

## Compassion of the King

### 1. Intro

- This morning we're beginning a new series on Matt 14-18
- I've called the series 'Clash of the Kingdoms'
- The reason I've done that is because in Matthew's gospel ... Matthew is wanting to make it clear to us that
  - Jesus is God's king
  - And that he is ushering in the KoH
- And as Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God
  - entered our world and
  - began to teach about the kingdom, and
  - display his divine power ...
    - it led to an inevitable clash of worldviews with those who came in contact with him
- And as we encounter Jesus throughout this series ...
  - you and I ... wherever we stand
  - will be challenged as to
    - what we make of Jesus and
    - what we make of his teaching
- But the clash doesn't end with what you make of Jesus
  - Because we'll also see that what Jesus has to say continues to clash with the worldview of the **disciples**
  - Even though they're following Jesus ... they still need to be
    - challenged and
    - have their misunderstandings about Jesus and
    - what it means to follow him, realigned
- Whoever you are ... wherever you stand with Jesus ... be prepared to have your kingdom, your worldview, and your priorities challenged as we encounter Jesus in this series in Matthew

### Pray

### 2. Compassion of the King

- *v13 - When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.*

- What has happened
- 14:1-12 Matthew gives us some background
  - He explains that Herod the Tetrarch has had John the Baptist beheaded
  - This guy was one of the sons of Herod the Great (king at time of Jesus birth)
  - Herod the Tetrarch was a puppet ... allowed to rule over the region of Galilee on behalf of the Romans
  - Galilee is the region north of Jerusalem
  - Herod had just executed JtB ... and he hears about Jesus and all the miracles he is doing, ... and he thinks Jesus is John the Baptist returned from the dead!
  - Herod thinks Jesus is the ghost of JtB
  - He's worried ... because he knows he killed a holy man of God ... he's fearful
- Jesus knows he's got lots more to do as part of his mission
  - He doesn't want to risk Herod bringing him in for the same treatment ... so he withdraws to a place of solitude with his disciples
  - They get in the boat and go across to the other side of the lake
- In all probability ... they have left Capernaum and headed towards Bethsaida<sup>1</sup>
  - We know the solitary place they go to is at Bethsaida because Mark tells us that in his gospel
- The problem is ... it's not always possible for Jesus to escape the crowds ... even if it was possible for him to leave a place
  - Because his reputation as a great teacher and healer means that great crowds are constantly following Jesus
  - And the crowds can see exactly where Jesus is heading
  - And so, the crowd followed on foot around the edge of the lake
- And we see in v14 ... that when Jesus and his disciples get to the other side of the lake ... there's already this huge crowd there waiting for him
  - They're like "what took you so long Jesus?"
- And how does Jesus react?
  - Frustrated because he wanted some peace and quiet?
  - No ... v14 says 'he had compassion on them and he healed their sick'
  - Lit. **deeply moved** with compassion

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 9:10 ... lonely place Jesus went to was Bethsaida (east of Capernaum and Jordan River in Phillip's territory)

- His heart went out for these people
- Matthew tells us in v21 there were about 5000 men there that day
- Which means ... was more likely the crowd was about 15,000-20,000 men, women and children
  - More than the average attendance at a St George Dragons game
- Consider for a moment the needs, concerns, anxieties, and issues facing the crowd ... and he had compassion on them
  
- They were obviously there for some time ... and the disciples are getting worried
- They can see that neither Jesus nor the people were not preparing to wrap it up and bring things to an end
- So, they take the initiative and remind Jesus of the hour and location
  - "Hey Jesus ... it's getting late ... you'd better send the crowds off for a Maccas run"
- Jesus says ...
  - We don't need to send them away
  - That don't need Maccas
  - I'll feed them
- With two fish and fives loaves ... Jesus feeds the entire crowd there that afternoon ... so much so there were 12 baskets of leftovers
  
- Later in Ch 15 ... Matthew records another occasion where Jesus miraculously feed 4,000 with a few fish and pieces of bread
- On this occasion he's in a different location known as the Decapolis ... this was Gentile territory
- Again, he is filled with compassion
  - 15:32 – *"I have **compassion** for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way.*
  
