

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: November 9, 2008

Title: The Supplying of food for the 5,000

Text: Mark 6:33-45 ([See also 8:1-9] Gospel Parallels – Matt. 14:13-21; Luke 9:10b-17; John 6:1-14)

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Big Idea: You can do what Jesus did because His life is in you.

Introduction:

Mark appears to emphasize the fragile and frazzled existence of Christ and His disciples. No matter where they turned the masses waited with their needs.

All of the stories Mark provides shows the harried existence of our Lord and His disciples. He sought to give them refreshment, but the masses were pressing and relentless. Our Lord intended to give His disciples some quiet time, but the pressing multitudes were without consideration of their needs.

“This miracle is mentioned by all the four evangelists. It is one of the most astonishing that Christ has wrought. It is a miracle which could not be counterfeited, and a full proof of the divinity of Christ.” (*Adam Clarke’s New Testament Commentary* on Mark 6:44).

In the feeding of the multitude our Lord again “tests” His disciples to see if they are getting it. He had already given them authority to preach, to deliver, and to heal. He has sent them out as ambassadors of His kingdom, thus His statement was genuine in verse 37.

This will be one of those “eye opening” moments. Remember the placement of this passage. They just returned from doing many powerful things and they have just shared with Him what they had just seen and done and now He seeks to cement this idea with more force.

The intent of our Lord is not for them to declare their independence from Him, but to see that they are to live in His power. This is the Christ-life of the New Covenant. This is the idea in 1 John 4:17.

“By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; **because as He is, so also are we in this world**” (1 John 4:17).

It is the idea in John 14:12.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and **greater works than these he will do**; because I go to the Father” (John 14:12).

“Not necessarily greater miracles and not greater spiritual works in quality, but greater in quantity.” (A.T. Robertson’s *Word Pictures in the New Testament*)

It is the same idea in Galatians 2:20.

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20).

They could have fed the multitude just as He will do because He is working through them. It is not their glory but His that such miracles are done.

THE BIG PICTURE:

Putting the pieces together, we see Jesus with authority over demons (5:1-20), death (5:21-24, 35-43), and disease (5:25-34). Now in chapter six, Mark gives us a panoramic view of a variety of events.

- The Sin of Unbelief (vv 1-6)
- The Sending of the Twelve (vv. 7-13, 30-32)
- The Slaying of John the Baptist (vv. 14-29)
- **The Supplying of food for the 5000 (vv. 33-45 [See also 8:1-9])**
- The Storm on the Sea of Galilee (vv 46-52)
- The Summarizing of His Ministry (vv 53-56)

“In Mark’s Gospel the story of the feeding of the five thousand plays an important role. It begins with an elaborate introduction (6:35-38), is looked back to on two different occasions (6:52; 8:17-21), and has a sequel in the feeding of the four thousand (8:1-10).” (Walter W. Wessell, “Mark,” *EBC*, [Zondervan, 1984], 8:672).

Its Eternal Value:

Jesus Christ has not left us to ourselves. He is working in us and through us to those around us. All of our activity is from Him, through Him, and for Him. In all of the work He receives the glory.

The Problem:

Our problem is that we see ourselves and not Him. Our inability to embrace Him is sourced in our desire for personal recognition and glory. We look at ourselves and fail; we look to Jesus and live in His victory. What are you focusing on?

The Storyline:

Our Lord is the great Shepherd of God who cares for His people. Jesus is the promised Shepherd King. He is watching over His sheep. He can do all He wills to do.

Questions:

1. Does verse 33 remind you of modern day celebrities and the paparazzi?
2. What does verse 33 suggest about verses 31 and 32?
3. Why did our Lord feel compassion on the large crowd?
4. What does this tell you about sheep?
5. What was our Lord's response to their immediate condition in verse 34?
6. What do you believe is the tone of our Lord in verse 37?
7. What do you think He expected from them based on 6:7ff and 6:30?
8. What is the purpose behind the feeding?
9. What does this tell you about the relationship between His teaching ministry in verse 34 and His addressing of their physical needs?
10. Are both expressions the gospel?
11. What do verses 42-44 suggest?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know Jesus as the caring shepherd.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose Him as our shepherd.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in His shepherd arms.

Outline:

- I. Our Lord's popularity (vv. 33, 34a)

Notice the same dynamic in Mark 6:53-55.

⁵³ "When they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore. ⁵⁴ When they got out of the boat, **immediately the people recognized Him**, ⁵⁵ and ran about that whole country and began to carry here and there on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard He was" (Mark 6:53-55).

The masses flocked to Him as their only hope. Some came out of curiosity, some out of necessity, and some out of genuine faith and love.

