

A Tale of Two Kingdoms: Part 2 – Jesus

Mark 6:30-56

Tonight will be my last talk as part of this series in Mark's gospel
Neil and Andrew will be continuing the series from next week
Last Sunday we saw the Kingdom of Self-Interest as represented by King Herod
Tonight in the second part of Mark chapter 6
We'll be looking at Jesus the King

As usual, an outline of the talk or the full transcript are available on the foyer table
Or can be downloaded on the livestream page of the Bundy Website
Please keep your bibles open as we look at different bible verses together

Let me pray

What should we look for in a leader?

It seems that in Australia

We want a leader who doesn't abandon his people in their hour of need

In the summer of 2019, then Prime Minister Scott Morrison

Was criticised for taking holidays in Hawaii

While devastating bushfires were destroying property and lives

When asked about why he wasn't here he infamously replied:

"I don't hold a hose, mate, and I don't sit in a control room."

He later apologised for this comment

This summer, Anthony Albanese our current prime minister

was criticised for spending three nights at the Australian Open finals

Chugging beers and eating ice creams

After having spent only four hours in Alice Springs

Which is currently experiencing a Youth Crime wave

We clearly want a leader who suffers with his people

This time last year

Russian forces invaded Ukraine and attempted to take over the capital Kyiv

The US government offered Volodymyr Zelensky, the Ukrainian President

An opportunity to evacuate from Kyiv

Famously he is reputed to have said: *The fight is here, I need ammunition not a ride*

This of course, became a meme that went viral

Since then Zelensky has galvanised the country to resist the Russian advance

The former comedian has met with other world leaders

To urge them to help Ukraine's much smaller army to fight the Russians

It seems that he is exactly the kind of leader that Ukraine needs

That is a great line isn't it

"I need ammunition not a ride"

It's very John Wick or Neo

But is Zelensky, the leader that Ukraine will always need?

Winston Churchill was the prime minister of Britain World War Two

He galvanised the British people to resist Hitler's advances

Famously telling them to never give in

He was described by a fellow politician as the “only man we have for this hour”
But just before the official end of the war,
Churchill was voted out of office
He was no longer the leader the country needed or wanted

Leaders are important
God uses good leaders for the good of His people
Look at Deborah from the book of Judges who led Israel in a victory against the Cannanites
But equally a bad leader can adversely affect his people
Look at the many terrible kings of Judah and Israel in the Old Testament

We here at Bundy are coming to an important point in our life as a church
After over twenty years of serving as Senior Pastor
Neil will be retiring soon
And as such, we will be searching for
and voting on someone to replace him
I’ll put out a disclaimer – that’s not going to be me
Because I’m not ordained
But neither do I think I am suitable for the role anyway
So permission to speak freely
It’s a crucial decision who we vote for
It’s important that we look for what God wants in a leader

Let’s look at that tonight.
As we look at Jesus – the King that God wants for His people
Let’s value what God wants in the King he has chosen.

There will be two points from tonight’s sermon

The King who feeds
The King who calms

Let’s start by looking at the context of our passage
Verse 12

³⁰The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and taught.

Remember from last week in the first half of chapter 6
We saw Jesus the King, extending His kingdom through his apostles
Jesus sent out his apostles in six pairs of two
To go from village to village around Israel
And they were to do the same things that Jesus did in his own ministry
Preaching, healing, driving out demons
And now we find them back at home base with their King
And it seems that the mission trip has had some degree of success
As many people from the different places have followed them

Verse 31

³¹He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a remote place and rest for a while”. For many people were coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.

Like every good leader, Jesus is taking care of those he leads
He wants the apostles to be able to rest and recover after their time of service
Now imagine what Jesus himself is going through

We know from Matthew's gospel that Jesus has recently learned of John the Baptist's death
So imagine that he must be deeply grieving his cousin's death
But he still shows his concern for his disciples.

