



## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

### Mark 6:30-44 Jesus feeds a crowd of 5000 (18 July)

This is the only miracle which is described in all four gospels; the gospel writers clearly saw it as important for their understanding of Jesus.

When the twelve report back to Jesus to tell him how their mission went, he takes them away for some rest and quiet. Such is Jesus' popularity that crowds follow them. Jesus welcomes them, teaches and heals, and then, instead of sending them away to find food, feeds them miraculously. In doing this he is shepherding the people by teaching and providing for them, as foretold in the OT (see, eg, Isaiah 40:11; 49:9), because he has seen that they are like sheep without a shepherd. Although Mark gives first place to Jesus' teaching the crowd 'many things' (v.34), his emphasis lies on Jesus' miraculous provision for them (verses 35-44) – Jesus as Israel's true shepherd compassionately provides for all who come to him. In Ezekiel 34:10-16, God promises to shepherd the people again directly, since Israel's leaders have failed. Jesus is that shepherd.

The miraculous feeding of a large crowd in a remote place has strong echoes of the feeding of the people with manna in the wilderness (Exod 16) – giving further clues as to Jesus' identity. The focus is not so much on the miracle itself as on the one who worked it. Jesus is not merely a prophet; he acts as God acts.

Jesus took... thanked... broke... gave... (v.16). These four actions had, by the time Mark wrote his gospel, taken on a huge significance for Christians as they celebrated the Lord's Supper. See the same four words at the Last Supper (14:22-23) and also at Emmaus (Luke 24:30).

1. Jesus is concerned that the disciples should get some rest following the exertions of their mission (v.30-31). Why was this important? What do you think are some of the wider implications of the fact that Jesus is concerned for the physical well-being of his servants? How might we apply this to Christian workers?
2. Verse 34 is a reference to Ezekiel 34:1-11. The leaders of Israel are described as shepherds. What is God's case against them?
3. What differences are there between Jesus' approach to the crowd and that of his disciples?
4. Considering the attitude of the disciples (v.35), what hinders you from serving other people?
5. Herod and Jesus – two kings – both serve banquets (v.21-28 & 39-44). What does each king's banquet reveal about his character and authority?
6. What do you think the twelve learnt from the feeding of the five thousand?
7. Miracles are often thought of as works of power, but we may also see expressions of compassion and signs of the kingdom's presence. In what ways are these characteristics seen in this miracle?
8. How may we trust Jesus to provide for our needs?
9. Can you tell of an occasion when God used meagre resources to meet a challenging situation?