

**Title:** The Book of Mark: Part 17, Feeding the 5,000: God's True Shepherd

**Speaker:** Corey Brown

**Passage:** Mark 6.30-44

**Big idea:** We can learn to better Marvel at Jesus when we see how he extends miraculous compassion.



I'm curious, how many would say they have witnessed a miracle? If you are a Christian, you ARE a miracle. Jesus has brought you from spiritual death into resurrection life. This is NO SMALL THING.

Now miracles do not necessarily need to be the "over the top" amazing things we see in the Bible, like what we will see in Mark 6.30-44. Even "small" things that you notice as God's direct intervention are miraculous. It could be his answer to a prayer, the healing of a sick friend or family member, protection in a situation that should have ended negatively.

The key point is that miracles DO happen. And, I would argue, much more frequently than we may pay attention to.

A miracle is an event that takes place, that is outside of natural order and explanation. It is a supernatural event, caused by God, which upsets the understanding of human senses.

## **BIG IDEA**

We can learn to better **Marvel at Jesus** when we see how he extends **compassion**.



In Mark 6.30-44 we are going to see in a miracle, how Jesus shows us his deep compassionate heart for his people.

30 The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. 31 Then, 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 by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." 32 So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. 33 But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 34 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. 35 By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. 36 Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." 37 But he answered, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" 38 "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish." 39 Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. 41 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. 42 They all ate and were satisfied, 43 and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. 44 The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

Mark 6.30-44

Mark 6:30, “The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.”

The sent missionaries return, coming back to Jesus to tell of their stories and grand adventures and to share of all they had done during their small missions.

Mark 6:31, “Then, 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 by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’”

The disciples had been healing, casting out demons, so their popularity grows also. The people are clamoring for a need, so much so, that they could not even have the ‘peace’ of a common meal. Jesus then invites them into his rhythm of ministry, pray, go & do, rest. Jesus had already regularly gone off on his own to solitary places to pray and be refreshed with God. At this point, Jesus invites those who had now been sharing in his ministry to learn this pattern as well.

Mark 6:32, “So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.”

They head back into a boat, heading to a solitary place, for some R&R. They are looking to be with Jesus, as they learn his practices and patterns of ministry. REST is a significant part.

Mark 6:33, “But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.”

The many are those who saw Jesus. They spread the word and ran after the boat. Along with the people from the neighbouring towns who heard and saw the commotion and joined in to get near to Jesus.

Mark 6:34, “When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So, he began teaching them many things.”

The word “teach” is important in this verse. Sometimes we can think of Jesus explaining these spiritual ideas in a sermon style, as if he was always “performing” a teaching model or lecture style like they would have been used to in the Synagogues, or like we would be in churches. However, the type of teaching Jesus is doing seems less of a dictation and more of a dialogue.

The Greek word used is *didaskao*, which is more a dialogue situation, that he “learned them”, or caused learning to take place.

Jesus is moved to teach them and has compassion on them.

The Greek word for compassion is *splanchnizomai* (Splanchn - Neetz - omy), meaning to be deeply moved in the bowels.

Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon shares, “for the bowels were thought to be the seat of love and pity”.

The depth of Jesus is moved... but why is he moved?

The real reason is that they, the people who were clamoring to see him, were like sheep without a shepherd.

The phrase “sheep without a shepherd” is very important. It is not just a nice piece of imagery but actually a significant biblical theme from the Old Testament.

Numbers 27:17, “Who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.”

We see this also in Ezekiel 34:23-24 speaking of king David’s throne and the coming King.

Ezekiel 34:23-24, “And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.”

Mark 6:35-36, “By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. ‘This is a remote place,’ they said, ‘and it’s already very late. Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.’”

We are supposed to get the idea that Jesus had been speaking with the people for the large majority of the day. His disciple’s response recorded here could be two-fold:

- 1) Care for those who were there needing to get back to their homes for evening meal.
- 2) Annoyed that their day of rest had been taken up by the people who flocked to Jesus in need.

