

Living the Way of Jesus Week 8

'Amazing Compassion'

Bible Passage: Mark 6:30-56

These verses give us two of Jesus' most well known miracles side by side – the 'feeding of the five thousand', followed by Jesus 'walks on water'.

You might be hard pressed to look at all of this passage in one session, so it has been divided into three parts: the feeding of the crowd, the incident on the lake, and the verses that link these two events together, so that you can just choose one or two parts of the narrative if that suits your group.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

Read Mark 6:30-44

- Mark repeatedly says that people are 'amazed' by Jesus. What do you find particularly amazing about this incident?
- Food multiplication is a rare miracle. Do you have any experience of this, or maybe you have heard about it from elsewhere?
- Can you think of any other occasion – either in the Bible, or in your own life – when meagre resources proved to be either sufficient, or more than sufficient? Notice here the abundance of the leftovers, as well as the fact that 'they all ate and were satisfied'. (6:42)
- What reasons are given for Jesus performing this miracle? (6:33-37, 42)
- How does this incident show how Jesus cares for the whole person?
- What do you think we are saying when we pray, 'Give us today our daily bread'?
- Given the miracles done by the disciples in (6:12-13), do you find their response to the needs of the crowd surprising?
- Why do you think they did not recognise the parallels (6:52) with the provision of manna in the desert? (Exodus 18:21) And also the words of the prophet? (Isaiah 25:6-9)
- What is the significance of there being twelve baskets of leftovers?
- Has God seemed closer to you when you are in the wilderness, than in times of plenty? How has he been close?

Jesus Walks on Water

Read Mark 6:45-52

- It is only a few hours since the feeding of the five thousand. How does Mark contrast the behaviour of Jesus with that of his disciples in the intervening period?

- Why do you think the disciples were so stressed? (6:48-50) And Jesus wasn't?!
- Given what happened at the end of chapter 4, do you find their response surprising?
- Why would the phrase 'It is I' be comforting for a Jewish believer? See Exodus 3:6, 14-16; 20:2; John 8:58.
- What experience have you had where you have cried out to God and, rather than being taken out of the storm, Jesus has climbed in the boat with you?
- What do you find so amazing about the idea of Jesus walking on water, and why?

Cultivating a Heart of Compassion

Read Mark 6:30-56

- Where do we find Jesus acting from compassion in these verses?
- Look at the verses that link these two amazing miracles. How does Jesus re-energize? Have you ever known a similar experience yourself?
- Do you find the response of the disciples to both of these miracles at all surprising, particularly given what had happened in (6:12-13)?
- How is Jesus described in (6:34)? This is an image from the Old Testament that Mark is applying to Jesus. Look up Numbers 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17; Ezekiel 34:5, 25, 26-29; and Zechariah 10:2 to discover what this means about the character of Jesus.
- Jesus is often described as the 'Shepherd King'. How does Mark highlight this by placing the story of King Herod immediately before this incident? (6:14-29)
- What links does this passage have with Psalm 23?
- How helpful do you find the images of shepherd or king helpful in your relationship with Jesus?
- Jesus prayed just before they ate the food. (6:41) Do you pray before a meal? Do you think it matters? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Prayer means we recognise God at work. The words, 'It is I', imply God is ever present. Do we expect the presence of Jesus in our everyday lives? (6:50)

Finally

Let's continue to use this prayer this week on our frontlines.

Day by day, dear Lord, of Thee three things I pray:

To see Thee more clearly,

Love Thee more dearly,

Follow Thee more nearly,

Day by day. Amen.