We're told in Luke's account
That Jesus gathered with his disciples in Bethsaida in northern Galilee
In Mark's account they withdraw from the people by boat to get to a remote place
But many saw them leaving and ran on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them
Their final location must have been somewhere outside Bethsaida within running distance

We're told in Matthew's gospel that it's a large group of people
Five thousand men, besides women and children
So there would have been many more than 5000
Some commentators think that it could have been as many as 14,000-15,000 people
About the size of a decent sized music festival like the Falls Festival
But it is a huge number for the day,
Considering that the towns around Galilee
like Capernaum or Bethsaida had about 2000-3000 people
Clearly Jesus and his disciples are generating a buzz
A buzz that Israel's leaders like Herod and the Romans would be unsettled by

What do you think the people gathered see at an event like this?

John tells us in his account

John 6

¹⁴ After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." ¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

The crowd sees Jesus as a Prophet
They're in a remote wilderness area
And Jesus has just fed a large group of people miraculously
And when you're thinking Old Testament
You're thinking that this is very much like Moses
Who fed God's people with manna from heaven
Who led them from captivity in Egypt to the edge of the promised land

Moses himself promised a great prophet like him in Deuteronomy 18
And the people want this great prophet to be a *political* King
Remember that Israel like Ukraine is an occupied land
How much must the people resent being ruled by the Romans
And how desperately must they have longed for a good leader
A leader completely different to the rotten royalty like Herod Antipas
Sucking up to the Romans for his own indulgent self-interest
What do you do, when you see someone with incredible power who cares for you
Well you want to make someone like that your King
And a crowd this size – it's the beginning of an army, a rebellion

They intended to come and make him king by force
By force – they want a King to fight
To fight for them
To fight against their enemies
To liberate their land
That's what the people see in Jesus
"I need ammunition not a ride"

In complete contrast to this

What does Jesus see at this gathering?

Mark chapter 6 verse 34

³⁴ When he went ashore, he saw a large crowd and had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Then he began to teach them many things.

Jesus looks at the crowd and he doesn't see an army for a King
He sees lost sheep who need a shepherd
This phrase "sheep without a shepherd"
Immediately draws Mark's readers back to the Old Testament
Passages like Ezekiel 34
God's people were led astray by idolatrous kings and unfaithful priests
These leaders were meant to shepherd the people of Israel
Instead they failed miserably and were subject to God's judgement
And that resulted in God's people being led astray
Forgetting God's law
Turning to the false worship of idols
And now Israel under Herod and the Chief priests and teachers of the law are no better
The people are still sheep without a shepherd
The compassion of Jesus leads him to feed his sheep
How does he do that?
He began to teach them many things.

In Mark chapter 1

When the disciples come to bring Jesus back to the people who want healing
Jesus says "Let's go on to the neighbouring villages so that I may preach there too. This is why I have come."

The priority of Jesus is to preach and teach
When Jesus taught – he taught about the Kingdom of God
What it's like
How you enter it
When Jesus preached – he preached the gospel
The good news that in spite of our sin against God
God would forgive all who turn away from sin
And turn to trust Him
God's forgiveness is a gift not earned
But due entirely to His grace.
Free to us, but paid for by the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross
This is the food that sheep without a Shepherd need

Let me ask you

Do you agree with Jesus' statement?

That people are lost
Like sheep without a shepherd?
And that what people need more than anything else, is the teaching of the gospel?

When I finished my commerce degree
I got a graduate position at one of the Big 4 accounting firms
For accounting students
This was a much sought after job
But in that year Emma and I had decided that I would work for a couple of years
Before going down a path of doing a ministry apprenticeship and heading to bible college
So that eventually I would spend more of my time teaching the Bible for a living
There were points that year though
That I wondered about staying in that job
After all, it was much more financially secure
And people at least understood and respected accounting
Not so much the case with ministry
What helped to convince me though
That this was the right path for me
Was our audit team's weekend retreat

The company spent lots of money on us to go to the Cape Schank RACV resort
Great food
All drinks paid by the company
Golf at the resort course
Swimming pool and spa access
They paid Kevin Sheedy, the Essendon footy coach to come and to speak to our team
But it was what happened after dinner
There was lots of alcohol
And people were getting more and more drunk
And more and more out of control
Tim, the only other Christian and I decided at that point
That we would return to our rooms when people were no longer coherent
And the morning after
The gossip was spreading over breakfast
Some guys were boasting about how drunk they were
That they began throwing furniture into the swimming pool
Young female graduates were in various states of undress in the spa
As male managers and partners sleazed all over them
And to top it all of
A manager with a young wife and child back at home
Slept with a female manager that night at the resort
By day, these were some of the most professional and competent people in Collins St
I mean accounting students aspired to be these people
And when you could actually have a real conversation with them
When they actually opened up honestly
They were often so insecure
So terribly lost
Sinned against by others and sinning against others
Trying to fill that Jesus shaped hole in their lives with anything else
They didn't need more money
They didn't need more education

