

**Introduction**

1. “Come with me with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mk 6:31).
  - a. This verse from today’s passage in Mark resonated with me this week.
  - b. Each week, I try to go one morning for a walk with a few men from our church. We walk a few miles on the Creeper Trail, Mendota Trail, or another trail in our beautiful area.
  - c. As usual, the list of ministry needs was long, and I wasn’t sure that I could go for a walk this week.
  - d. I almost told the group that I couldn’t make it this week because I was too busy. Then I read today’s passage from Mark in preparation for this Bible study, and it hit home.
  - e. I needed some time out in the beauty of God’s creation with a few other believers to walk in a quiet place not just for physical exercise but for a mental/emotional reset from the needs/demands of life.
  - f. So, I went for the walk and was renewed. Now I will finish this Bible study with renewed energy.
  - g. Sometimes, oftentimes, we need some time away in a quiet place with the Lord and maybe also with a close friend or loved one. The time away from our responsibilities and in communion with God is time well spent as we return to the work God calls us to do with Him.

**2. Read Mk 6:30-44.****A. Finishing Our Sandwich (30)**

1. The first verse in today’s passage, completes the Markan sandwich that we have been building over the past two weeks.
  - a. Two weeks ago we laid down the bottom slice of bread in this Markan sandwich as Jesus sent out His twelve disciples two-by-two to minister with His authority.
  - b. Last week we added the middle of the sandwich related to the preaching, persecution, and beheading of John the Baptist.
  - c. This week we put on the top slice of bread (Mk 6:30) as Jesus’ disciples return to report to Him on their ministry before moving on with Him to feed more than 5000 people on a hillside.
  - d. Remember that the two parts of this Markan sandwich—the disciples’ ministry (i.e., the top and bottom slices of bread) and John the Baptist’s ministry and death (i.e., the middle) are connected.
  - e. James Brooks writes, “The account of Herod’s reaction to John and Jesus (6:14-29) is inserted into the account of the mission of the Twelve (6:6b-13,30). The mission of the Twelve may have been one way in which Herod came to know about Jesus. Herod’s execution of John suggests the extent to which opposition to the Christian mission may extend. The martyrdom of John anticipated that of Jesus. Disciples of Jesus must be prepared for the supreme sacrifice. Furthermore, the two accounts contrast the indulgence and cruelty of a secular ruler with the dedication and sacrifice of the disciples” (James A. Brooks, *Mark*, 100).
2. “The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught” (Mk 6:30).
  - a. The disciples are called “apostles” (Gk., *apostoloi*) here not in the formal sense of a title but with the meaning that they were “ones sent out,” the literal meaning of this Greek word.
  - b. After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the disciples would be known by the formal title of Apostles. However, the meaning of being sent out with the gospel remained the same.
  - c. The apostles reported to Jesus what they had “done” (Gk., *epoiesan*), which was what Jesus had authorized and sent them to do.
    - 1) “They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them” (Mk 6:13).
    - 2) They also told Jesus what they had “taught” (Gk., *edidasksan*) (Mk 6:30). As Mark recounted earlier, “They went out and preached that people should repent” (Mk 6:12).
    - 3) They had been empowered to be little Jesuses doing what He did—casting out demons, healing the sick, and proclaiming the good news of the coming of God’s kingdom and the need for repentance.
3. Two weeks ago, I shared a model for Jesus’ method of growing his disciples. There were three stages.
  - a. Stage 1: You watch while I do (cf., Mk 1:17).
  - b. Stage 2: You do while I watch (cf., Mk 6:7,30).
  - c. Stage 3: You do (cf., Mt 28:18-20).

4. What happened in Mk 6:30ff was part of stage two: You do while I watch.
  - a. I'm sure that there were many successes and a few failures reported to Jesus. There were villages where they were rejected and may have had to "shake the dust off" their feet (Mk 6:11).
  - b. As we recount our ministry and life successes and failures to others, especially our spiritual mentors, we can grow through insights they share to help us improve our skills.
  - c. Jesus also knew that His disciples needed some not only to report to Him but also some time to rest and rejuvenate after a demanding season of ministry.

## **B. The Compassion of Jesus (31-34)**

1. Jesus had compassion for His disciples who continued to minister with Him to many people.
  - a. Jesus and the disciples were so busy meeting the needs of others that they did not have time to meet their own needs to eat and rest (31).
  - b. So Jesus called them away to be with Him in "a quiet place" where they could "get some rest" (31).
  - c. We have seen how Jesus Himself withdrew from busy periods of ministry and went to a quiet or lonely place to rest and commune with His heavenly Father (cf., Mk 1:35; 3:13).
  - d. Now, Jesus included His disciples in these retreats to rest (cf., Mk 5:35; 6:31) as He shared this important discipleship insight concerning the need for rest with His followers.
  - e. Jesus and His disciples got into the boat and set sail for a "solitary place" "by themselves" (32).
  - f. We must balance work and rest. We need time to rest and revitalize so that we can engage in ministry.
2. Jesus also had compassion on the "large crowd" (33-34).
  - a. As soon as Jesus and His disciples landed on the shore, a crowd gathered.
  - b. Jesus and the disciples most likely had not sailed out far into the lake and so the people had been able to track their progress and see where they landed on the shore. (33).
  - c. Other people quickly joined the growing throng from the surrounding towns (33).
3. When Jesus saw the large crowd "he had compassion on them" (34).
  - a. The word compassion (Gk., *esplagchnisthe*) is one of my favorite Greek words to pronounce, but I love its meaning even more. Jesus was moved deep down inside by the needs of the people.
  - b. Jesus knew that the people in the crowd ". . . were like sheep without a shepherd" (34).
  - c. Jesus is the Good Shepherd (cf., Psalm 23; John 10). He is the one who comes for the sheep who have gone astray (Isa 53:6; Mt 18:10-14).
  - d. Even though Jesus was most likely tired and hungry, He still reached out to minister to the people's needs.
4. Notice that Jesus did not begin with miracles, such as casting out demons or healing the sick, but with ". . . teaching (Gk., *didaskein*) them many things" (34).
5. Jesus' primary ministry was proclaiming the good news of the coming of God's kingdom and the need for repentance (cf., Mk 1:15). Miracles and healings were given as evidence in support of the truth of His teaching.