- Here are these two vast crowds
  - They had been so desperate to
    - meet him
    - be healed by him
    - hear his teaching
  - and now were starving and miles from home
- And Jesus had compassion on them
  - He heals them

- He feeds them
- I don't know about you ... when I'm tired, and stressed, and under pressure and facing the possibility of having my head cut off ... my go to reaction is **never** compassion
  - When I'm in those situations ... it's all about me
    - Don't hassle me
    - Let me sleep
    - I need help
- But not Jesus ... he shows compassion
- And Jesus showed compassion to everyone ... all sorts of people
  - You didn't need to be part of the inner-circle to experience Jesus' compassion
- He showed compassion to the
  - Needy, poor, disturbed, distressed, anxious, abused, oppressed
- Think of ...
  - Woman at the well – an adulteress ... Jesus showed compassion
  - Bleeding woman – an outcast ... Jesus showed compassion
  - Jairus, synagogue ruler – a grieving father ... Jesus showed compassion
- He showed compassion to the Jews ... he showed compassion to Gentiles
- To the crowds by the lake ... Jesus showed compassion
- Most of that crowd
  - Weren't believers
  - No real love for Jesus ... they were there for the show
- But he had compassion on them all

### Application

- Compassion is at the core of who God is
- That compassion that moves Jesus to heal the sick and feed the hungry is the same compassion that moves Jesus to go to the cross and die for sinners like you and me
- You and I should see Jesus compassion here and know we can go to him
  - Helpless, needy, spiritually hungry
  - Knowing we are broken and in need of spiritual healing
- And **know** ... Jesus is willing and able to show you compassion
  - He is not distant
  - He is not uncaring

- He is not disinterested
- He is 'compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.'<sup>2</sup>
- He is the King of compassion

### 3. Power of the King

- Not only do these miraculous feedings point to the compassion of the king ... the also point us towards the power of the king
- Quite clearly ... something miraculous and supernatural took place that meant Jesus was able to feed the multitudes with the equivalent of McHappy Meal
- And Matthew wants us to see the divine power Jesus possesses
- And as we'll see next week ... when the disciples experience this divine power up front and personal ... they begin to realise Jesus is the Son of God
  
- But many people will read this account of the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000 and think
  - "This is ridiculous
  - "Miracles don't happen
  - "It's just a story"
- Or they'll say
  - "It's just a legend ... and what really happened was
    - people saw what the boy was doing sharing his lunch
    - they felt guilty and ashamed ... and they brought out their lunches they'd been hiding in their Tupperware boxes ...
    - and they shared their lunches with others
    - and behold! There was enough for all and plenty of left overs
    - and this just happened to be the first ever pot luck lunch
  
- But if you're to believe that ... you'd have to suspend all logic and reason because it's not consistent with the text ...
  - Disciples / the eye witnesses ... came to Jesus saying there was no food
    - Which means they were either blind or they hadn't done their research
    - If there was food ... there would have been no need to go into the villages to buy food
  - In addition, ... Matthew tells us everyone was full!

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<sup>2</sup> Exodus 34:6-7

- So much so there were 12 baskets full of leftovers
- Did he just make that up?
  
- I don't know about you ... but in the Maze household ...
  - Liana cooks enough food to feed a rugby team ... and we're lucky if we 1 **bowl** of left overs ... let alone 12 baskets!
- And if we ever had to share meals ... there's no way there's left overs
  - We'd be fighting over scraps and licking the plate
  
- It's clear that what Jesus did was a miracle
  - Because as the King the universe Jesus has divine power
  
- When it comes to issue of miracles ... skeptics say the disciples and writers of the NT were pre-scientific and had no idea about the laws of science and therefore they were much more gullible and open to believing in Jesus miracles than us modern, educated people
- But there are several issues with that
  
