together. To this passage in Luke's, in Mark's Gospel.

And we're going to continue with the same kind of thinking that we've been working through all the time in Mark's Gospel.

Because I think this passage is intended by Mark, by the Holy Spirit, through Mark, at least to trigger two questions in our lives that might not be immediately obvious when we think about this miracle, which we probably know so well, many of us anyway.

But these questions really fit in well with the account and with the intention, I believe, of the author as he wrote this account of Jesus' life for us.

And it's very linked actually to chapter 8 as well, and the lessons from chapter 8, where there's feeding of the 4,000. So we'll come to that in the future, we ask God willing. But so there's the feeding of 5,000 and also the feeding of the 4,000.

[1 : 0 7] But really both of these events and also many of the other miracles that Jesus performed, I hope will trigger at least two questions today in our minds. One is, who is it that you listen to?

Who's your authority? Who do you respect? Who do you trust in life? Now each of us can ask that question. As believers, we know what a Christian answer is to that. But think through that.

Who is it that we respect and who is it that we listen to? Who is it that we follow and who is it that we have authority over our lives? And if we're absolutely honest, it might end up just, we might just say, well actually, it's just me.

Not me, but you and me. It might just be that we rely on our own authority and significance. That's the first question.

The second question is, who do you look to for care and attention in your lives? Who do you look to for that protection and care and love and oversight of your life?

[2 : 0 9] Now our answers, even at a human level, and I know there's human answers to that as well, sort of everyday answers, societal answers. But even at a human level, I think our answers as Christians to that reflect our understanding of Jesus Christ and of his significance and of his centrality to us in our lives.

And to develop our thinking about who he actually is for us, a day-to-day basis. And there's really one overriding message that I want to get across from this chapter.

And you may think this is contrived, but it's not contrived, just because I'm preaching the day after the coronation. But the one message from this chapter, and I hope you'll see why it fits into the passage, the wider passage, is that Jesus is the true King.

Jesus is the true King. He's the King of Kings. Now that is relevant, I believe. The Spirit is always bringing us relevant truths at relevant times in our lives. So many of you, some of you may have watched the coronation of King Charles yesterday, outstandingly long.

So you may have had to depart for a cup of tea or something at some points. I didn't watch all, but the ceremony, the crowning of the King of the United Kingdom, the British Isles, is different from anything we're speaking about today, really.

[3 : 37] And I don't want you to compare the two, because apart from anything else, even from a political point of view or a leadership point of view, King Charles, as the Queen was before him, is a ceremonial head of state as part of a constitutional monarchy.

And so his power, and there was much illusion yesterday to power and authority, which is really, in all honesty, quite vacuous, because he doesn't really have power and authority.

But that power is allocated, it's delegated to government and to the judiciary. And so that makes the constitutional monarchy different from what I'm speaking about in terms of kingship.

And for many people, and we saw that maybe increasingly today or yesterday, is that the ongoing life of the King is fairly irrelevant to most of us.

It's not a literal position of power and authority, whereas decisions will impact our lives every day. There's a general irrelevance, I don't mean that disrespectfully, but I've just been in terms of the position.

[4 : 51] So when we think of the King who was made King yesterday, I want you to disabuse yourself of that notion and think about the King of kings and also who it is that you listen to in your life.

Who has the authority? Who has the admiration, the envy of your life? Who is it that you respect to the point of following and obeying?

And we all have that. And we all have that desire to be loved and cared for, and these are good things. There's nothing wrong with these things. But I want you today to take stock and ask what place, even as Christians today, does Jesus Christ actually hold in your life as you walk away from church this morning?

Does He have the authority? Is He the King of kings? Do you entrust yourself to His care and to His love and to His protection as a different King, a King different from the one that was coordinated yesterday, but who has a rightful claim on your life and on mine, as our Creator, as our sustainer, as our Savior, and as our judge?

He absolutely has a rightful claim on whoever you might be today coming in, whether you're a believer or not. And the reason that we can speak about Him as being the true King today in this passage is because of the context.

[6 : 25] And I think the context reminds us that He is nothing like Herod Antipas, the King who Cori preached about last week from the previous chapter in verses 14, or not the previous chapter, but the previous section of chapter 6, verses 14 to 30.

