

# Mark 6:14-44

**Date: Sunday, 25 April 2021**

**Scripture: Mark 6:14-44**

**Sermon: Jesus our Good Shepherd**

**Preacher: Justin Ang**

## Passage

Mark 6:14 King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him." 15 But others said, "He is Elijah." And others said, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." 16 But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." 17 For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her. 18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not, 20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.

Mark 6:21 But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. 22 For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." 23 And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom." 24 And she went out and said to her mother, "For what should I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist." 25 And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26 And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. 27 And

immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison 28 and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Mark 6:30 The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32 And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. 33 Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 34 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. 35 And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. 36 Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." 37 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?" 38 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." 39 Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. 41 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. 42 And they all ate and were satisfied. 43 And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. 44 And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

## **Transcript**

Today is ANZAC Day. And ANZAC day services are often steeped in Christian character. Often you might have Christian hymns being played. Psalms are read. For example Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd. The passage that David read out to us, in fact, shows us that Jesus is our good shepherd. It's a theme that I want us to focus on today as we look at this passage together. And today, I want to draw your attention to the fact that Jesus is our good shepherd the one who leads and the one who feeds.

## Leads

Let's look at Jesus, the good shepherd, the one who leads his flock. The passage that David read out to us shows us two leaders, doesn't it? King Herod and Jesus. Let's compare the two. We're told, aren't we, in the passage that Herod had had John the Baptist beheaded. And we're told the story behind his beheading. How Herod's wife, Herodias wasn't too happy with John the Baptist for speaking out against her. And we're at a feast with Herod. And Herodias' daughter does a dance before Herod that pleases him. But I want to draw your attention to what a selfish leader Herod is. Have a look with me.

*For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom." Mark 6:22-23 (ESV)*

Talk about a leader caught making a rash decision. He makes a grand gesture in front of a crowd, and Herodias' daughter asks for John the Baptists head. And even though Herod likes John the Baptist, he is caught in a bind, isn't he? The story continues,

*And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. Mark 6:26-28 (ESV)*

Here is a leader who is perhaps concerned about one thing, and that's his own image. It's all about himself. One of the things I love as I read the Scriptures is that I'm reminded that human nature hasn't changed over the last two thousand years. Yes, we may have better technology than people back then, but human nature is still the same. I reflect on leaders of the world, and they're still the same now as they were back then. You see leaders whose priority is their own image. It's not their priority to serve their people.

But what about Jesus? Let's have a look,

*And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. Mark 6:31 (ESV)*

I love Jesus, his love for his disciples. He cares, he's thinking about his own disciples. He's looking out for those around him. He's concerned that they don't burn out. Do you find yourself like that, tired, weary? Jesus is there for us, he knows our burdens, and our cares. He leads us to where we need to be. He is tender, a bruised reed he will not break.

But that's not the whole story is it? The people, the townspeople, have faith and they seek out Jesus because they know his power, they know that he's able to heal them of their illnesses and their sicknesses, and they run after him don't they? And I want to draw your attention to what he does.

*Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they 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. Mark 6:33-34 (ESV)*

What's Jesus' leadership like compared to Herod's? Herod's power comes from his relationship with the Roman Empire. But Jesus' power comes from God himself. And yet, despite having more power than King Herod, what does he do with that power? He uses it to serve his disciples, he uses it to serve his own people. King Herod, on the other hand, uses it to lift himself up. It gets him into trouble. Maybe you know someone like that, a leader who actually served those around them, rather than taking and taking? Or maybe you know people in your life, who had been called to be leaders, but used their power for their own glory. They abused their power. But that's not Jesus.

Here is Jesus as the good shepherd, the one who leads. And Mark wants us to clearly see that. Maybe you know that famous passage, Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd. Let me remind you what a good shepherd does,

*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. Psalm 23:3-4 (ESV)*

That's what we should be reminded of, when we encounter Jesus in this passage this morning as he feeds the five thousand. Even as the crowd is in the desolate

place, they are in Jesus' care. Just as Moses, with God's strength, led the people of Israel through the wilderness, through the desert, Jesus does the same here too. And that should be an encouragement to us.

Do you remember when you first learnt to drive? I do, I remember the first time I got my Ps and I was in the car driving by myself to high school. Driving was a lot of fun for me because of my independence. But it was before the days of GPS was available to us. I remember I had to get out the Street Directory, look up the street that I was on, figure out which suburb I was in, look it up in the index and then go to that particular page and use the map references. It's been a long time since I've done that since using the iPhone. These days, I turn on the GPS, and I don't even remember the trip as I follow the GPS. But sometimes, the GPS isn't good enough is it? Sometimes, when you're in another area, another country, the GPS isn't enough. When what you need is more than a GPS and what you need is a guide. Someone to show you how the locals do it. To show you the shortcuts, to show you the right way of doing things.

