

# Who is Jesus?

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Please turn back to Mark chapter 6. As I said we're going to focus on one miracle in the life of Jesus. One miracle particularly. When you listen to the radio sometimes you get a snapshot of a portrait of a particular famous person. So I got that this week. I don't often listen to the radio but I put the radio on in the car and I heard a very, very brief portrait summary of Nicola Sturgeon because they were talking about her because she is going to become the next First Minister of Scotland. Now when the media, all different types of media that you can listen to, portray a famous person they have different reasons for doing so and they give different information depending on how they want me or you to see that person. So I learned something about Nicola Sturgeon's background, what she studied, something a little speculative I think about what her leadership might look like and then

I also learned that her favourite film is *Gone with the Wind*. Now I don't know why I needed to know that but I think what the snapshot portrait of Nicola Sturgeon was trying to do was say okay here's a brief, informative but light hearted look at the life and possibly the leadership of Nicola Sturgeon. So the media were trying to produce a little portrait of somebody to give me an idea of who that person was. Now the Gospel writers want you and me to know about Jesus and they deliberately portray the life of Jesus, particular things, not everything about Jesus, not everything that he did because in many ways that would be impossible, it would be so much to write about. But when we get to a chapter like this and focus in even more particularly on a story like the Feeding of the Five Thousand, we get particular details about the life of Jesus and I want to use this story to ask the question this morning that you might be asking who is Jesus? If you were to want a portrait of the true Jesus, well what would you need to know? And I think we find a lot of that key information in this passage here. Who is Jesus? Well hopefully we'll look at this passage and find out because it's a really important thing for us to know isn't it? Who is Jesus? Because Jesus himself said that there will be people who will come to him and say, he says, not all who say to me, Lord, Lord, will be saved. So in other words there will be people who think, presume maybe, that they've got some association with Jesus so that makes them Christians and he says well they're mistaken. So in other words us knowing who Jesus is and knowing how to respond to him is right up there, the most important decision, information and decision you can have. So we're going to focus on this passage.

What I want to do, the way I want to look at it is to focus first of all at the miracle. So we're going to go to the second half of the passage and then I want us to come back and look at the first half and the build up and hopefully that will be clear why I want to do it like that. So straight into the miracle. What do we learn about Jesus from the miracle of the feeding of the five thousands? Well the first thing I want you to see is that Jesus challenges, he challenges expectations, he always does that. You may be very familiar with this story and obviously it's emphasised in the Bible because it's written about four times but please don't let that familiarity blind you to the huge challenge that is going on here as Jesus performs this miracle. What's the situation? Well Jesus and his followers are way out in the country. If you can think about them in a lonely place, an uninhabited place and Jesus is teaching and it's coming to the end of the day and his disciples say we've got a problem. All these people, they don't have any food so what are we going to do about it? Jesus. And we pick up the story at this point. Now Jesus challenges immediately and you'll see this in verse 37 because of his response to the disciples. What does he say to the disciples when he's faced with their query? He says, look at verse 37, you give them something to eat. Now the disciples are twelve men, twelve humans like you and me and Jesus says to them, you give them something to eat. So he challenges them in a very immediate kind of way doesn't he? And it seems like a crazy thing to say and the way they respond shows that they're amazed by what he says. They don't say okay

fine and they often do what he says, they come back to him and they say in the second half of verse 37, well that would take eight months wages. Jesus. Wait a minute, have you thought about this? What are you saying to us? We can't afford that, we don't have the resources. Now notice the way that they respond. They respond by thinking about a human solution. So he says you feed them and they say we can't afford it, we haven't got the money and the resources. Just not here Jesus. Now this is interesting because of the way this passage comes in the flow of what Mark is writing about in the book. We need to go back a few verses into the earlier in chapter six. The way Mark sometimes writes is he takes a kind of a section of a story and he inserts another, in this case a kind of a flashback into the middle of it. So if you come back with me just to verse six in chapter six, you'll see in your Bibles that there's a section there about Jesus sending out the twelve. At this point in their ministry

Jesus gathers his disciples and he says he commissions them. He sends them out as his ambassadors and as missionaries and he gives them this job to do. Then what Mark does is he writes about the beheading of John the Baptist. He writes about Herod and then he picks back up at the feeding of the five thousand. You'll see in verse 30 what it says there is the apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and taught. Now all that they had done and taught relates back to when he sent them out. So that's how this passage kind of links together. So that means that this miracle where Jesus says to the disciples, you feed them, you give them something to eat, is not long after they had been out and about teaching about the kingdom of Jesus and doing miracles in Jesus' name. They had had that experience and that was an incredibly exciting thing for them. It was a new thing. It was in many ways a mind blowing thing. You can see that in verse 30 they reported to him all that they had done and taught and yet when Jesus says to them, you feed these people, it seems like there's no thought in them, first of all that they can do it miraculously or that Jesus can do it. So if we're thinking about a picture of Jesus, a profile of who Jesus is, then if you relate that immediately to these disciples, what's their understanding of Jesus at the moment? It seems that their profile of who Jesus is is incomplete. They don't see Jesus at this point immediately.