And here we have Mark revealing to us a very different kind of political King who absolutely abused His authority. He abused the authority He was given, and there's a complete contrast to the Jesus who is revealed in the Feeding of the Five Thousand.

When He was opposed morally by John the Baptist for taking His brother's wife Herodias to be His own, and John questioned that and opposed that, rather than speaking into it, rather than accepting it or thinking about it, He simply crushed that using His authority.

He in His folly and in His corruptness and in His desire for power and His lustful immorality, His selfish, weak, confused nature, He used His power to annihilate John the Baptist, to get rid of the opposition, to crush the moral challenge that was made to Him.

And rather than caring for and loving His people, what we find is that He provided a feast. It wasn't like the Feeding of the Five Thousand, but He provided a feast, but it was very much a feast for His own elite.

[8 : 02] We're told in these verses that He had a feast for the leaders of His day and the military leaders as well.

And so it was a self-interested feast where He expended His wealth on those who would secure His own position, His own power and His own security.

It was opportunistic. It was greed-filled, and we know that that was the motive of His heart. His generosity was inward-looking, really.

It was to protect Himself. Jesus calls Herod in Luke 13, that fox. Jesus knew and understood His heart, and He leaves the scene of time exiled and a fruit note in history.

And so we have that immediately before this account of the Feeding of the Five Thousand. We have the account of Herod Antipas, and then we come to Jesus, and there's clearly a contrast being made by Mark.

[9 : 09] He's saying, there's a king, but here's the king of kings, and he's completely different. He's not like Herod, and he's not like earthly kings and earthly power and authority.

He is different, we recognize that the people came to Him. He was tired, the disciples were tired, they went to get some time on their own, and Jesus by this stage was so popular that even though He went to the other side, the people legged it from all the towns and ran round so that they could be under His teaching.

And we're told that when He saw them, verse 34, He had compassion on them because they were sheep of that shepherd, and He began to teach them many things, and Mark's very strong on that. And in chapter one, he tells us when he's describing who Jesus is, twice he says that Jesus taught with authority, not like the scribes and Pharisees.

And that is what's coming across here, that Jesus attracted people by the strength of His teaching, by the power of what He was saying. And it was unparalleled, unparalleled to the point that He couldn't even eat His dinner because people were so desperate to hear what He had to say.

And He spoke with authority. And in this passage, this king not only spoke with authority, but he served a feast with authority. And it was very unlike Herod's feast.

[10 : 31] It was a feast where He gave, He provided miraculously from scant provision with His power and with His authority, He fed everyone who was there using His glorious character to provide not just a spiritual feast for them with His teaching, but also a physical feast generously giving them a banquet where they had plenty and more enough to eat, using His riches and using His power and glory to nourish other ordinary people who were there.

And Mark is contrasting the two, reminding us that there is only one real king. And it's never going to be Herod, it's never going to be me, it's never going to be you, even though we like to think we're kings of our own and queens of our own destination and our own destiny.

And He's providing this great contrast. And I believe that that contrast goes further, not so much in contrast, but in further revelation of who Jesus is by comparing Him, it would have at least been, I think, evident to the original readers of Mark's gospel, those Jewish people who knew the Old Testament, that here is someone greater than the Old Testament Moses, who also fed and nourished His people and had great authority as it were their Old Testament Savior who redeemed them by God's grace, strength and power from Egypt and brought them through the Red Sea, through the wilderness, into the Promised Land.

Now we've seen that before in Mark, that there's a lot of comparison with Moses, with Jesus being the greater Moses, even we saw that most clearly, maybe on the Sermon and the Mount.

And in Deuteronomy 15, Moses prayed to the Lord as God and He said, Well, you raise up a prophet like me from among your own brothers, you must listen to him.

[12 : 34] This was an Old Testament longing of Moses to see the Redeemer who would come. And there's little glimpses of that comparison between Moses and Jesus in this feeding of the 5,000.

I think it's not without significance that we're told that the people gathered to a desolate place for a while in the same way that the Old Testament people were in the wilderness and Jesus provides for them food, bread, in the same way that God provided through Moses manna in the wilderness.