I believe the second of these is most likely and appropriate. A shielded concern, as is indicated by Jesus’ response to them.

Mark 6:37-38, “He answered, ‘You give them something to eat.’ They said to him, ‘That would take eight months of a man’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?’ ‘How many loaves do you have?’ he asked. ‘Go and see.’ When they found out, they said, ‘Five—and two fish.’”

The disciples, practical as ever, seemingly not looking for the supernatural in their encounters with Jesus (as of yet) explain correctly that it would take 200 denarai to feed these people. This was more than a half years wages, and none of the disciples had anything. At this point, it was possible the disciples had been with Jesus for close to that same amount of time and they had not the means to go and provide for this need.

John’s Gospel record fills us in a little more, helping us to understand that Jesus already had in his mind what he was going to do. John fills us in that this was a test of faith.

In some of the other gospels record is kept that this amount of food, even if purchased, would only allow for the 12 disciples to share a small morsel, a bite. The evidence to the disciples was clear, they could not feed these people with the money they had in any reasonable or fulfilling way.

Jesus then offers a concession, telling the disciples to find what they can. What they find; five barley loaves (think of very small pita breads) and 2 small fish. Basically, sardines and crackers.

Mark 6:39-40, “Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.”

Jesus directed the people to sit down in the green grass and they were arranged in groupings of hundreds and fifties. This is supposed to echo us back to the feeding of the children of Israel with the Mana and Quail from heaven. The biblical writers are far too clever for these things to be coincidental. Mark is making the point that Jesus is like Moses. He provides for those in the desert(ed) areas, desolate places.

Mark 6:41-42, “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.”

taking the five loaves and 2 fish, Jesus looks to heaven, signifying his compliance to his father in heaven. Jesus regularly looks towards God when performing the miraculous, some have speculated as to why Jesus does this.

Does Jesus require permission??

Is Jesus incapable on his own of performing the supernatural or the miraculous?

Jesus is in full submission and agreement with his Father in Heaven. His heart is God’s heart, he’s showing his solidarity to the father’s mission. That Jesus, like Moses, is the teacher/shepherd/prophet they need.

Jesus said a blessing known as the Mishnah. It is a common Jewish prayer around meals that would go something to the wording of:

“Blessed are You, Lord Our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth food from the earth.”

Jesus broke the loaves, in the same wording that is used for Jesus breaking the bread at the institution of Communion which we celebrate.

Jesus gives the food to his disciples, and they distribute the food to all those who had been seated in the 100s and 50s.

What strikes people as odd, is that in all of the records of this event, Jesus feeding the 5000 men, there is no mention of how this event took place.

Some like to take verse 42, as Jesus only fed the 12, his disciples. That this event was not a feeding of the 5000 present, but instead a pictorial example of sharing.

Other non-believing scholars have referenced to the possibility that others, seeing that Jesus and his followers were willing to share what they had, encouraged the rest to share what they had, as if the groupings had hidden stores of food on them, carried in baskets to feed the crowds.

Still others think that this was some elaborate hoax. That each person had a tiny bite, and that it was an overstatement of what actually occurred. That Jesus just did a little miracle and fed all with tiny pieces.

All these responses deny the central theme of this narrative story that Jesus is God. That He can make something, out of nothing.

If Jesus could make a little more out of the little he had, why couldn't he make abundance?

If the people had stores of hidden food with them, the disciples were not paying very close attention when asked to retrieve food from people.

If this were just an issue of sharing for an object lesson, then why include the story in all 4 gospels?

The resounding response to this miracle is that when Jesus commands the physical to appear in creation, it does so. In proper order, the supernatural becomes natural. The impossible, becomes possible. Jesus = God.

Mark 6:43-44, "And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men."

Not only did they have enough, but they also had 12 baskets left over. What is the significance of twelve?

There are two options here, and I believe both work in tandem together.

