

# The Power & Compassion of Jesus

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 13 July 2025

Preacher: Dylan Marais

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, wouldn't it be wonderful if the Christian life was problem-free?! Victory after victory, living in faith and power, always trusting the Lord no matter what.

! Or maybe at a point in your Christian life where you feel a distinct lack of faith in God for the really big stuff, or even the daily stuff of life.

The irony is we're often okay with trusting God for the big things, forgiveness of our sins, looking forward to the resurrection, life after death.

But we struggle to trust Him with what we need for everyday things, smaller stuff. Food, income, petrol, airtime even.

And if you feel like that, you're not alone. Most Christians feel along those lines at some point in their life. In fact, in our stories today, we even see Jesus' disciples struggling in this area to trust Jesus.

[ 1 : 20 ] And so these stories in Matthew 14 are a wonderful balm for those who have nagging doubts or flagging faith. But they do pose a challenge to stretch our faith and not stay where we are in our doubts.

And the reason that these stories do that is because Matthew records two incredible miracles that show us in the most down-to-earth way just what kind of person Jesus is.

We see Jesus as this powerful and compassionate King. But the stories also reveal something else about Jesus that is absolutely central to what it means to be a Christian.

And so the first point we're looking at today is that we can trust in Jesus, our compassionate Savior, or we can trust in Jesus' compassionate provision for our lives. We can trust in Jesus' compassionate provision for our lives.

We can trust in Jesus to give us more than what we need because of His compassionate nature.

And when we respond in faith, no matter how little we think we have, we find that it is more than enough to supply our needs and the needs of others.

[ 2 : 36 ] And we get this in our first story of Jesus feeding the 5,000. Jesus plans to go off to be alone for a bit. He's got to spend some time in prayer.

He's busy processing what happened with John the Baptist. Remember last week we saw Herod behead John the Baptist. And Jesus needs to process this. He goes off to be by Himself to be in prayer.

And as He moves off, just when He needs to be alone, that's when the crowds descend, clamoring for His attention. Have a look at chapter 14, verse 13.

When Jesus heard what had happened, He withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. But hearing of this, the crowds followed Him on foot from the various towns.

Jesus wants to go off by Himself. Crowds of people arrive. What does He do? Does He go off? Does He turn His attention to them?

[ 3 : 43 ] What would you do in that circumstance? You really need to be alone? The people come clamoring after you? Oh, leave me alone. I don't need this right now. I've told you I need to be alone.

Jesus doesn't do that. He stops where He's going. He focuses His attention on the crowds. He changes His plans. And He gives them what they need.

Healing the sick. And a little bit later on in the story, feeding the hungry. But what stops Him? What stops Jesus from continuing to do what He wanted to do and what He needs to do, but then put their needs in front of His?

We'll have a look at verse 14. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them and healed their sick.

It's Jesus' compassion that stops Him from going to do what He wants to do, turns His focus, and helps the people who have got immediate need in front of Him.

[ 4 : 50 ] It's Jesus' compassion that drives Him to supply what is needed. Now this word compassion is a special word in the New Testament, used almost exclusively of Jesus.

And the word itself describes a gut-wrenching emotion that compels one into action. I'm going to put it up on the screen for you, just so that you know that we do study Greek at college.

And it is a very strange-looking word, and it's an even stranger-sounding word. I'm going to say it, but it's going to sound like I'm sneezing. That's okay, half of you are already sneezing. The word is esplank-niste.

Esplank-niste. Esplank-niste. We get the word spleen from that.

You can see it in the word S-P-L-A-N. Splen. The spleen. Jesus felt something in His guts. It's a move of deep urgency that you just get in your guts.

[ 5 : 53 ] Jesus feels it in His guts. He sees what's going on. This crowd comes to Him. He's got His need. He puts it to one side, because just this gut-wrenching reaction to the desperate need of the people in front of Him.

They're sick. Just now we're going to see if they get hungry. It's this compassion that drives Jesus to overcome the next problem that the disciples bring to Him.

The people are getting hungry. Oh, and there's not enough food. In fact, famously, there are only five loaves and two fish to feed over 5,000 people.

So there's 5,000 men, and not including women and children. You could easily double that number to about 10,000. And if those children are teenagers, you could double it again to nearly 20,000. But there's more than 5,000 people there. All that Jesus has got are five loaves and two fish. It's farcical.

