

The Gospel According to Mark The Compassionate Shepherd – Part 1

Mark 6:30-34

Sunday, September 13, 2020

Introduction

As followers of Christ we should long to know the heart of Christ. We should desire to know what He loves and what He hates and what moves Him to action. It's in the Gospels that Jesus is most fully revealed and in Mark 6:30-34 we see a particularly clear vision of His heart through His interaction with His disciples and His reaction to a persistent crowd.

Context – A Costly Calling and a Compassionate Shepherd

In the passages leading up to this one Mark has been emphasizing the mission of Jesus and the cost of discipleship. It's clear that the call to follow is a high calling that often requires great sacrifice. While this true, Mark follows this call to costly discipleship with a reminder of the heart of Jesus. He is a sympathetic and caring Lord who has compassion on those who are lost and wandering.

The Care of Jesus for the Disciples (6:30-32)

- **The return of the disciples (vs. 30)** – After traveling the region proclaiming the message of repentance and doing signs and wonders the disciple's first missionary journey ends as they return to Jesus and tell Him all that had taken place.
- **Jesus offers rest (vv. 31-32)** – As the disciples returned to Jesus there is no doubt that they returned with stories both of great blessing and of the difficulties of the ministry. The work of the ministry comes with highs and lows, both of which take a toll. As the disciples return Jesus calls them to a time and place of rest.
- **A sympathetic Savior** – One of the results of the incarnation is that Jesus knows, personally, what it feels like to be overwhelmed. He is not only aware of it as an omniscient God, but as a fellow participant in the human condition. Because Jesus lived in flesh among us He knows our weakness and He knows our needs – including our need for rest.
- **The heart of Jesus in offering rest** – Jesus's call to rest is a demonstration of his care and concern for His disciples. Not only is Jesus committed to His mission but He's also committed to caring well for His friends.

The Compassion of Jesus for the Crowds (6:33-34)

- **A persistent crowd (vs. 33)** – As Jesus and His disciples sailed along the shore toward an isolated area (where they could rest) the crowds continued to follow them. They ran along the shore and were ready to meet the boat wherever it made landfall.

- **The response of Jesus to the crowds – compassion (vs. 34)** – Because Jesus was seeking a place of rest for Himself and His disciples we can imagine different ways He could have responded to the persistent crowds. He could have dismissed them or found a way to escape them, but He does neither. Instead Mark records that Jesus had compassion on them.
- **Understanding compassion** – The word Mark uses to describe Jesus's response to the crowds is a strong word. It refers to a deep affection or pity that comes from the core of a person. This is the same emotion that is attributed to the Good Samaritan (a parable of Jesus) who stopped and rendered aid when others passed by (Luke 10:33-34).
- **The reason for compassion – sheep without a shepherd (vs. 34a)** – Mark not only records Jesus's response, but the reason for His response. He had compassion on the people because they were as sheep without a shepherd.
 - **Understanding the metaphor** – Sheep are not self-sufficient. They require care and attention in order to survive – they need a shepherd. As Jesus looks at this crowd who is going to such great lengths to follow Him He sees them as lost and wandering sheep in need of a Shepherd to guide them.
 - **The promised Shepherd** – The metaphor Jesus uses is one that is repeated throughout the Old Testament. On several occasions the nation of Israel is referred to as sheep in need of a shepherd (Numbers 27:17; Ezekiel 34:1-6). In some subtle ways, and in other not so subtle ways the Old Testament points to a perfect Shepherd who will come and lead His people (Numbers 27:1-19; Ezekiel 34:22-24) – Jesus is this true and perfect Shepherd (John 10:10-18) (see also Psalm 23).
- **The response of compassion – Jesus teaches them (vs. 34b)** – Jesus leads these “sheep wandering in the wilderness” by teaching them. While Mark doesn't record the content of His teaching we know the message of Jesus: Jesus came proclaiming the kingdom of God and inviting people to participate in the kingdom through repentance and faith. Faith and repentance are the means by which these wandering sheep can enter the fold of the true and perfect Shepherd.

Summary – This glimpse into the heart of Jesus should leave us with at least two reminders.

First, we must remember the compassion Jesus has for those who are lost and wandering and we must strive to cultivate this same kind of compassionate heart toward the lost who live all around us.

In addition, the interaction of Jesus with His disciples is a reminder of the joy it is to be cared for by the Good Shepherd. He is sympathetic and kind and He loves the sheep of His fold (John 10:10-18; Psalm 23).