They were like sheep without a Shepherd
I was convinced from that weekend
That what people need more than anything else is Jesus

In Ezekiel's prophecy, it is the Lord himself who would come and shepherd His people
Ezekiel 34 verse 13

I will shepherd them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the land. ¹⁴ I will tend them in good pasture, and their grazing place will be on Israel's lofty mountains. There they will lie down in a good grazing place; they will feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

This prophecy speaks of the Lord gathering together his lost sheep and feeding them
And this miraculous feeding that happens in our passage
Looks a lot like this prophecy from Ezekiel 34
John's account tells us that it was near the Passover festival
Which is springtime in Israel
When this normally dry and dusty land becomes lush with grass

And Mark says in verse 39 that Jesus had the massive crowd sit on the green grass
Which reminds you of that verse from Psalm 23
Where God the Shepherd leads his people to the green pasture
In contrast to Herod's lavish but self-serving birthday feast
Here the people eat a simple meal of fish and bread until they are full and satisfied
And there's an abundance of food
Even more leftover than when they began

When you put it all together, it's a beautiful scene, isn't it
It's a glimpse of what the heavenly feast will be like
This humble yet satisfying meal of God with His people
The Shepherd King feeding His sheep in both body and soul

Let's focus in on Jesus' disciples for the moment

Because in Mark's account it very much seems like the focus is the disciples
It seems like the crowd may have no idea
That Jesus has transformed five small loaves and two dried fish
into a meal for thousands
But the disciples are the ones who get to see firsthand what is going on
Verse 35

³⁵ When it grew late, his disciples approached him and said, "This place is deserted, and it is already late. ³⁶ Send them away so that they can go into the surrounding countryside and villages to buy themselves something to eat." ³⁷ "You give them something to eat," he responded.

The disciples' suggestion is very practical
How could anyone feed a massive mob like this
I'm sure it's also been a long day for them
After a long mission trip
I'm sure they're exhausted
Imagine then when they hear Jesus' words
"You give them something to eat"

And you can hear the incredulous, exasperation in their response to him
“Should we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread
and give them something to eat?”
Two hundred days of income for an average worker
That’s the scale of what would be needed to feed this mob
Even if they could find people to sell this to them in a remote location
The disciples sound frustrated and exhausted
Of course Jesus never intended *them* to feed the sheep
He was always going to do the feed them *himself*
So why did he ask them?
To show them that they couldn’t do it
That they needed to rely on Jesus
Who can make something out of nothing

Over Easter 2021, during our second year of pandemic
I hit the wall in my ministry
After a year of putting together livestream services
Pivoting in and out lockdown
Trying to meet people over zoom
And remote learning with kids
I was fatigued
Struggling to keep things in my head
I was forgetting things
I lost motivation to see people
Because all I could see was overwhelming need
And resentment was building up in me
Looking back at it now,
I had the symptoms of mild to moderate burnout
Neil arranged for me to see someone who helped me think through things
One of the things I had to work through was my picture of ministry
For a number of years I felt that my role here at this church
Was to plug leaks in a dam wall
Except that there were so many leaks
That I just couldn’t do it anymore
There’s nothing biblical about that picture
It’s just a picture that I formed
And what I see now is the pride behind it
I thought it was all up to me
Using my own strength and gifts
There’s a better picture
My two roles here at Bundy is under-Shepherd and sheep
As a sheep I need the Shepherd just like you
As an under Shepherd
I answer to Jesus the Chief Shepherd for his sheep
But he is the one who feeds his sheep
They are His sheep not mine,
Bought with his blood
My job is to pray and to keep pointing the sheep to the Chief Shepherd
Now that is a much healthier picture
If you’re anything like me,
And think that you can accomplish things in your own strength

