

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for January 22, 2017

A Plentiful Picnic
Mark 6:30-44

I. The retreat of the apostles (6:30-32)

The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught.

- This is the only time the 12 are called “Apostles” in Mark rather than “disciples”
- They reported their ministry of miracles and messages, just like Jesus had done

31 And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.

- Jesus desired to withdraw for several reasons:
 - Threat of hostility from the Herodians
 - Grieving over death of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:13)
 - More personalized instruction between Jesus and the 12
 - Disciples to rest after mission (Mark 6:31)

32 And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.

- Luke 9:10** “On their return the apostles told him all that they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida.”
- This was probably Bethsaida Julias, which was east of where the Jordan River enters the Sea of Galilee
- This Bethsaida is not to be confused with the more common Bethsaida on the Northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee (Mark 6:45)

II. The recognition of the crowd (6:33-34)

33 Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.

- Many people saw them and “recognized them”
 - It was Jesus AND the 12 who were recognized and popular now
- Withdrawal unsuccessful since people “from all the towns and got there ahead of them”
 - Sea of Galilee is small enough to see what is happening on and around the lake

34 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.

- “When he went ashore he saw a great crowd”
 - This crowd seems to interrupt Jesus’ plan to withdraw with disciples
 - Crowd was undoubtedly an inconvenience for Jesus and disciples
 - Crowd could be like media trying to get Jesus’ comment after John the Baptist’s death
- How does Jesus respond to the crowd?
 - Jesus could have been upset and reprimanded them, telling them to leave
 - Jesus could have kindly asked for space and alone time between He and His disciples
 - Jesus could have miraculously disappeared through the crowds
 - Jesus could have ignored the crowd and sailed on to another location
- “He had compassion on them”!!!
 - Was it possible to inconvenience Jesus???
 - Can you find one example in the gospels?
 - No matter the scenario, Jesus stood ready to serve and minister to others
 - To the blind, Jesus had compassion (Matthew 20:34)
 - To the demon-possessed, Jesus had compassion (Mark 9:22)
 - To the grieving, Jesus had compassion (Luke 7:13)
 - To the lost in the region of Galilee, Jesus had compassion (Matthew 9:36)
 - To the masses, Jesus preached forgiveness motivated by compassion (Matthew 18:27; Luke 15:20)
 - To one another, Jesus exhorts us to have compassion (Luke 10:33)
- Why did Jesus have compassion on this crowd?
 - “because they were like sheep without a shepherd”
 - He was ultimately concerned with their spiritual condition
 - Old Testament Scripture upholds this meaning in Mark’s expression
 - Ezekiel 34:1-5** “The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? 3 You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. 4 The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have

not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. 5 So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered;”

-Ezekiel 34:15-16 “I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. 16 I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak...”

-Ezekiel 34:23 “And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.”

-How did Jesus shepherd this flock of sheep?

- “And he began to teach them many things”

-Jesus’ compassion leads Him to address their greatest need

-Jesus teaches them or feeds them the Word

III. The recommendation of the disciples (6:35-36)

35 And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late.

-Jesus must have been teaching for some time (“it grew late”)

-Disciples reminded Jesus that they weren’t necessarily in the city (“This is a desolate place”)

-Disciples reminded Jesus that it was late (“the hour is now late”)

36 Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

-Disciples’ recommendation was to wrap up the teaching and send the people away

-Who knows how far away the “surrounding countryside” is at this point?

-Disciples’ recommendation seems reasonable and even compassionate

-Jesus would take their understanding of compassion to another level

IV. The response of Jesus (6:37-38)

37 But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.”

-Jesus challenges His disciples to care for the people in providing food

-Initially, this seems unreasonable

-But remember the disciples had just returned from their respective missions where they were casting out demons and healing people

- Now they are in the presence of the One who authorized them to have such abilities
- It stands to reason that Jesus could probably solve this food issue as well

And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?"

- Rather than taking a hint and thinking of Christ's abilities, the disciples think only about the natural solution
- They estimate the money necessary for such a meal
 - Denarius = Day's wage for a laborer (Matthew 20:1)
 - Total = 7 months wages for a laborer
 - Maybe \$10,000 for a meal!

38 And he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish."

- Jesus asked the disciples to assess the current and available resources
 - Disciples are still not acknowledging the realization of Jesus' abilities
 - Thus, this request had to have seemed ridiculous to the disciples!
 - What would they possibly do with snacks from the crowd?
- They must have taken time to investigate what was available in the large crowd
 - After searching, 5 loaves and 2 fish, was clearly meager and worthless
 - Bread and fish would be common for region of Galilee
 - Fish were probably smoked or dried already (John 6:5)
 - This is practically nothing!

V. The replenishing of food (6:39-44)

39 Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties.

- Jesus sets up the crowd for the food and the disciples for the miracle
- "sit down in groups on the green grass"
 - It is worth noting the several OT parallels taking place in this scene
 - Already established Jesus as God's Shepherd for His helpless people
 - Jesus has already been feeding them through teaching
 - He now sits them down on the "green grass" (Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34)
 - He will physically feed them in a desolate place (Moses in Wilderness)
 - He will multiply food miraculously for this crowd (Elisha and prophets)
 - This meal potentially mirrors the last supper (Passover)

-This meal points to a greater Messianic Banquet to come (Isaiah 25)

-Interesting that Jesus has them sit in groups

-Crowd might not have seen or even noticed the miracle

41 And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all.

-Jesus simply “broke the loaves” and “divided the two fish” for everyone

-We have no luxury of learning how this was done

-The chain of verbs “taking... looked... said a blessing... broke” all mirror last supper

-This miracle targeted the disciples who would be serving the food to the people

-Initially, the great crowd seems like an inconvenience to Jesus’ planned alone time with the disciples

-Instead, it appears that Jesus used the great crowd to teach His disciples true compassion by example

42 And they all ate and were satisfied. 43 And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. 44 And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

- “And they all ate and were satisfied” is hard for us to grasp in the 21st Century

-This was big for them because they did not have the overabundance of food and money that we have in America

-Clearly supernatural to go from 5 loaves and 2 fish to 12 baskets full of leftovers

-Climatic ending to wow the reader → 5,000 men!

-5,000 men would mean 15,000-20,000 people with women and children (Matthew 14:21)

-Did the people even recognize that the miracle had happened?

-Mark emphasizes that the disciples witnessed this miracle and learned more of the authority and compassion of Jesus Christ