

The Gospel According to Mark
The Compassionate Shepherd – Part 2
The Feeding of the 5,000

Mark 6:35-44

Sunday, September 20, 2020

Introduction

In Mark 6:30-34 we are given a glimpse into the heart of Jesus. As Jesus stands on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and looks over a crowd of thousands who have followed Him into the wilderness Mark records that Jesus has compassion on them because they are like sheep without a shepherd.

A common theme in the Scriptures is that God is the perfect Shepherd for His people. Jesus comes as the fulfillment of the promises of God and as the One who will gather the lost and wandering sheep.

While the previous section shows the heart of Jesus as the compassionate Shepherd, in Mark 6:35-44 we see how Jesus reveals Himself as a shepherd who can provide for and fully satisfy all who come to Him. Through the feeding of the 5,000 we are reminded that Jesus, our good Shepherd, can be trusted.

The Situation: A Crowd of Hungry People in the Wilderness (6:35-36)

- **It's getting late** – The first way Jesus demonstrates His compassion for the crowd is by teaching them and telling them of the coming of the Kingdom of God (vs. 34). As Jesus continues to teach and the evening draws near the disciples recognize a pressing need – the people will need to eat.
- **A reasonable suggestion** – After recognizing the need the disciples make a plan. They suggest to Jesus that the people should be sent away so that they can find food for themselves.
- **An opportunity to reveal Himself** – While the request of the disciples was reasonable, Jesus doesn't accept their suggestion. Instead He plans to reveal Himself as the One who can provide for His people.

The Response of Jesus: An Invitation to Trust (6:37a)

- Knowing His plan to reveal Himself, not only to the crowd but in a special way to His disciples, Jesus gives them an opportunity to trust Him. While they have suggested that the people should feed themselves, Jesus calls on them provide food for the crowd.

The Disciple's Response: A Lack of Understanding (6:37)

- The suggestion by Jesus that the disciples should feed the people made it seem as if Jesus didn't understand the situation. The disciples sarcastically imply the impossibility of Jesus' command and also show that they are only viewing the situation through a human lens. They are failing to consider the power of Jesus and the fact that He can be trusted to provide.

A Flashback – The Nation of Israel in the Wilderness - It's worth noting that there are many ways in which the feeding of the 5,000 in the Galilean wilderness parallels the way God provides for the people of Israel in the wilderness after their deliverance from Egypt. Both are stories about God giving physical food to His people in order to demonstrate His care and His ability to provide for His own. Also, in both cases the people of God are invited to trust God's provision and instead respond with doubt (Numbers 11).

The Instructions of Jesus – A Call to Trust (6:38-39)

- Although the disciple's first response to Jesus reveals a measure of doubt Jesus continues to move forward with His plan. He instructs them to go and gather what food they can find, and to their credit they obey.

The Work of Jesus – A Miraculous Provision (6:40-41)

- After offering a blessing Jesus gives the food to the disciples to distribute. We aren't told anything specific about how the miracle takes place, but Mark makes it clear that the food never runs out. By the power of Jesus everyone has their fill of fish and bread.

The Scope of the Miracle – An Abundant Provision (6:42-44)

- Jesus leaves no room for doubt regarding His ability to provide. Mark says that *all* (every person) ate and were satisfied. Every person who Jesus fed was filled and after they had eaten there were twelve baskets leftover. Later when Jesus wants to remind the disciples of His ability to provide He points back to the abundant leftovers on this day (Mark 8:18-19).

The True Shepherd of the Sheep – The Shepherd Who Fully Provides

- **The forgetfulness of Israel** – The people of Israel were lost and wandering in the wilderness and God showed Himself faithful. However despite His faithfulness the nation of Israel continually doubted God and His ability to care for them (Hosea 13:4-6).
- **The true heart of the crowd** – While Mark doesn't provide this insight, the Gospel of John records that despite the miracle many in the crowd failed to trust in Jesus. They were filled with physical bread but didn't recognize their need for the true bread and the perfect Shepherd (John 6:22-59). Too often people see Jesus, and they may even get close enough to be fed by Him; but even though they've eaten the bread, they don't trust Him and they don't see Him as the One who can fully satisfy.
- **A call to faith and trust** – As we see the compassion of Jesus for lost and wandering sheep and the way He reveals Himself as the One who can provide for His sheep we should be reminded of the privilege we have to be invited into the care of perfect Shepherd. We must confess the times when we fail to trust Him and give ourselves fully to Jesus, knowing that in Him we have all that we need (Ezekiel 34:11-16).