You need to learn the lesson that the disciples and I keep learning
You cannot do anything without Jesus

In the feeding of the crowd
Jesus wanted the disciples to see that He was not just a Jewish King
But that He's the Son of God full of power
And that His Father's riches were at His disposal
Soon these disciples would be the key leaders in God's kingdom
And they were not to build a kingdom on their own strength
But on the strength of their King

Jesus also wanted the disciples to see that He was the Son of God
Full of compassion and love
That his power was used not to kill and destroy but to care for and provide

This is how commentator NT Wright puts it:

We are probably meant to make a connection between Jesus' compassion for the crowds and his action with the fish and bread. God's kingdom is not simply a matter of power, but also of overflowing love, and the two here go inextricably together.

Power without love destroys
And that is what we see with many leaders today

There is more for the disciples to see if they look closely
At this memorable meal the disciples saw Jesus blessing the bread and breaking it
Exactly one year later at Passover, Jesus would preside over another memorable meal
And again he would bless and break the bread in front of the disciples
This bread that would symbolise his broken body on the cross
And on that night his disciples were ready to draw swords and fight with their King
But this King doesn't fight he feeds
This kingdom doesn't come with swords and spears
But with sacrifice and service
This kingdom is not about control but about compassion

The disciples struggled to see Jesus their Shepherd King
Because of who they wanted Jesus to be
They wanted the Warrior King
They wanted positions of power
They wanted to make Israel great again

What is the leader we want for our country?
Someone who can manage inflation, interest rates and housing
Someone who can get race relations right between white and black Australia
Someone who can get our security right with China
These are the things we want
But what about the leader you need?
Which leader help you when you stand at the edge of death
And wonder what happens next?
Jesus the good shepherd who laid down his life for us
Who opened a way for us to life after death

Only he can do that

What is the leader we want for our church?

Someone with a strong vision

Someone who is multi-gifted

Someone who can manage a large team of staff and volunteers

Someone who is good at relations with people outside the church

These are the things churches often want

And we as a church will be full of regret if the man we voted for had all those traits

And yet Jesus was missing in his life

The senior pastor you need must know his constant need for his Jesus

The senior pastor who need wants to share Jesus with others over every other priority

The senior pastor you need is full of compassion like Jesus

Our second point tonight is

The King who calms

After feeding the crowd

Jesus dismisses them and He sends the disciples by boat back to Bethsaida

Jesus himself retreats to spend time in prayer with God

This is not the first time that Jesus has done this

And you can imagine that Jesus is still grieving the death of his cousin

And he's disappointed by his disciples continued lack of understanding

As well as dealing with the frenzied desire of the crowd to make him King

This time to spend aligning himself with the will of His Father God is crucial

In the last few verses of this passage we see that in dealing with a strong wind

They are blown off course to Gennaseret rather than Bethsaida

And there in Gennaseret, Jesus continues to draw a lot of people through his healing

Now we won't focus on those last verses

but we will turn our attention to what happened on Lake Galilee

Verse 47

⁴⁷ Well into the night, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and he was alone on the land. ⁴⁸ He saw them straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Very early in the morning he came toward them walking on the sea and wanted to pass by them.

Somewhere between 3am and 6am

From his mountain top prayer retreat,

Jesus can see that the disciples are struggling with the strong head winds

And so he decides to encourage them

By walking past them, on the water

As you do

Now why past them?

Well if you can remember that once for Moses,

The glory of God passed by Him as a means of encouraging him

I think something similar is going on here

Walking past them is to show them that

The glorious King who calms the storms

Is reassuringly present with the disciples in their struggles

Unfortunately that plan backfires and they're even more freaked out

Verse 49

When they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out, ⁵⁰ because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke with them and said, "Have courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." ⁵¹ Then he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased.

This is not the first time that Jesus has performed a miracle with them on a boat

That time they were on the verge of drowning

Back then Jesus rebuked the storm itself

And brought calm and the disciples were afraid of him

This time they are still terrified of him.

So Jesus speaks to the disciples

"Have courage. It is I. Don't be afraid".