Their first thought isn't, well this is okay, Jesus can deal with this. They're still bewildered. They're still confused by the situation and wondering how is this going to be dealt with.

[ 8 : 01 ] So they are stumbling here. They say, I don't know how we're going to do this and they bring the problem to Jesus. How else does Jesus challenge the miracle? Quite simply, again our familiarity sometimes makes us think of maybe even childhood picture books we have of a bunch of people sitting down on grass eating lots of bread and fish. There was hardly any bread and fish and then 5,000 men were fed and more probably. That's a miracle.

We cannot get away from that. We can't brush that away. Pretended it didn't happen. Explain it away by saying, well probably what happened is everybody was just nice to each other and they shared. This is a miracle. They were very concerned about the fact that nobody had enough food and then everybody eats and has enough and has more than enough to the point where each disciple picks up a full basket of leftovers. Now that is absolutely miraculous and Jesus did it and that's what the Bible tells us about Jesus. Now I don't know about you. Maybe you come to the Bible and you're a bit skeptical and you're still finding out about who God is and it's difficult for you to accept the whole idea of the miraculous.

But if we take the Bible and all its truth and what it says about Jesus as the Son of God then we're speaking here about somebody who is God and who came from heaven and as he walks the earth and the shores and the paths of Galilee he performs miracles because of who he is because he's the Son of God and this really shouldn't surprise us. We shouldn't really think, well I believe in God, maybe there's a God, maybe I believe in Jesus as a person but it's unacceptable to say that Jesus did miracles. That's just impossible.

That goes against logic because the Bible presents God as the Creator which is miraculous. And there's something about a clue as to who Jesus is here. When we see Jesus performing a miracle like this it should really start to point us to who he is, the power that he has behind him and the supernatural event that takes place here. So we're confronted with this big picture of who Jesus is and the potential that he has to do this incredible thing. In John chapter one, I'm just going to read one verse from John chapter one. This reminds us and it points us to something of a power that is in Jesus. In John chapter one it says, in the beginning was the word which is another name for Jesus so it focuses us immediately on Jesus and then it says this about him, through him all things

were made.

All things were made through Jesus who was integrally involved in the process of creation and so we see something of who he is, who this person is that is being presented to us and the power. But even see the pattern that Jesus outlines here for us because Jesus is living at this point as one who has work to do but yet he lives in such close relation to God the Father supported by the Holy Spirit. You'll see that when Jesus takes the bread and he tells him to organize the people and make them sit down in groups, good way of organizing all the people, making sure things went smoothly and it says in verse 41, he took the five loaves and the two fish and he looked up to heaven and gave thanks and broke it. So he looked to heaven to God the Father and recognized him. In many ways this is just the pattern of what a, as I wear a male head of family would have done in giving thanks at a meal. But I want to come back to this in a minute. Jesus is so conscious of his connection to God the Father and the way Mark often portrays him in prayer, relying on God. So Jesus challenges these people. He challenges the disciples by asking them this question. He challenges everybody and us by this miracle and the power that he is able to show here. And this also links back. And really if you think about the people who witnessed this, in their culture, many of them steeped in the Old Testament and the stories of what God did in the Old Testament and how he worked amongst his people, this should really have triggered something in their collective memory and the way that they thought about who God was and what he was like. So a man providing for hungry, needy people in the wilderness should take them back to, and it can take us back to as I look up a verse just in numbers, with Moses, the leader of the Israelites, God's people. And Moses had a crisis because he had a group of people that he was leading and he didn't have enough food. And in Numbers chapter 11, let me just read in verse 21, Moses said, here I am among 600,000 men on foot and you say, I'll give them meat to eat for a whole month, speaking to God. Would they have enough if flocks and herds were slaughtered for them? Would they have enough if all the fish of the sea were caught for them? Moses can't quite handle the challenge here. The Lord answered Moses, is the Lord's arm kind of like a symbol of his power or his ability? Is the Lord's arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you. God provided for his people when they were in need. There were situations in the Old Testament where the people had nothing. They were starving and God provided for them. And here we see the Son of God, Jesus Christ come and this miracle that he does and the power that he exhibits should be pointing them to see the identity of who he is. The one who has the power to do this, the one who will super abundantly provide for his people, who is absolutely able to provide for his people when they need. [14:29] So that's in a really kind of physical material way, isn't it? This is all about the fact that people were hungry and Jesus provided for their hunger so that they were full up.