Now there's a great comparison between the manna of the Old Testament, the feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus being the bread of life in John chapter 6. We'll see a little bit more about that in a moment.

But there's clear comparisons between it all that Jesus is not just feeding them and doing a miracle, but He's bringing spiritual lessons to them about who He is, about His provision for them.

We know too that Moses in Numbers 27 prayed, May the Lord the God who gives breath to all living things appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in so that the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.

[13 : 56] And Jesus here in the ultimate fulfillment of that is the one who looks on the crowd as a sheep without a shepherd. And He's there to feed and nourish and protect and care and love them, the greater Moses that Moses himself considered.

And He loves and cares for them not just in a spiritual way, but in a very down to earth, very practical way. Many commentators also see a link between the organizational structure that Moses set in place for his people in Exodus 18, where he put them into hundreds and fifties in order for them to be judged and looked after, and in a much smaller way the way that Jesus divided the crowd into smaller groups in order to be fed by the disciples.

And also the very prayer of thanksgiving, the prayer that He gives before He serves the bread, surely points towards the Passover thanksgiving meal and the breaking of bread and indeed His crucifixion, His exodus, His departure on our behalf.

So in this great miracle of provision where He feeds the 5,000 men, probably double that number, great number of people, we learn a great deal about Jesus himself and who He is.

That He is a king of kings, He's not like Herod, and He is greater than Moses. These things, the great continuity of old and new as it points towards and points forward to the fulfilling of all that happened in the Old Testament in the coming of Jesus in His life, but most significantly His death, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, of which we will recall soon, which is a great thing as well at the Lord's Supper.

[16 : 01] But I want just in conclusion to allow, seek that this truth would soak into your heart and my heart today.

That's what we need. You're not here to listen to a treatise, you're not here to listen to a message that is just intellectual or even spiritual.

You're here under the living word of God to hear His voice into your heart, and I have to hear it into mine. And that is always how we come to God's word, not in an intellectual pursuit only, not even in a religious pursuit only, but in a personal spiritual searching and listening and responding to God's word.

So there's a couple of things really. Just as in this throughout the gospel, there's a call to trust in the true King, the King of Kings.

What we call the shepherd king, the shepherd king, because that's what we have here, don't we? Mark's describing the shepherd king, the one who sees the sheep that are lost and alone, and yet who is the king unlike Herod, and he's this great shepherd king.

[17 : 19] And in many ways, in some ways, I hope this is not too fanciful, but in many ways, it does, the feeding of the 5,000 does look like an illustration of Sam 23 in many ways, in some ways anyway.

It's a great picture of Sam 23, which is the great shepherd Sam, the great king shepherd Sam of David. The Lord is my sheep.

That's a great declaration of it, isn't it? The Lord is my shepherd. It's a call to trust this great God, this great Creator, Savior and judge. He is a living God, and He is the Lord of all, not just in words, not just in ceremony, but in reality, because we will all face Him, the one who cares and provides like no one else.

I wonder if it's interesting that in this chapter, we're told that the people come to a desolate place, and then in verse 39, we're told that He commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass.

Because we can see there the green pastures of Sam 23, as He provides, as He cares, and He's still waters, as they listen to His teaching, guiding them into all truth and into all righteousness with His message, that great restoring of their soul as they come under His nourishing leadership and provision and care, even maybe.

[18 : 54] And I think that comes across very clearly in John chapter 6. If you have time, go home and read that, because John chapter 6 comes after John's version of the feeding of the 5,000, but it's much more detailed in the way Jesus applies it to Himself.

You know, He says to the disciples, yeah, you just wanted a miracle because you wanted to be fed. He said, but there's something much deeper than that. He said, He links it to the manna from heaven that Moses provided, or God provided through Moses, and then said, but He said, I am the manna from heaven.

I am the bread of life. And He links it, He gives a great I am statement that I am the bread of life, and He links it so powerfully with the nourishment and the feeding spiritually that He brings into our lives, that really every meal that we have, every Lord supper that we partake in, but every time we drink and eat, we're reminded of a spiritual nourishment that is also ours because of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done.