I think about life. And life is the same. Someone to guide us, to bring us through life, to show us what is the wise way of doing things. Have you found yourself in times where you've needed guidance? Where it feels like you're in the wilderness, doing the same repetitive things, and you can't go backwards, and there doesn't seem to be any way forwards? The encouragement this morning to us is this. We have a good shepherd who walks with us, guides us, leads us, protects us. Who looks after us. We have a shepherd who goes before the sheep. In fact, we have the good shepherd who has gone before us even through death and out the other side, who can say the words from Psalm 23, the one who walks with us even through the valley of the shadow of death. That's who we have, Jesus the good shepherd. That should be a great comfort. Even in death, he is with us. We can find our encouragement in that.

## **Feeds**

But not only that, but we should see that Jesus is the shepherd who feeds. We have Jesus who provides what we need. I hope we clearly see that in the passage. It's one of the most famous passages in the New Testament, the whole of Scripture,

*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 peo-*

*ple. 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. Mark 6:41-44 (ESV)*

Mark is showing us that Jesus is the good shepherd, who makes his sheep lie down in green pastures, who restores by feeding. I remember about 10 years ago, at a youth event, someone bought a fillet o'fish from McDonald's. And they handed it around, asking each member to take a bite. It barely got through 5 people before it got finished. That's not what happens here does it? Here, Jesus multiplies the five loaves and two fish to provide for the 5,000 men. In other gospel accounts, we're told that there were also women and children so it's likely that there was up to 20,000 people being fed. We see there is an abundance don't we? Because here we're told there is twelve baskets full of leftovers. One basket for each of the disciples, including Judas.

The feast that Jesus provides to these people may not have been as lavish as what King Herod provided his guests at his feast. But the story should encourage us and remind us that Jesus provides us what we need. Jesus here asks the disciples to feed the crowd. It's a task that seems impossible, doesn't it? But Jesus always provides us what we need in order to serve him. The question is whether we want to follow him, and obey what he asks of us. If we do, we can be confident he will provide us with all that we require in order to serve him.

I'm reminded when Jesus is on the mount, giving his sermon (Matthew 5-7), and he says to the crowd that they are not to be anxious about anything but are called to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness knowing that all that we need will be provided for.

This morning, I wanted to ask, then, do you believe that Jesus will provide for our needs as we serve him? Some of us here, know exactly what it is that I'm talking about. Where we have had to live pay-check to pay-check, where we have not much in the fridge. Do you find yourself in lack, in need? This morning, we are reminded from the passage that Jesus will provide what we required.

But for many of us here, we have fridges which are full, we don't live pay-check to pay-check. Maybe, I could put it a different way, do we recognise that what we have is all from God? Do we remember Jesus who continues to provide everything that we have? And do we use what he has given us to serve him and his kingdom? Maybe he is calling us to be generous with those here who don't have much.

I was speaking to a minister friend this week, and we were reflecting on how in Australia. My minister friend told me a story of a pastor from a third world country visiting Sydney. According to my friend, this pastor shared a concern. The pastor said that he was afraid to raise his children in Sydney because we are way too comfortable. And it's dangerous because being comfortable means we get complacent. It suggests that we don't need God in our lives. That God is only for the difficult times, and we forget him in the good times. Imagine that. Imagine you had a friend that only came to you in hard times. When they were going through financial difficulties, relationship issues, they'd be knocking at your door. But when things were good, you'd never hear from them. It'd be the opposite of a fair-weather friend, we'd be a foul weather friend. I fear that is a great danger for Australians, including us here at Caringbah. We would be foul weather friends to God, when the going gets tough, we'd attend church, we'd say our prayers, and we'd read our bibles, attend bible study. But when the savings in the bank account is plentiful, our children are going well, then we'd forget Jesus.

Maybe you're here, and you're thinking, well, it's nice to know Justin that Jesus provided the crowd with bread. But how can I be confident that Jesus will provide for me now? Well, when we read this recount, this passage, what it should cause us to do is think about Moses and the Israelites. As Moses leads the Israelites through the wilderness, the desolate place. And how God provides the Israelites with manna. Enough manna for each family, enough manna each family needed. They were never to take more than they were to eat for that day, (or two days for the Sabbath) because any manna that was left over would grow maggots and stink overnight.

And it was a lesson for them, and it's a lesson for us, that God gives us enough, enough grace for today's troubles. I know some of you say to me, "take it day by day." And that's true, we are to trust God for today, trust him to provide for what we need today. But we are encouraged to trust Jesus to provide because not only is Jesus Moses, he's also the bread of life (John 6). The one whom we go to and we are promised that we will never go hungry. The true bread of heaven. If he's the true bread of heaven, then we can be confident that he will provide us with what we need in order to serve him.

## **Closing**

Can I respectfully ask, are you trying to store up for yourselves, bigger barns for the future? Do you act in a way where you're trying to control what may happen tomorrow where we don't need to trust in Jesus on our needs? That is not what we as followers of the LORD Jesus Christ are to do, we are to trust the good shepherd. We are to trust the good shepherd to lead us, even into desolate places, even through the valley of the shadow of death. We are to trust the good shepherd to feed us since he himself is the true bread of heaven. Will you fully entrust your life to him? Let's pray.