They had everything that they needed at that point in time. I want to just say two things summarizing this miracle, this kind of startling big picture of Jesus. First of all, just to re-emphasize the fact that he has power over the elements. Again, taking this miracle in the flow of all that Mark is writing about. Shortly before this, he's written about Jesus healing. He's written in Mark chapter 4 about Jesus calming the storm and he's also written about in Mark chapter 5 a man called Jairus whose daughter was very sick and who Jesus raised and healed. Jesus has power over the elements. Jesus has power over life. Can you imagine that? Jesus has power in Mark chapter 6 over bread and fish to multiply it so that everybody has enough. And I read the rest of chapter 6 because again, Jesus walks on the water. Who can do that? Who is able to do that? And calm the storm. The disciples even save when he gets in the boat. They're just amazed. Who is this? Who on earth is this and how can he do this? So we're being shown here very deliberately the power that Jesus has. But of course this miracle, Jesus breaking the bread, the food and providing for the people, we have to see that that points forward to a bigger truth. So Jesus didn't just come so that he could provide bread for people or so that he could heal the sick.

He didn't just come to do that. He came so that he might give life, spiritual life. He can provide bread for everybody that needs it but he's the one who came to give of himself and that's where this gospel is going. If you read the gospels, they all point forward to Jesus giving his life. So that he's saying, I give of myself so that you might have life.

So that all your sins might be forgiven as you trust in me. And that's what this is in many ways pointing us forward to. Jesus said of himself, I am the bread of life. Come to me that you might have life, that you might live. Now this is the miracle. This is a big picture of Jesus. This shows us his power and it tells us something of the big story of the salvation of Jesus. But I want now to go back

and I want to look at the buildup because I don't want you just to think, well that's a huge story of Jesus. It's the big picture. He's a remarkable person but I can't really relate to him. There's two things I want us to see very importantly just as we go back into the buildup to this miracle and the first part of the story. The first thing I want you to see is that Jesus himself with all his power having come from heaven with this great mission, Jesus relates to ordinary people like the disciples and like me and you. He relates to them. He thinks about them.

[18:09] He knows them. He knows their needs and we see that from verse 30 to 31. What are they doing in this remote place? The miracle takes place in an uninhabited place. What are they doing there in the first place? Well remember that I said that this linked back to the fact that he'd sent out the 12 on as it were a mission trip. They were incredibly busy. They had all these new experiences and as they come back and report to him you'll see in verse 31 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. Let's get out here for a time. Let's go away. He knows that they may well be tired. He knows that they may well be overtaken by all the events and he also knows something of the pressure of the crowd that are forming around about them at this time and all the kind of fervour. These aren't just a few people who are kind of passing by them vaguely interested in what's going on. The fervour of the crowd here pressing all around about them. They've not even got a chance to eat. Now he relates to them. He knows them and he knows their needs. He knows that they may be hungry, that they may be tired and that they may be distracted. So he says to them, come with me and we'll go to a quiet place. I'm going to pick up my notes. So he takes them away and he asks them to be with him. Now another point just to notice here is that Jesus knows as he moves them in their own personal discipleship, in their own personal following of him, he knows that the more demands that are on them, the more that he asks of them as he sends them out to do miracles and as he sends the preach in his name, the greater, not lesser, the greater need they have to be close to him. So that means that as Jesus asks his people to follow him and to walk with him, to obey him and to serve him, to speak of him and to witness to the world, Christian life, as we go out in Christian life, all these different aspects of what that means, more time we need to spend with Jesus himself. So Jesus is saying, come with me. He doesn't say, I'll just go off on holiday as important as holidays are, he says, come with me. That's a key thing for us to notice at this point here. And also here Jesus himself knows something of the need for him. Remember the fervour of the crowd and the other Gospels, John particularly, gives us an indication of what these people wanted from Jesus, the expectations they had of him. Jesus himself knew of his own need to take time away. Let me just read one example. Mark at different points focuses on Jesus being on his own to pray. Mark chapter 1 verse 35, very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place where he prayed.

So then again, who is Jesus? What's Jesus like? Well, Jesus relates to these disciples and he knows their needs. And Jesus himself is giving us an example there of personal quiet time with God. He's not thinking, I'm just going to breeze through this. I'll just keep going, nothing can touch me. I'll be fine. I just need another cup of coffee or something.