## **C. Feeding the Crowd (35-43)**

1. The Problem (35-36)
  - a. Jesus was so engaged in ministering to the people that time passed quickly and the day grew late (35).
  - b. Jesus' disciples came to Him with a problem—It's late and the people need something to eat.
  - c. They offered Jesus a solution to the problem: "Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat" (36).
  - d. The disciples saw the problem and put it on the shoulders of the people.
  - e. Jesus saw the problem and put it on the shoulders of His disciples.
2. The Proposal (37)
  - a. Jesus offered a counter-proposal to the solution proposed by His disciples.
  - b. Jesus said, "You give them something to eat" (37).
  - c. The disciples did a gut-check. They couldn't believe their ears. You want to put the people's problem on us?
    - 1) Don't you know buying that amount of food would ". . . take more than half a year's wages?" (37)
    - 2) Furthermore, where are we going to get bread and water out here? (37)
  - d. The disciples didn't want to accept this responsibility and wanted to hand it back to Jesus.

### 3. The Provisions (38)

- a. Jesus wouldn't take the responsibility off of His disciples. Instead, He commanded them to "go and see" what they had. (38)
- b. The disciples found five small loaves of bread and two fish, which were the meal given to a young boy.
- c. It wasn't much, but it was all they had. They brought it to Jesus.

### 4. The Providence (39-43)

- a. Jesus did not accept the responsibility for feeding the people alone. He accepted the little that His disciples had found and multiplied it to meet the need.
- b. The people sat on the grassy hillside in groups (39-40). In the Holy Land I have visited the site of this miracle which is in a grassy bowl-shaped depression in the hillside above the Sea of Galilee.
- c. Jesus "gave thanks and broke the loaves . . . and divided the two fish among them all" (41).
  - 1) Jesus did not belittle the disciples for their meager findings.
  - 2) Jesus did not complain to His Father about the inadequacy of His disciples or the lack of provisions.
  - 3) Jesus simply gave thanks in prayer for what He had and began in faith to use it to the glory of His Father.
- d. The people all ate until they were satisfied and when they were done each disciple collected a basketful of leftovers. Those who had a lack of faith each carried evidence in their baskets of what faith can do (42-43).
- e. The number fed that day was 5,000 men (44). If we include the women and children present the number fed easily becomes 15,000-20,000. A true miracle indeed!

### 5. Leader Formation

- a. Last year Chip Ingram introduced me to a little book, *Leader Formation*, during a time of rest, retreat, and rejuvenation at the Billy Graham Retreat Center in Ashville, NC.
- b. In *Leader Formation: How Jesus Shaped 12 Men in 3 Years to Change the World*, Dr. Bill Lawrence uses the Feeding of the 5000 to discuss not only how Jesus forms disciples but how He calls us to grow in our faith by accomplishing the impossible tasks He calls us to complete.
- c. Dr. Lawrence presents seven leadership principles in his book. The first two, which are drawn directly from the Feeding of the 5000, are:
  1. The Reality of Leader Inadequacy – You must do what you cannot do with what you do not have for the rest of your lives.
  2. The Reality of Christ's Adequacy – Jesus can do what you cannot do for the rest of your life.
- d. If you would like to read this wonderful little discipleship book, I have an extra copy or two that I would be glad to give to you.

## **D. Reflections**

1. Do you need some time away from life and ministry responsibilities to rest and rejuvenate?
2. How are you building mini-respites into your schedule to allow you time alone with the Father or a few friends to renew your spiritual, emotional, and physical energy?
3. What ministry successes have you had recently? What failures/rejections have you experienced? You can learn from both success and failures. In fact, a wise person once told me, "If you haven't had a few failures lately, then you may not be trying hard enough."
4. We need to be sensitive to holy interruptions that God sends our way. Even in a period of rest or at an inconvenient time, people still have needs. We must be sensitive and responsive to the needs of others.
5. Jesus called His disciples to complete an impossible task. What tasks is Jesus calling us to do that seem impossible to us in our life and ministry? Jesus says to us, "You give them something to eat."
6. Jesus says of our impossible tasks, "You give them something to eat." He hears our objections, and He asks, "How many loaves do you have?" Look for what God has already given. Thank Him for it. Begin using the little you have to His glory. See how God blesses and multiplies your offerings as the needs of people are met.
7. What resources has God already entrusted to you/us to accomplish the impossible tasks before you/us in our church and community?
8. What resources must we trust God to provide to fulfill our mission of meeting the specific, impossible needs in our church and community?