And maybe with the giving of thanks and the breaking of bread, thinking of the future, maybe not the people, but Jesus was thinking of the future and the dark places of sin and death where He could look at His people, say, they don't need to fear any evil, because I will be their redeemer.

I'm going to that place of darkness and death in their place, and I'm the one who provides a banquet. I'm the one who provides a feast.

[20 : 29] And I think that the overflowing 12 basketfuls of bread and fish are just a reminder of the provision that He gives us spiritually, but also into the future that we can't even imagine.

You can't imagine from five loaves and two fish, you can't imagine 12 massive big basketfuls of leftovers. You can't imagine it, how does it happen, because it's a miracle.

But so the provision for us in eternity and the feasting that we enjoy with Him in eternity is beyond our imagination.

Every time we eat and drink, we're to be reminded of that. He's an incredible King, powerful, generous, loving, forgiving King as we come and recognize Him.

So there's a picture here, a developing picture of the King of Kings that we have in Mark. And so I'm just asking this morning, who is it you're listening to?

[21 : 30] Who is that rightful place of Lordship? Who do you obey in terms of the moral injunctions of your life? Who you're looking to for ultimate care and provision in this life, but also eternally taking you through that valley of the shadow of death, because He says we lack nothing if we trust in Him, because He is with us.

I will be with you in the valley of the shadow, and He provides so that we lack nothing that we need to live life to the full as we follow in self.

So I'm asking myself very deeply, and you also, who is it that you are trusting in your day-to-day life? Who is it that you go to and have relationship with, and who has authority and who has significance so that you will follow Him before any of the other myriad of voices that there are that we may trust and follow?

Call it trust, because Mark is always revealing to us the person of Jesus. But then lastly also, we need to understand discipleship from this passage, because Mark is always about relating Jesus to us, and then encouraging us to understand our discipleship.

And just a few things here. First of all, the call is for Jesus Christ, it's for us to recognize as disciples that He is our King. He has priority.

[23 : 04] He's first. He can't be a bit player in our lives. He's not just someone we have a nodding acquaintance with on a Sunday morning, and then ignore and forget the rest of our lives as we just live to please ourselves.

He isn't even to play second fiddle to anyone in governing our heart and our life. And last week, Corey brought that out very powerfully from the previous section, which says the great cost that is involved in following Jesus.

The gospel is free, grace is free, but it's never cheap. And he requires that preeminence in our lives and in our hearts. He is God, we are not.

The temptation is always to relegate Him to some bit play of our lives, submitting to other teaching and other thinking, and trusting in other people to satisfy our love and our care.

Which we know is important. I'm not saying we don't be loved and cared by people, but ultimately to recognize and see His provision for us where nobody else can provide in this life for our heart and through the valley of the shadow of death.

[24 : 15] No one else can do that for us. He provides peace and nourishment and satisfaction and abundant love. He calls you a day to be His King, and you may need to repent, and I know I need to repent, there's many times, and then you ask for forgiveness where He's not in that place.

But let's move on and be encouraged. It's a struggle. Hallelujah. It's a struggle. You've got to love the disciples, don't you?

Because they just haven't a clue what's going on. And they don't really get it in so many ways. Not just in verse 30, he said, wow, are we going to feed this crowd? Did St. Jesus do all kinds of miracles?

And He still couldn't really believe Him that He could do it. How are we going to take eight months' wages? And then Jesus goes on later on, I think, in chapter 8, after the feeding of the 4,000 in verse 18, he says, you know, do you still not understand?

Do you not perceive? Are your hearts hardened? Do you not remember when I broke five loaves? Do you not remember when I broke seven loaves?

[25 : 23] Do you still not understand? They didn't get it, they didn't understand that it was speaking about His kingship, His authority, His Lordship. It wasn't just a kind of bit of magic that He did for them to entertain them or to give them a bit of food.

It was far deeper than that. We're not looking for Jesus just to snap His, we snap our fingers and Jesus, bam, does an amazing miracle for us to make our lives easy.

It's to understand the deeper truth of His Lordship, of His authority, and of His sovereign care spiritually and materially for us. So it's a struggle, we know that.

