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**Sunday 18 July 2021 to Sunday 25 July 2021**

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Sunday 18 July 2021

# Are we afraid to disturb God?

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

**When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them (Mark 6:34).**

Read Mark 6:30–34,53–56

When looking at the passages for this week, I was drawn to a common thread about God’s compassion and faithfulness to us, who are often faithless.

Our passage this morning occurs before the feeding of the 5000. It concludes after Jesus walks on water (well worth reading all of Mark 6:30–56). Matthew indicates that Jesus and his disciples are almost overwhelmed by the number of people, and so they escape via boat to a quiet place – they (including Jesus) just need a break from the crowds. However, the large crowd gets there before them. Does Jesus lose his temper? Does he tell his disciples to send them away? No! He has compassion for them. He sees their need, and he teaches them (and as the story continues, he miraculously feeds them).

Are we at times afraid to disturb God? Are we worried that he may be too busy? Or perhaps we don’t think we really matter to him, and thus, we shouldn’t bother him? These are the sort of suggestions the evil one throws up. Our God, the God of the Bible, has compassion on us; he hears us. We should be like the crowd and race to get time with our God. We should be eager to spend time with God praying, reading his word and spending time worshipping with fellow believers. In our need, are we prepared to let God teach us, as Jesus taught the crowd?

Jesus died for you. Through his death and resurrection, you are a child of God. Your Heavenly Father wants to hear from you, and you can be assured that as with his dear Son, he will have compassion on you!

**Heavenly Father, renew in me the joy of your salvation. Help me to better hear your Holy Spirit as he encourages me to come to you. Forgive me for doubting your compassion. I need your help to better see who you are through your beloved Son, Jesus. Amen.**

Monday 19 July 2021

# Return to the Lord

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

**The Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you (Deuteronomy 30:3).**

Read Deuteronomy 30:1–8

As Moses’ time comes to an end, he lays out before the people the consequences of following (blessings) and not following (curses) their Lord God. Notice that in this passage, he assumes the people will fall away, but he knows  God will not give up on them – all they need to do is to return to him, and he will have compassion on them.

We may often criticise the people of Israel for their failures, but are we really any better? We know Jesus died for us, and the Father raised him from the dead – yet we still have difficulty putting God first. And that’s just the first commandment! Our lack of consistency when it comes to obeying the Lord and following his commands reminds us that just as we couldn’t save ourselves, neither can we be his people without the work of his Holy Spirit within us.

We need to be like the people of Israel in this passage and return to the Lord. Each day, we should remind ourselves of our baptism, that we have died with Christ, that we have been raised with him, that we are forgiven, that our Father has circumcised our hearts enabling us to love him. We can daily return to the compassion of God as we throw ourselves at the foot of the cross and receive the forgiveness that is freely offered.

**Almighty God, your word shows me how patient and compassionate you are. Help me turn to you every day. Remind me of my baptism. Remind me of the death and resurrection of your dear Son. Work in me so I may love you better and thus love those around me better. Amen.**

Tuesday 20 July 2021

# He will save you!

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

**How gracious he will be when you cry for help! (Isaiah 30:19)**

Read Isaiah 30:19–26

The prophet pleads with the people to turn to the Lord. If only they would ask him for help, he will be so generous with them. They were suffering from the oppression of Assyria, and it looked like they may be wiped out, as their northern brothers and sisters had been. But Isaiah speaks with confidence that the Lord is going to save them. Thus, they should put their trust in their Lord!

We see in this passage (verse 20) what Martin Luther referred to as the alien work of God. He doesn’t enjoy our suffering; rather, his desire is for our good. He is a God who gets his hands dirty by getting down into our mess with us. Even when we are suffering due to our own sin, God’s desire is for us to turn to him.

Do you feel out of control? Have things gone horribly wrong? Surely your Father in Heaven – who did not withhold his dear Son but sent him to live, die and rise again because he loved you – surely this God will have compassion on you and will bless you. Turn to him, cry out to him, and he will save you.

**Lord of all Creation, help me to turn to you when I mess up. Please help me turn to you in the bad times and the good times. May your Holy Spirit enable me to see more clearly the blessings that you give me. Amen.**

Wednesday 21 July 2021

# God of my salvation

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

**The Lord will save me, and we will sing with stringed instruments (Isaiah 38:20).**

Read Isaiah 38:13–20

This passage takes place when Hezekiah is deathly ill, and the Lord graciously heals him, and these are some of the words that he wrote after he recovered (see verse 9).

God has shown compassion on Hezekiah, and he has removed his suffering. And Hezekiah responds with his desire to walk humbly (verse 15), to see how God worked good for him through his suffering (verse 17) and how God has forgiven him (verse 17). His response is one of praise for the grace he has received.

The grave is a fearsome place for Hezekiah (verse 18) because our Lord Jesus is yet to come at this time. For us, our Lord Jesus has conquered sin, death and the devil through his death and resurrection. For us, as his brothers and sisters, we shall continue to praise him even after death – and we shall praise him, together with Hezekiah and all the saints for all eternity!

Your baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ means you are saved from your sins; you are saved from the power of death; you are no longer a slave to the prince of this world. Not only has he saved you, but he will save you from the trials and temptations that you are facing and will face.

**God of my salvation, help me to bring my problems to you. Forgive my reluctance to share with you my pain and suffering. Fill me afresh with your Holy Spirit so that I may walk humbly in your ways. Amen.**

Thursday 22 July 2021

# Do we underestimate God?

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

**‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will fulfil the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah’ (Jeremiah 33:14).**

Read Jeremiah 33:14–18

In this passage, Jeremiah looks forward to the coming of our Lord Jesus – Israel’s promised Messiah. The prophet tells us that this is God’s promise, his plan for the salvation of Israel. In this, we see how great is our God – his blessings not only come to Israel but overflow to the whole world. Yes, Jesus, the son of David, will fulfil this promise, but we also see so much more revealed at the end of verse 16, ‘The Lord Our Righteous Saviour’. The Messiah will be the salvation of the world!