1. Jesus had his 12 disciples, who were concerned that they would not have enough food for the people, and now they stand, each holding a basket full of bits of leftover. This is significant, because in some other gospel accounts the writers make mention of not leaving any to waste.
2. The twelve baskets were to signify how God has provided for his 12 tribes of the children of Israel in the past and Jesus, as the greater Moses, the Greater Prophet, the Greater King, the Greater Shepherd, provides for all they need and there will never be any lack.

There were 5000 in attendance. Why so specific about the number?

A few things:

1. Matthew's gospel specifies that there were 5000 men, as well as women and children. For there to be so many men present, would mean that they had felt it more important to go and hear and see, Jesus, than to be at work. But, in addition to this, the number of women and children present, who mostly would have been more available to spend their day following after a rabbi in the wilderness would have put this commotion to anywhere between 10-20 thousand people.  
Jesus has just fed a small town anywhere between the sizes of Ingersoll and Strathroy.
2. "Go and ask those who were present, they'll tell you". The men present could give eye witness testimony for validation of the event, and while two people were necessary to corroborate the

truthfulness of an event, there were plenty of pairs of 2 in this group to validate what they had witnessed and shared.

There were 5000 men in attendance, probably more, but we see that God provides and satisfies everyone of those people. Because God always satisfies the needs of his people.

In the message notes, there are three blanks. With three ways we can marvel at Jesus in how he extends compassion.

### **1. Jesus The Compassionate Prophet/Teacher (vs. 31 & 34)**

In the same way that Moses was the teacher to the people in Israel, the mouthpiece that God used to ensure that the people were fed, spiritually, so is Jesus to his people. Moses led Israel while they were in the wilderness, Jesus leads his people in his teaching.

### **2. Jesus The Compassionate Shepherd (vs. 34)**

The shepherd statement in Mark seems innocuous, but this is far from the truth. We saw this need in both Numbers and Ezekiel. Where Jesus is clearly the response that Israel is waiting for, the *Long-Awaited Proper Shepherd* that Israel needed. Both as the Prophet like Moses, and Leader like Joshua, but also as the Shepherd King who was needed.

Ezekiel 34:5, “They were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered;”

But God’s response is so significant later on in Ezekiel 34, that He is going to send them a shepherd.

Ezekiel 34:23-24, “And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.”

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He is the one who comes through the line of David to save the scattered sheep.

Psalms 23:1-4, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

#### *Green Grass*

Remember the mention of ‘green grass’ in Mark? Where does he get that image from? He gets it from Psalm 23.

Jesus as the perfect shepherd, the Lord, providing everything that they need, makes them to sit down in green grass, beside the still waters of the lake of Galilee, he certainly restores their souls as he teaches them, dialogues with them, and prepares a meal for them.

Mark makes this connection that Jesus, as his people need their shepherd, compassionately satisfies their need. Jesus fulfills all these things.

Jesus is truly the Good Shepherd

### **3. Jesus The Compassionate Provision & Provider (vs 39-41)**

Salvation through Jesus was the plan from the very beginning. At the centerpiece of this narrative story is the issue above all the issues. The Miracle the people needed was not just food, it was Jesus.

Jesus is not just God's plan or provision for the world, he is also the provider, because he is God. Jesus looks to heaven, performing the miracle in submission to God, he is not acting alone, he is working in union with His Father, their mission is singular.

Jesus doesn't provide like others do. It was not Moses that gave the command for bread to come from heaven, it was **God** feeding the Israelites in the wilderness.

But Jesus, here, miraculously provides for a number of people at one time, to believe it as anything other than a divine miracle is to miss the point.

Jesus is sent by God to offer compassionate care to the people of Israel. Those who had been lost and gone astray, Jesus is the exact provision from God that they needed. He fulfills every need, both as the provider of this miracle, and all others, but also as God's provision to humanity, for our greatest need.

Here is what I want you to know:

It is all about Jesus.

Jesus is for you, everything that you require. For salvation, as a teacher, as a prophet, as a guide, as a leader. He is your shepherd.

## **BIG IDEA**

We can learn to better **Marvel at Jesus** when we see how he extends **compassion**.



May you to MARVEL at Jesus, and all he is for you.