It does also involve sacrificial service, discipleship. We see that throughout the New Testament, we can't get away from it. And this section starts with the disciples where Jesus says, I want you to come away with me because you're tired and you haven't had any food, and you need rest, and they go there and then the crowds follow.

And they don't really get that rest that they require. And I think Jesus is, well, maybe this is, I would go to say, but He says, you'll get rest, but you'll get rest on the move because you're not in heaven yet.

[26 : 41] We'll get rest, but we'll get it on the move. You know, Christ is a great example, He sees the people. He hasn't eaten Himself, He sees the people, and He sees their need, and He sacrifices His own rest in order to provide for them.

And it's a great example. And I know the Bible speaks about rest, and I don't deny that, we need our rest. And I'm sure the disciples get rest at some other point with Jesus.

But here, the needs of the crowd prioritized over their need for rest, and even for food, although they would have been provided for with food as part of that great picnic, which is not something we should forget.

Isn't it better to spend for Christ Jesus, spend and be spent, and die a year or two earlier, than live out a life of selfishness and self-indulgence into ancientness, to live to 110, but really in a self-centered way.

Christ knows what we need. Christ will give us His rest, and we will be able to carry on as we serve Him.

[28 : 03] Grace, another lesson briefly. Grace triggers generosity. Jesus out of His riches gave absolutely, it generously, it's a great picture of generosity, the feeding of the 5,000.

And I think that's a lesson for us too, as we serve and follow Jesus Christ. And all the gifts He's given us, we're generous.

We're a generous congregation, generous in love, generous in time, generous in the use of our gifts because it reflects the grace that we've been given. And then lastly, and this is my favorite lesson of all from this passage in Mark's gospel.

I love this in terms of discipleship. Our nothing is enough. Our nothing is actually enough for Jesus.

You know, I don't think it's insignificant in that same chapter when He sends the disciples out, He sends the 12 apostles out in verse 8. We're told that He charged them to go out with nothing for their journey except to staff.

[29 : 09] No bread, no money. The two things that were needed at this juncture, they were told, don't go out with bread and don't go out with money.

And I think there's a spiritual message that comes across in what Jesus was doing. They were commanded to go out with nothing.

And then they came to this situation where they had nothing to give. In fact, we learn in, I think it's John's account that it was actually a wee boy they had to go to who had a picnic.

How humbling would that have been for them? The disciples, the followers of Jesus. They had to go to a little boy, the only boy that they could see with a picnic. And you know what little kids are like with food? Well, a bit of a challenge that would have been, oh, it's okay, it's for the master.

We're going to feed. 10,000 of them, yes. Will there be any left for you? Not sure. How difficult would that have been? How humbling to go and ask a little boy for his food for the master.

[30 : 12] Even didn't have their own bread and fish. But isn't that a great lesson that our nothing is enough? We can come with our nothing and we can trust Him that He will provide all we need in His service and He will use us for His glory.

And that's a great thing. It's not kind of having a simplistic or irrational or unwise use of our gifts and our resources, but it's recognizing that spiritually nothing in my hands I bring simply to the cross.

I cling that we don't bargain with God. We don't sit with God and say, I've got these kind of gifts. If you use me in this way, maybe we'll partner together in serving Jesus, serving the kingdom.

We come with nothing. We're giving everything. And we use that everything for His glory and for His good because He's the loving King of kings and lords of lords.

Let's pray. Father, God help us to understand You more clearly and help us to serve and follow You more delightfully.

[31 : 35] May we have that counterintuitive faith that we wrestle with so much because we feel we need to be kings. We feel we need to be those who are in control, those of authority.

And yet we're called here like children to trust with a childlike faith that is both deep and powerful and life-changing and not in any way simplistic or any way a dumbing down of our minds or our reason or rationale but looks to the Christ who is revealed in Scripture as the living one and the one who has come to provide light and darkness and break the back of evil and of death and of sin and of guilt.

And so we come in the name of Jesus and we pray and give thanks for You today. And we thank You that we can now enjoy just for a few moments the Lord's Supper together which will enable us just to meditate and think on these things for a minute or two longer in this great sacrament You've given us.

May we ask in Jesus' name, Amen.