- First, it's extremely arrogant to presume we are so much more intellectual or discerning that we can determine the truth of what happened 2000 years ago more than the eye witnesses who were there
  - Imagine if you and I witnessed a miracle ... say Sydney Swans currently sitting second last on the table ended up winning the AFL premiership
  - And you spammed all your friends who support rival teams with text messages, winding them all up and celebrating the miracle you and countless thousands have just witnessed
  - And then in 2000 years time ... someone digs up your phone, sees the messages and says
    - "Nah ... that's not what happened, that's impossible - the Swans winning a premiership, that's got to be made up"
  
- Secondly, the men and women of 1<sup>st</sup> century were no dummies
  - They knew the laws of nature
  - They knew it was not normal to feed 5000 ppl with 5 loaves and 2 fish
  - And yet despite that ... this was what they reported happened
  
- Thirdly, it's a false logic that says miracles can't happen
  - Because what a skeptic will say is ...
    - Miracles don't happen because they break the laws of science
  - But all science can do is tell us what is normal

- And it's that same science that means we're able to discern a miracle ... because we have observed something that breaks those normal laws of science
- But just because science tells us something abnormal has happened ... doesn't mean it can't or didn't happen
  - What we need to do is look at the evidence of miracle itself
  - Rather than dismiss it out of hand ... have a look at the non-scientific evidence ... because you can't prove or test whether a miracle happened or not scientifically
- One of the compelling bits of evidence for Jesus miraculous feeding of crowds is recorded six times!
  - Feeding of 5000 recorded in each of the gospels
  - Feeding of 4000 recorded in Matthew and Mark
- Each of the gospel writers, writing within a generation of the event, was either there at the event and saw it happen ... or spoke to others who were there
- Multiple people attested to the events that happened there in Galilee
- In addition, ... the accounts read like history ... not fable or legend
  - Fable or legends tend to be generic, no time or place markers
  - But when you read the these feeding miracles there are lots of details that point the fact that it happened
- Example
  - We know place where it happened – Bethsaida / Decapolis, by sea of Galilee
  - Each time the bread and the fish are numbered (5 and 2)
  - Each time the crowd was numbered (5,000 & 4,000)
  - Each time the baskets of leftovers were numbered
  - At feeding of 4,000, Matthew describes intricate details of the scene –
    - Crowd sat on the grass
    - Crowd had been there three days
- It quite clearly reads as an historical event
- But when we're able to put aside the bias we have in our modern western worldview that says miracles don't happen ... and look at the evidence ... it takes more faith to believe these things didn't happen than to believe they do

- As one commentator says
  - “Either these guys are telling the truth ... or they’ve concocted an elaborate hoax which fooled the people who lived through the events and then these ancient lies somehow transformed the world and every generation since”
  
- Another piece of evidence for us to consider is the reason Jesus does his miracles
- Now we live in society where people do spectacular things like magic, illusion, big productions ... simply to be spectacular ... simply to be revered and receive lots of accolades and glory from people
  
- **Illustration – The Prestige**
- Movie Prestige – Hugh Jackman and Christian Bale are rival magicians in London at the end of C19<sup>th</sup>
- They are obsessed with coming up with better and better illusions in order to outdo each other and be known as the greatest magician alive
- It’s clear ... all they do ... all they live for is the accolades of the people ... for their glory
  
- But that’s not why Jesus does miracles
  - If that the main reason ... why would Jesus do this miracle of bread?
  - It’s very inconspicuous ... not very spectacular
  - Not really the way to get people to go ‘Wow! He’s amazing’ ... feeding ppl with bread
  
- If that’s the reaction Jesus wanted ... he would’ve said to everyone ...
  - “All you stand there by the Sea of Galilee say watch this” ... and he’d fly up and do loops over the Sea of Galilee and then come down
  - Everybody would be amazed
- Or he might say ...
  - “Hey look ... nothing up my sleeve”
  - Then pow! Balls of fire coming shooting out
- He’d say
  - “Look at that tree!”
  - And shoot fire out his sleeve and disintegrate the tree
  - Everyone would be like “Wow!”
  - “Who needs bread ... that’s small stuff, that’s not exciting!”
- If Jesus wanted to get across his naked power and bring himself glory ... there are better ways to do it