[ 7 : 08 ] There's not nearly enough to meet the need. But for Jesus, it's more than enough to provide more than enough for people in need.

So pick up the action in verse 17. The disciples come to Him and say, Look, there's a problem. Jesus says, Well, you sort it out. And let's make another kind of an excuse.

Hey, we have here only five loaves of bread and two fish. That's not a problem for Jesus. Bring it here to me. He directs the people to sit down on the grass, 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 the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. And miracle upon miracle, they all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up 12 basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

That word satisfied in verse 20 is over-satisfied. They had more than enough, and you can tell by the 12 baskets left over. But it's a word that's... The word satisfied, they were gorged on the food.

[ 8 : 25 ] They were over... They had more than enough to eat. And then you've got these 12 basketfuls of pieces left over. Some things for us to think through for ourselves looking at this miracle.

Firstly, it's not hard work to get Jesus' attention. It's not hard work to get Jesus' attention. You know, unlike those in political power over us who never pay attention to us unless you kick up a huge stink, when we are in need and cry out to Jesus for help, He's quick to respond with compassion. We don't have to drag it out of Him. Jesus' compassion is boundless, tireless, endless, always ready to be given to those who cry out for it.

The moment Jesus heard the crowds are in trouble, He stops what He's doing and goes and helps them. He's compelled to do it, almost, by His compassion.

It's not hard work to get Jesus' attention. We sometimes feel it's hard work to get His attention. It's really not. All you need to do is just cry out to Jesus for help, and He's quick to hear you.

[ 9 : 49 ] But then secondly, to trust Jesus with what you feel is an impossible situation, to overcome that nagging doubt or that flagging faith, to overcome all that, we just need to apply the five loaves and the two fish principle, the thing that we see in this passage.

As you look at your situation, just remind yourself, five loaves, two fish, five thousand people fed. More than enough for Jesus to do something with.

You might be looking at your situation, I don't have enough energy to deal with the problem I've got at home. Five loaves, two fish, five thousand people.

I don't have enough energy. Jesus, please help me. Jesus has got enough energy to help you. Trust Him with it. We might be thinking, well, we don't have enough money for your next business project, or maybe your next project here at the church.

What am I going to do? How are we going to do this? We may as well not start. We don't have enough anything. Five loaves, two fish, five thousand people.

[ 11 : 15 ] That's more than enough for Jesus to do something with. Maybe looking around in the world, in South Africa, there's huge problems in our country.

How are we ever going to fix this issue? The issues that we face. So many poor people, so many people hungry. Five loaves, two fish, five thousand people fed.

Jesus has more than enough resources to solve any problem. We can trust Him with it. Now, I don't know how He's going to work all of these things out, but the story tells us that He can.

What Jesus wants us to do is take what we've got, look up to heaven, thank Jesus for it, trust in His compassion to use it to make a change that will provide for your needs and the needs of others.

So that's the first story. It says we can trust Jesus to give us everything we need, both for ourselves and to help others, but we can still have nagging doubts about His ability.

[ 12 : 31 ] So this is His, He's keen to do it, He can do it, He wants to do it, but can He do it? Does He actually have power? What about the really big things in life? Do we believe He has all the power He needs to save us, especially when life gets scary and threatening?

Well, that's what our next story is all about, that we can trust in Jesus' power to save. We can trust in Jesus' power to save. And so the feeding of the 5,000 is followed by an equally famous story of Jesus walking on water, which shows us that just like His compassion, we can trust that Jesus has more than enough power to save us and keep us safely working for His kingdom for as long as He needs us to.

And it's an incredible story, it's an incredible scene, it's a classic storyline, it was a dark and stormy night, the disciples are in serious trouble, out on the lake struggling against a storm in their boat, Jesus is up on the mountain praying, and He sees that they're in trouble, and He simply walks over to them on the lake, walking on the water like it's nothing out of the ordinary.

The disciples, understandably, freak, as would you if you were sitting in that boat. And so we pick up the action in verse 25.

Shortly before dawn, Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw Him walking on the lake, they were terrified. It's a ghost, they said, and cried out in fear.

[ 14 : 23 ] They don't know what's going on. They've seen Jesus do this miracle of feeding, but it's a totally other thing to have someone walking on the water in a storm.