"Here we have an important piece of information from the Fourth Evangelist (John 6:4), 'And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh'--rather, 'Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was nigh.' This accounts for the multitudes that now crowded around Him. They were on their way to keep that festival at Jerusalem. But Jesus did not go up to this festival, as John expressly tells us, (John 7:1) --remaining in Galilee, because the ruling Jews sought to kill Him." (*Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown on Mark 6:34*).

II. Our Lord's compassion (v. 34b)

"Jesus had come over for rest, but his heart was touched by the pathos of this situation. So 'he began to teach them many things'. Two accusatives with the verb of teaching and the present tense of the infinitive. He kept it up." (A.T. Robertson's *New Testament Word Pictures*).

Instead of becoming irritated and upset, He sees them as having the greater need and seeks to meet their need. This is what the response of God looks like to our exhausted state. Our Lord always sees people as sheep needing a shepherd. It was not their immediate needs that moved Him; it was their shepherd-less state that moved Him.

This shepherd-sheep language is common in the Hebrew Scripture and speaks of God's relationship to His people.

- When Moses was about to die he asked God to give them a leader, "so that the congregation of **the LORD will not be like sheep which have no shepherd**" (Num. 27:17).
- When the prophet Micaiah spoke to Jehoshaphat King of Judah he said, "I saw all Israel **Scattered on the mountains, Like sheep which have no shepherd**" (1 Kings 22:17).
- God through the prophet Ezekiel castigates the leaders of Israel when He says, "**They were scattered for lack of a shepherd**, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered" (Eze. 34:5).
- When God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah to the nation of Israel He said, "**My people have become lost sheep; Their shepherds have led them astray**" (Jer. 50:6).
- The prophet Zechariah speaks of this condition when he said, "They comfort in vain. Therefore **the people wander like sheep**, They are afflicted, **because there is no shepherd**" (Zech. 10:2).

Our God is a shepherd God and has the compassion of God for His flock. It is His shepherd's compassion that causes Him to be a sympathetic intercessor (Heb. 4:14-16).

¹⁴ "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ **For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.** ¹⁶ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:14-16).

It is His compassion that provides for us a throne of grace.

III. Our Lord's ministry (v. 34c)

Here our Lord's first response to their need is to teach. Matthew 14:14 speaks of His first response being one of healing. We must not overlook this idea. It is possible that we are imbalanced and need to add either teaching or humanitarian acts, but the gospel encompasses both. However, He equally met physical needs. This is the gospel. The gospel addresses the soul of mankind without overlooking the body of the individual.

IV. Our Lord's test (vv. 35-45)

"Matthew (Mt 14:15) says, 'when it was evening'; and yet he mentions a later evening of the same day (Mark 6:23). This earlier evening began at **three P.M.**; the latter began at sunset." (*Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown on Mark 6:35*).

Notice with me the additional narrative John gives to this story in John 6:6, "**This He was saying to test him**, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do."

Mark uses the word "test" 1) of our Lord's **test** in the wilderness (Mark 1:13; 10:2; 12:15) and 2) of the Pharisees and Sadducees seeking to **test** Jesus (Mark 8:11).

Jesus is now **testing** His disciples. The entire story is rooted in verse 37. Place verse 37 in the context of vv. 7-13, 30-32. "Jesus uses the emphatic personal pronoun to make the message plain: '**You give them something to eat**'" ([emphasis added] Walter W. Wessell, "Mark," *EBC*, [Zondervan, 1984], 8:673).

I am not willing to concede that what we have today is less than what His early apostles or disciples had. We have the same Christ and it is His power and His life that is to flow through us in the expansion of His kingdom. We are involved in kingdom work no matter what level we might be functioning.

A. Notice the problem (vv. 35, 36)

We have hungry people and they need food. "This is the disciples' way out of the difficulty. No doubt they can take care of themselves:--'send them away.' We hope something may be done for the masses, and there we leave it." (*Spurgeon's Devotional Commentary on Mark 6:35, 36*).

B. Notice the perspective (vv. 37-38)

1. Notice the perspective of the disciples

"Here was a strong charity, in desiring the people's relief; but a weak faith." (*William Burkitt's Notes on the New Testament on Mark 6:35*).

“The disciples’ caustic reply showed the inadequacy of their resources and the impossibility of meeting His demand. According to their calculations [it would take] roughly equivalent to eight months of a man’s wages, a sum beyond the disciples’ means.” (John D. Grassmick, “Mark,” in *BKC*, eds. John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck [Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983], 130).

They saw the present problem without seeing the person present. Any problem when viewed through who God is becomes small.