Do you underestimate the Lord God? Is his arm too short to reach you? Is he unable to hear you? To see you? No! Our God is one who blesses so greatly that the blessings overflow. In Jeremiah’s time, what was left of Israel – the people of Judah – was taken by Babylon. The kingship was lost. Jerusalem was lost. The temple was destroyed. Israel (like us) had not been faithful. But we see here that God promises restoration; he promises salvation. Not because Israel deserves it, but because he is gracious. He is so gracious that the Messiah who will save Israel also saves you and me! The Messiah is our Lord Jesus, who saves us through his death and resurrection!

We often feel when things go so horribly wrong that God has abandoned us. Scripture shows us that while we may move away from him, he doesn’t give up on us. It is easy to grab hold of our righteous Saviour when we realise that he has already got us firmly in his grasp.

**Gracious God, thank you for never giving up on me. Thank you for sending your dear Son to live, die and rise again for me. Help me to see that you are with me – in the bad times and the good times. Amen.**

Friday 23 July 2021

# Great is his mercy!

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

**When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them (Matthew 9:36).**

Read Matthew 9:27–38

Today we see our Lord Jesus showing mercy through the healing of the blind and restoring speech (and exorcising a demon) to the mute. We see that as he saw the crowds, the feeling he felt was compassion. Sadly, the Pharisees who were present were blinded by the threat to their power, and they used their speech to condemn Jesus – and we should also note their apparent lack of compassion.

Jesus’ words to his disciples indicate that he wants them – and us – to share in the compassion he feels for the people. That he wants them – and us – to work with him to spread the good news of the kingdom. He also wants us to pray for more workers because God’s harvest is bountiful!

As God has been (and is) merciful to us, how merciful are we with others? As Jesus was (and is) compassionate with us, how compassionate are we with others? It is good to hold up a mirror to ourselves and see how we measure up. I know I find myself wanting. I am then so thankful my Lord God is merciful and compassionate. He is patient with me, and he will help me be the worker he needs for his harvest.

**Merciful Father, help me be merciful and compassionate to my family, to those with whom I work and to those whom I encounter each day. I want to be a good worker. Help me hear your Holy Spirit as he teaches me. Amen.**

Saturday 24 July 2021

# How great is our God!

by Pastor Glenn Crouch

**The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does (Psalm 145:13b).**

Read Psalm 145:10–18

The psalmist invites us to join with him as he praises the Lord God. The psalms are wonderful in helping us to pray. They show we can bring our hopes, our fears, our complaints and our praise to him. Try it now. Say the words of these verses in Psalm 145 as your prayer to God. Hopefully, you will find as I do that your heart cries out in praise, along with the psalmist.

How great is our God! The evil one wants us to forget this. He wants us to focus on our problems and worries. But our God is trustworthy! Our God is faithful! Our God is compassionate!

We have seen throughout this week that our God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is worthy of our praise. We have seen his compassion, his faithfulness, his trustworthiness. He is a God who keeps his promises. He is a God who not only helps us when we turn to him but also helps us to turn to him in the first place.

All glory to the Father, Son and Holy Spirt – one God, now and forever!

**Holy God, worthy are you to be praised. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! I realise that I am only aware of a small portion of the blessings you give me every day. May your Holy Spirit make me more aware of who you are, and may he enable me to praise you more and more. Amen.**

Sunday 25 July 2021

# Little is much

by Verena Johnson

**Here is a small boy with five small barley loaves and two fish, but how far will they go among so many? (John 6:9)**

Read John 6:1–21

Ever been asked to do something impossible? Imagine how the disciples felt looking out over that huge crowd when Jesus asked, ‘Where shall we buy bread for all these people to eat?’

Philip gives a practical reply focusing on what they don’t have, which is more than half a year's wages to even give everyone a bite. Andrew gives an answer that focuses on what they do have – five small barley loaves and two fish. Not much at all, in fact. While it’s a more positive answer than Philip’s, I can’t help wondering how stupid or embarrassed Andrew felt as he even mentioned this ridiculously small amount.

I also can’t help wondering why no-one else in that great crowd had brought anything at all with them to eat. Apparently, this boy’s mother was the only person with any foresight in the whole Galilee area. That boy probably also had a clean hanky, water and a warm jacket (just in case).

I wonder how that boy felt when he gave Jesus his food. Did he think he was going to go hungry? Did he trust that Jesus would put it to good use? Was he curious to see what Jesus would do? Did he expect a miracle?

Did the disciples expect a miracle, even after Jesus asked them to get everyone to sit down? And what about the crowd?

Regardless of their doubts or expectations, Jesus blew everyone away with what he did with that little amount of food. In Jesus’ hands, little was turned into much and small was turned into great.

We often forget what Jesus can do with our little. We can become focused on what we don’t have rather than on what we do have. Even if we look at what we do have, we can feel embarrassed, inadequate or lacking, because it doesn’t seem like we have much to offer.

This story reminds us of the Jesus factor. He can take our little and turn it into much. He can take our small gifts, talents and abilities and use them for great things. All we have to do is give them to Jesus as that boy did, and like that boy, we will see what Jesus can do with them!

**Dear Jesus, I give you all I am and all I have today, even though it may seem like a small offering. I place myself in your hands, trusting that you will use me. Help me take advantage of every opportunity you give me today, knowing that in and with you, little is much. Amen.**