Jesus reassures them, don't worry, it's me, He says. It doesn't seem to help, but it actually does do a little bit of help, because Peter then does the strangest thing.

Oh, that's Jesus. He then asks Jesus, can He get out the boat and join Him on the water? Here we go, faith at last.

But is it faith enough to last? At first it goes well, Peter nearly makes it to Jesus, but then disaster, he notices the wind, and he starts to sink.

He cries out, Lord, save me, and my version says, Jesus immediately reaches out His hand and saves him.

[ 15 : 29 ] verse 31, immediately, Jesus reached out His hand and caught him.

Yes, there's a rebuke for his lack of faith. Oh, you of little faith, why did you doubt? Disciples might have been thinking, oh, you of, out of your mind, why did you get out of the boat?

So there is a, there's that note of Jesus, but you, you had faith. What happened to it? Just in five steps, it's gone. I'm right here.

And it disappeared the moment you saw the, you saw the wind and you got scared. And there is that rebuke, but there's no hesitation from Jesus and no lack of power to save His friend from drowning.

He immediately goes over, reaches out His hand and stops him from going down to the depths. He doesn't leave him. He doesn't say to the other guys in the boat, see, see what happens if you don't have faith?

[ 16 : 42 ] It's not an object lesson for them. He sees the guy in trouble and immediately goes over and saves him. And it's this saving power that lets the disciples know for the first time in the storyline of Matthew just who they are dealing with.

They get in the boat, the wind dies down, and the disciples are still freaked out, but this is what they do next. Verse 33, Then those who were in the boat worshipped Him, saying, Truly, you are the Son of God.

To worship there is to, they all basically fell flat down on their face. That word worship is another interesting Greek word. It means to bow down and kiss the feet of the person who you're honoring. In the olden days, they would do that with kings. But they're recognizing that Jesus is much more than the person that they thought He was. They've begun to recognize that the source of Jesus' power is that He's got this identity with the covenant God of the Old Testament.

With the covenant God of the Old Testament. And that's what makes sense of both of these miracles. Remember that Matthew is writing to a Jewish audience, and they would be instinctively thinking back to the events of the Exodus.

[18:03] That's why we read Exodus chapter 16. The miraculous feeding of Israel in the wilderness. And they'd also be thinking back with this water episode of, yeah, but God saved us through the water.

And the disciples realized that Jesus is so closely identified with Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, that He has got unlimited power.

He has the unlimited power of heaven to work salvation, to provide for what they need on earth. It's an incredible moment. They bowed down and worshipped Jesus as the Son of God.

And it's this last point of who Jesus is that highlights what Matthew is pointing to. And this should really help us cast away all doubt and put our firm trust in Christ.

By trusting in Jesus, you're trusting in the one true God of the Bible. And then all the promises, all the things, if you're listening to Matthew, you're a Jewish person, you're hearing all of these stories, and you're putting the two together, you're putting, but I know what God did in the Old Testament.

[19:13] I know what He's like. And here's this person that can do what that God does. Then, He's got all the power in the world He needs to do what I need for me, to save me.

By trusting in Jesus, you're trusting in the one true God of the Bible. The same God of compassion that proclaims His name in Exodus 34, for example, these verses will come up on the screen, where God proclaims His name, the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.

That's the God of the Old Testament. That's what Jesus is like. The same God of provision who says, for example, in Psalm 84, verse 11, for the Lord God is a sun and a shield.

The Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly. As God provided for His people in the Old Testament, He's going to do the same thing through this new Son of, through the Son of God, through Jesus.

It's the same God of power who says in Exodus 15, Exodus 15, if you remember, it's the song of Moses. They've come out of Egypt. They've crossed the Red Sea and they sing this glorious song of victory.

[20:45] They say this of God, Exodus 15, from verse 11, Who among the gods is like You, O Lord? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?

They've just seen Jesus work two amazing wonders, feeding people in the wilderness. That's the connection. They're out in the wilderness in Matthew 14, just like they were in the desert wilderness in the Exodus passage.

You've worked wonders. Verse 12 in Exodus 15, You stretch out your right hand and the earth swallows your enemies. That was the sea episode where all the Pharaoh's chariots went down.