2. Notice the perspective of our Lord

Feed them, what is present, and tell them to sit down.

C. Notice the pattern (vv. 39-41)

Our Lord does things decently and in order. The Lord gives to His disciples and His disciples give to the people. God works through His people to meet the needs of others. It is of interest to note that the grass was green. “This shows that the incident took place in the late winter or early spring.” (Walter W. Wessell, “Mark,” *EBC*, [Zondervan, 1984], 8:674).

Let us not lose sight of just how large this group was. If everyone sat in groups of 100 there were at least 50 groups. Again, remember, this was only the men. The women and children were not included in the number total. There had to be at least ten thousand people present.

“There were about five thousand men who ate, **besides women and children**” (Matt. 14:21).

Jesus did what any pious Jew would have done before eating – He gave thanks.

Jesus distributes the food through His disciples. This accomplishes at least two ideas. **First**, His disciples serve in His behalf. They are His representatives. His disciples carry with them His authority to speak and act in His behalf. **Second**, Jesus elevates the standing of His disciples in the eyes of the people. They are His representatives.

D. Notice the provision (vv. 42-44)

“The eye of sense and reason sees an utter impossibility of those effects which faith can easily apprehend, and divine power more easily produce.” (*William Burkitt’s Notes on the New Testament* on Mark 6:35).

1. Everyone partakes and is satisfied

“To show that vast as was the multitude, and scanty the provisions, the meal to each and all of them was a plentiful one. ‘When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost’ (John 6:12). This was designed to bring out the whole extent of the miracle.” (*Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown on Mark 6:42*).

No one is turned away wanting. God does meet our needs.

2. There is always an abundance in God’s response

This same scenario is preserved for us in 2 Kings 4:38-44 when Elisha fed the sons of the prophets during a time of famine with a pot of poisoned stew. The passage is worth noting.

³⁸ “When Elisha returned to Gilgal, there was a famine in the land. As the sons of the prophets were sitting before him, he said to his servant, “Put on the large pot and boil stew for the sons of the prophets.” ³⁹ Then one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine and gathered from it his lap full of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, for they did not know what they were. ⁴⁰ So they poured it out for the men to eat. And as they were eating of the stew, they cried out and said, “O man of God, there is death in the pot.” And they were unable to eat. ⁴¹ But he said, “Now bring meal.” He threw it into the pot and said, “Pour it out for the people that they may eat.” Then there was no harm in the pot. ⁴² Now a man came from Baal-shalishah, and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And he said, **“Give them to the people that they may eat.”** ⁴³ **His attendant said, “What, will I set this before a hundred men?”** But he said, “Give them to the people that they may eat, for thus says the LORD, **‘They shall eat and have some left over.’**” ⁴⁴ So he set it before them, and **they ate and had some left over**, according to the word of the LORD” (2 Kings 4:38-44).

These passages let us know that God is not bound by natural law. **God is Lord of natural law.**

This is the testimony of the Psalmist in Psalm 145:13-17.

¹³ “Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations. ¹⁴ The LORD sustains all who fall And raises up all who are bowed down. ¹⁵ **The eyes of all look to You, And You give them their food in due time.** ¹⁶ **You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing.** ¹⁷ The LORD is righteous in all His ways And kind in all His deeds” (Ps. 145:13-17).

This is the theology of the disciples. They were experiencing what God has done and does.

3. God makes much of little

“When Jesus blesses our slender gifts, he makes them sufficient for the feeding of thousands. It is ours to do our best, and trust in the Lord to make it useful. Lord, help us so to do.” (*Spurgeon’s Devotional Commentary* on Mark 6:44).

Something that constantly encourages me when I feel as if nothing will ever happen is this simple thought, “God may do what He wants with what is His and when He does it, it is always right.” Everything expression of expansive ministry had small beginnings. God does take our simple efforts, our simple words, our simple gestures, and through such simple things He feeds thousands.

V. Our Lord’s confirmation (John 6:14).

“Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, **‘This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world’**” (John 6:14).

Remember, miracles done individually are redemptive in nature and miracles done corporately are signs to the nation.

May Waukesha County say “because of God’s work in us and through us that truly the Prophet who is to come into the world is here in Jesus Christ.” None of this is about you or the twelve apostles, but about Him in you and the twelve apostles.

Shepherding the Sheep (What’s the NEXT STEP?)

1. Do you believe God is living His life through you?
2. Do you believe God for the impossible?
3. Are you under the guidance and guarding of shepherds?
4. Are you intentionally being taught?
5. What problem is overwhelming you right now?
6. Do you find the provision of God abundant?
7. Are you looking to self rather than to Jesus?