We're going to do a bit of Greek and Hebrew study here

Quite literally the koine Greek (Ego Eimi) translated as "It is I" can be translated "I AM".

Now back in the Old Testament when Moses was speaking with God in the burning bush

Moses asked God to reveal His name

In the Greek translation of Exodus 3 it is the same Greek words

Ego Eimi – I AM

In Hebrew we would use the word Yahweh

The name that is translated as The Lord in our English translations of the Bible

Now I'm not going to go into an in-depth study on what "I AM" means

But in short,

It's a big statement about God

About God being self-existent, eternal, not reliant on anyone

So when I AM is found on the lips of Jesus

He is effectively claiming to be the eternal God

The disciples don't need to be afraid

Because I AM

I - the living God

AM - right there with you in your struggles

The wind and waves are nothing to Him

And to prove it - Jesus immediately calms the wind when he steps into the boat

According to the ancient Jewish document the Talmud

Jewish seafarers would have a wooden paddle on their ships engraved with

I am that I am, Yah, the Lord of Hosts,

And whenever there was wave that they thought could sink their boat

They would strike the wave with the paddle

With the expectation that the wave would subside

Job chapter 9 says of God

⁷ He commands the sun not to shine and seals off the stars.

⁸ He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea.

The King of creation is in the boat with the disciples
The King who treads on the waves
The King who turns chaos into calm

Sadly the disciples still did not recognise the King before them
Mark says, they had not understood about the loaves, their hearts were hardened
But that would not always be the case
Apart from Judas
All of those disciples would come to understand who Jesus was
And all of them died either as martyrs for Jesus
Or were exiled for Him.
Gone was that ambition for personal glory and nationalistic pride
Peter, considered the eyewitness source for Mark's gospel
Is recorded as having been crucified in Rome at the command of Emperor Nero
One of the beliefs is that he was crucified upside down because he thought himself
Unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as that of His Lord Jesus Christ

How do you live and die like that?
Only in knowing the King who meets us in the chaos
The King who calms

That's the leader you want next time you face chaos
The King who will never leave you or forsake you
The King who suffered for you
The King who promised to be with you until the end of the age
Do you know Him?
Do you know the King who will calm you in your chaos?

Pastor Oleksandr his wife Ekaterina
Pastor a church in Balakliya in Ukraine
When the Russian forces invaded
They stayed and helped many in their church escape Russian controlled territories
He would also bring food back into Ukraine
Oleksandr kept running Sunday services and said "I just saw fear in people"
"When you're near them as a pastor, it just inspired people" he said
At the beginning of May
He was arrested by Russian forces and beaten severely for two days.
"At first I didn't know what they wanted from me," he said.
"And then I began to realize"
"The man interrogating me"
"He was making it clear: We won't let you live here"
"There will only be one church here—the Russian Orthodox Church."
They hit and kicked Oleksandr everywhere,
bruising his whole body and breaking his left arm
Oleksandr prayed to the God he knew released Peter from prison
"I felt that God was silent," he said.
"It was awful. That is the moment you need God to speak, and he was silent."
Oleksandr's wounds were so severe he was taken to the medical centre across the street.
After a two-week stay there
His wife Ekaterina was allowed to bring him home.

That release “showed that God was with me, he showed his faithfulness,” Oleksandr said.
“And I realized that when God is silent, it doesn’t mean he’s not there.”

Balikliya was liberated by Ukranian forces in September

And Oleksandr’s church began to distribute humanitarian aid and to pray with people

“Now there are many people who come to Sunday service,” Oleksandr said.

“They just want to fellowship with us. They want to spend time with us.”

Oleksandr is praying for his church but also for his former captors.

“If at least one person heard the gospel and was somehow touched by it, give him repentance, and I want to see this man in the kingdom of heaven,” he said. “And it will be a great joy for me, if I come to the kingdom of heaven and see one of these who have repented before God.”

I am humbled and inspired when I read of leaders like Oleksandr and Ekatarina

I want to be that kind of leader

Leaders who don’t abandon the sheep but feed them

Leaders who are calm in the chaos

Leaders who love their enemies who hate them

How do you live like that?

When you know the King who feeds and the King who calms