In fact, he opened the waters there, but they talk about it as opening the earth, swallowing his enemies. In your unfailing love, you will lead the people you have redeemed. You will save them. In your strength, you will guide them to your holy dwelling.

You will help them all along the way. And the disciples are seeing Jesus walk on the water and saving them from going down into it. They're connecting the power and compassion of the God of the Old Testament with Jesus.

[21:57] It's the same God who says in Romans 8, verse 11, If God is for us, who or what can be against us?

He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things?

What's amazing is that this God of the Old Testament who's now in this person, Jesus Christ, doing all these amazing wonder works, all these miracles, all this power, all this compassion, all of that drives him to the cross to provide for our deepest needs.

Forgiveness of sin, reconciliation with God, power to live a new life. He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things? So friends, when you realize and reflect on who Jesus is, the Son of God, the Creator God of the Old Testament, come down from heaven to this world to provide compassion and power for our needs, when you reflect on who Jesus is, you'll find the assurance you need to trust that he has more than enough power to deal with any situation we find ourselves in.

[ 23 : 36 ] Even if, as it so often happens, when our faith falters, take heart, Jesus doesn't let us drown in our problems.

He doesn't reject us. He doesn't leave us to our own devices. It turns out that the compassionate heart of the covenant God of the Old Testament continues to beat in the chest of Jesus, his Son. He comes to where we're struggling. He tells us, take courage. It's me. Don't be afraid. I'm here with you. He grabs hold of us with his mighty hand and plucks us from the waters and puts us safely in the boat with him.

Yes, faith at that point may not sound like courage. It may sound like fear when you're surrounded by these waters that you can't control. Lord, save me!

But that's all that Jesus needs to hear. He gets our heart cry for help. And he comes running on the waters to save us. So I want to ask, have you done that in your life?

[ 24 : 45 ] Have you cried out to Jesus, Jesus, save me? Well, if you haven't, you need to. Because so many people are needlessly drowning in their own problems.

Desperate for a new way of life. Getting rid of the past. Getting rid of an issue in their life that's too big for them to handle that they just can't shake. If you haven't cried out to Jesus to save you, do that.

Jesus is the only hope you have of getting through these big issues in life and of course getting through the biggest issue of life which is our death. Jesus is able through his power to safely see you through death.

That's the purpose of walking on the water. The waters in the Jewish mindset are these chaos waters that bring death. Everyone knows you can't live in the watery place.

You can't. It's death out there. It's a picture of Jesus saving out of death. Jesus, friends, Jesus is the only one that can do that.

[ 25 : 52 ] This miracle is to show you there's no one, there's no other person that walks on water. The only other person that does anything with water or motor really close to that is the God of the Old Testament and only Jesus can do what he can do.

But maybe you have done that. Maybe you have cried out to Jesus and like Peter you're struggling with doubt and fear. The problems in your life are big. You feel like you are drowning.

Well like the first miracle we've got the five loaves and the two fish principle remind yourself just who you're calling out to.

You're calling out to the only being who can walk on water. You're calling to Jesus the God King of the universe. If he can walk on water then he can stop you from drowning in the mess you're facing. And so be encouraged in whatever situation you're facing. Hold out your hand to Jesus. Call on him. He'll take it. He'll save you. And you'll turn that situation of deadly failure or deadly peril into a time of worship and praise and thanks.

[ 27 : 12 ] If your faith is flagging if you've got those nagging doubts these two miracles are here to show us that Jesus has the compassion he needs more than enough.

You don't have to beg for his attention he's quick to give it. His compassion is immediate it's always poured out towards us as his people.

Does he have enough power? A God who's a human that can walk on water that if you kill him he comes back to life again?

Yeah he's got more than enough power to help you through every situation and to turn it into a time of worship praise and thanks. Let me pray to Jesus for us to help us trust him when the going gets tough.

Lord Jesus we like the disciples are so easily frightened and so easily overawed by the problems we face in this world we never think we have enough.

[ 28 : 27 ] Remind us Lord in those moments of the five loaves the two fish the five thousand people and you walking on the water to come and save us when we feel like we're drowning.

Lord help us to remind each other of these things to reach out and help others when we see them drowning. Use your word Lord deep down in us to help flagging faith faltering steps to reach out and trust you and experience your deliverance.

Amen.