- And guess what?
  - Jesus never does that stuff ... does he? Never
  - Why not?
- Because his main point is not
  - to get across his naked power
  - it's not about his self-glory
    - the point of the miracles is to point to something greater

#### 4. Restoration of the King

- What is that?
  - It's the restoration of people that Jesus will bring in the future
- In healing and feeding the crowds ... Jesus restores the people
  - In the feeding of the 4,000 in Ch 15, Jesus healed the blind, the crippled and mute
  - He fed them because he was worried if he sent them away, they would collapse
- As a cyclist I know what it's like to be on the verge of collapsing from lack of food
  - It's called 'bonking' (not a euphemism for anything)
  - Ride > Waterfall > RNP > Helensburgh ...
  - Ran out of energy > felt terrible > couldn't keep up
  - Spat out the back and dropped from the bunch
  - Barely peddle > feeling light headed
  - Stopped at Engadine ... got the dreaded '**train of shame**'
  - So exhausted ... fell asleep instantly
- I needed food > I needed to be restored, revived
- In healing and feeding them Jesus restores them
  - They were disabled, and diseased
  - They were famished and hungry
    - Jesus restores them and their life
- This restoration is spoken of in the OT book of Isaiah
- From Isaiah's time onward, there had been a great expectation that God's kingdom would come, and it would be characterised by times of great feasting and healing

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- *Isaiah 25:6* <sup>6</sup> *On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-- the best of meats and the finest of wines.*
  - And also, a time of healing
    - *Isaiah 35:4-6* "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come... he will come to save you." <sup>5</sup> *Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. <sup>6</sup> Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy."*
  - God promised a time of restoration ... and Jesus actions that day began to fulfill those Old Testament prophetic promises, found in Isaiah
  - But all that Jesus did that day was merely a foretaste of the complete restoration that is yet to come
  - Jurgen Moltmann – German theologian said that "Jesus healings are not supernatural miracles in a natural world. They are the only truly 'natural' things in a world that is unnatural, demonized and wounded"
  - You see what he's saying
    - God didn't make the world like it is today
    - When God made the world there was no hunger and starvation
    - There was not leprosy and poverty and blindness and disease and death
    - Those things are unnatural ... God didn't make the world like this
  - The miracles of Jesus are not suspensions of the natural order ... they're restorations of the natural order
  - They're pointing back to the way it was
  - And more than that ... they're pointing forward to the new heavens and new earth in which there will be
    - no poverty, no hunger, no blindness, no disease, no death, no leprosy
    - And those who are in Christ will feast at the eternal banquet (Rev 19:7f)
  - How will he bring about such a restoration?
  - We get a clue in the text
    - When Jesus fed the crowd, we're told he did two things
    - He gave thanks ... and he broke bread
    - Literally in the original language it says he 'blessed' and he 'broke' (rpt)
  - The only other place in the gospels where Jesus blessed, and broke bread was at the last supper
    - The night before he crucified on a cross for our sins
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- Matthew 26:26 – *Jesus took bread, gave thanks / blessed and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."*
- Jesus brings restoration at the cross
  - And as Jesus was hanging there on the cross, he says ... *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."* And then he died
- In other words, ... be blessed (the people who were killing him) and he broke himself
  - And through that he brings the ultimate restoration
  - Restoration from sin and death and judgment ... the very thing things that cripple us for eternity
  - Yet at the cross when Jesus blessed and broke
    - He restored you and I back into right relationship with God
    - He paved the way for the restoration of heavens and earth in the age to come
- And friends ... Jesus has such compassion ... that he would do this for people in the crowd like you and me
  - People who are broken and needy and spiritually poor
  - People who on our own accord
    - aren't believers
    - have no real love for Jesus
- And yet he was willing to show you and me great compassion
  - That he would go to the cross
  - And restore our brokenness
  - And restore us back to the Father
  - And give us the sure and certain hope of sharing in a restored and perfect eternity
- Do you need restoring?
  - Is your life broken?
  - Is your soul hungry?
- Come the Jesus
  - King of compassion who has all God's power to restore you and restore this broken world for eternity

## **PRAY**