He goes to a quiet place to be with the Father. And I think that's something we, something I need to keep remembering on a daily basis, spending time with the Father. So the first thing just to notice is that Jesus relates, the Son of God in all his power knows these people and he relates to them. Second thing is the Jesus loves. He loves people. In many ways, verse 34 is a hinge to this whole story. Things turn on what happens in verse 34. And I just want to pick out a couple of things from this one verse just in finishing. Jesus said, let's go. We need some quiet time. So they go with him. But what happens? Verse 33 describes that the crowd who are excited go after them because they have designs on

Jesus and they want to hear something more about him and they're impressed by his miracles. They see in Jesus somebody who can be their leader, not necessarily in the way that they need but in the way that they think. So they come streaming after him. Now you imagine the scene Jesus says we need a quiet time, takes his disciples and they go across to the other side and what's he faced with? A huge crowd, all demanding from him. Now what would your reaction be there? Mine would probably be, oh no, I can't believe they followed me. I wish they'd just leave me alone for a while. Well Jesus loved. Look at verse 34. When Jesus landed and saw the large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them. Three things very briefly. First of all, compassion.

He had compassion on them. That means that when he saw them, he knew their need and he was moved to do something about their situation. So he didn't just see them and say, that's a shame and then walk on by. He did something about it. The second thing, he says they were like sheep without a shepherd. What does that mean? We might think that taps into a frequently used image of the Bible, a pastoral image where Jesus is the shepherd. Now of course that's true. Jesus is the good shepherd and he's the one who cares for his flock, for his people. But actually the image that's being used here, some people almost describe it like a military image. These are a group of people, a crowd, a pretty worked up crowd who were effectively leaderless. Who was going to lead them? They thought Jesus is the one.

[ 24 : 58 ] He'll be our political ruler. He'll lead us against the authorities. But Jesus knows when he looks at them that the kind of leadership they're looking for is not what they need.

He has compassion on them. He sees that they're leaderless. They're lost. They're lost people. And what does he do? It's really interesting what Jesus does. It says at the end of verse 34, he had compassion on them. So he began teaching them. Now I don't know what you, when you think of the love of Jesus, what you want from Jesus, what you think you need from Jesus, what you want Jesus to do for you, do you think of being taught by him?

Jesus taught them because they needed to hear his teaching. Now this is because the words of Jesus are the words of eternal life. As he speaks to people, he speaks to them about the kingdom of God. He speaks to them about repentance. He speaks to them about the real heart issues that are going on within them, with all the people who he speaks to, because all are the same, all have the same issues. And as he speaks to them, he speaks to them in the words of life. Peter in John chapter 6, Jesus speaks to them and says, are you going to, a lot of people have left Jesus. They didn't like his teaching. So Jesus says to Peter, will you also leave me? And Peter says, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. So Peter recognized at that point in time, not just that Jesus was a medical worker, not just that he was charismatic or interesting, but the words that he spoke, the teaching that he brought to them were the words of eternal life. Jesus spoke to people of their need, of their spiritual need, of the need that they had to be reconciled, to be brought back into fellowship with God. And as people, he heard those words and listened to them and responded, then they knew life, the new life, eternal life. So Jesus is mighty to save. He's the Son of God who came and with much power did many miracles. And in many ways, he's completely outside of our kin. He so challenges what we expect of a person. He does things that we just wouldn't expect, but we can't do. But he's not somebody who's distant from you and who's unconcerned about you. He's somebody who relates to you because he knows your need and he's somebody who can provide for that need. And as he loves you, he would teach you. He would say to you, come after me and learn from me. Hear my words.

Hear my call to repentance to face up to all the problems in your life and the sin, which everybody has. Hear the call to repentance and hear my call to put your trust in me.

Jesus, remember, was on the way to the cross. And on the way to the cross, he had time for people like this whose ideas were all messed up and who maybe had very selfish ideas of what they wanted from Jesus. But he had time for them because he had compassion on them and he drew them to himself. Now, that's for us to learn from as well. Jesus is still the one who did these miracles. He is the powerful one. He is the Son of God and he is now enthroned in heaven. And he is the one who relates to us and he knows us and he is the one who loves because he has given his life for us. And so he is the one that we are to trust in. That is what this miracle speaks of. So when you think of who is Jesus, he's the one who is powerful and he's the one who cares and who loves. So he is the one that is good for us to go to. Amen. Let me just pray. Lord Jesus, enthroned in power in heaven, we praise you now and we ask that you would help us lift our eyes to you, to see you for who you really are. Forgive us we pray when we maybe sometimes deliberately ignore you, even though we might have been brought up hearing about you. It's easier just to not think about you or not worry about you. Forgive us for when we deliberately go against you. Help us instead Lord to see the way that the Gospel shows how amazing you are and how you meet our needs. Help us to have the right idea of who you are and to follow you. Amen.