

**A Plentiful Picnic
Mark 6:30-44**

And as we return to our study in the gospel of Mark, in focusing on the life of Christ from Mark's vantage point – I wanted to ask you a question this morning, and that is, how do you see people? How do you see people? I don't mean, like, identity, like, where someone works or what their hobby is or who they associate with. How do people impact you? What is the perspective that you have when you see people? For instance, I think it's very possible we have all at one point or another seen people as, maybe, a bit of an obligation. You know, sometimes there's the holidays; there's the times where you're with people, and you're kind of checking your watch and waiting for the time when you're done being with those people and you can be somewhere else, but you know you need to be there so you're obligated. This is one way that we can see people, as more of an obligation. Sometimes, we see them as an obstacle. We have a plan. We have an idea. We have something we want to get accomplished and done, and then unexpectedly, somewhere, these people come in, and now you have to interact with them and engage them, and now they're an obstacle to what you're trying to do. Or, some people are so manipulative and so clever that they actually have an agenda of what they want to get done, and they use people to get to that end. Right? You use people like little pawns in your perfect little chess game that you're playing, and it gets you what you want, and you use people in the process. I think, probably at one time or another, we could probably relate to one of those in some fashion or form.

But it does raise the question for us this morning that we'll want to answer, which is, how did Jesus see people? How does Jesus see people? And we've already seen some answers to this as pretty obvious, just looking at the beginnings of His ministry in the gospel of Mark, and we can tell that it's positive. There's love. There's these obvious and understanding responses that we understand, as far as how Jesus views people and sees them. But this morning, I think we're going to have our world opened to a whole new understanding of how Jesus views people, and hopefully, it'll challenge us as well in our own perspective and view of people and therefore how we act towards people.

We're going to be in Mark 6:30-44. So, join me in looking at that right now, and we'll read our text this morning starting in verse 30; "The apostles

returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. 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. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 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. And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, 'This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.' But he answered them, 'You give them something to eat.' And they said to him, 'Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?' 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.' Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. 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. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men."

This wonderful miracle, the feeding of the five thousand, one of the most popular instances and events in the life of Christ, so popular that it's, actually, one miracle, maybe aside from the Resurrection, that is in all four gospels. You have it in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. A well-known event (amazing, supernatural event) of all these people coming and getting free lunch. Right? ...this feeding of the five thousand. But in it, this morning, I think we're going to see not just another amazing display of Christ's authority and His supernatural ability and His, really, His identity as God's chosen One, Anointed One, and Messiah, but we're also going to see how Jesus views people and see how that works even in His view of the disciples as well as His view of this "...great crowd..." that He encounters. So, to begin, let's look at how He views His disciples or apostles as we see in verses 30-32, the retreat of the apostles - the retreat of the apostles. Once again, being reminded of verse 30; "The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught."

This reminds us of where we've been - reminds us of how, not too long ago... Actually, last time, we didn't talk about this, but a couple times ago in verses 7-13, we saw Jesus sending out the disciples. Right? They were followers of Him. Yes, they had observed and learned a lot under Jesus and His teaching. They had watched what He had done and, no doubt, had they been taking that in as the responsible pupils they were. But at this point in verses 7-13, that's when we saw Jesus change it up and send them out. They became apostles, sent ones. They were to go out and have this on-the-job training, have this opportunity to go and to learn as they would preach the gospel, as they would preach repentance, as they would even have authority to cast out demons and to heal people. They got this opportunity. And Jesus even warned them what they could expect. People will reject you. They won't like what you have to say, while others will. Some will receive you. This is where we left off with the disciples and the apostles when He sent them out.

And then, the last time, verses 14-29, we had this interlude. Alright? This story that's not even about Jesus necessarily or the disciples, but John the Baptist. And Mark catches us up with what happened with John the Baptist, and how he was not only imprisoned for preaching the truth and rebuking Herod, but he would actually go to his death, an example of suffering for the name of Christ, suffering as a prophet of God.

And then, we come to our verse this morning. The apostles return to Jesus. They return to give a report on how the mission went. How it went when Jesus had sent them out. And we kind of think, why this, you know, sandwiched here, where we have Jesus sending them out, them coming back and reporting, and in the middle, an emphasis on John the Baptist and his death? It seems that Mark is just, kind of, almost foreshadowing and looking ahead to how Jesus would talk more about the cost of following Him. To follow Christ - it is no easy thing; and Christ would go on to teach this and eventually model it in His own death on the cross. So, Mark is alluding to that and even showing that in the faith of John the Baptist, as the disciples, too, would go out and suffer that same fate, dying, suffering, for the cause of Christ. But for now, we still now have the apostles in the beginnings of their learning and ministry as they come back and report to Jesus, both what they had done in ministry and what they had taught in the message. The same type of ministry, the same type of thing that Jesus was doing, is what the apostles had done, and they report that to Him here.

And notice Jesus' response in verse 31. And He said to them, my, my, my, you have a lot to learn. No! In verse 31; "And he said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.'" Notice, immediately, how Jesus treats His apostles, how He treats His own, His disciples. This compassion... Right? ...this kindness, this gentleness with them. As I mentioned earlier, He easily could've told them you don't even know the half of it. Alright? You're reporting to Me all these amazing things that you did and all this amazing stuff that happened, but you don't even know what's to come and how little prepared you are for it right now. Jesus being the Son of God, Jesus having all authority, being the Messiah, totally able, totally qualified, if He wanted to, to bark orders at these men and to say get back out there, keep going, don't stop now. Why're you back talking to Me? You have more to do. And Jesus could do this; He has that authority. But that's not what He does. Instead, it's compassion. He feels for these men; "Come away by yourselves to a desolate [and quiet] place and rest a while."

We see that even, kind of more from a big picture standpoint, when you look at the life of Christ and consider all the gospels, this is a change in how Jesus would interact in the region of Galilee. We've seen Him really going for it. He's been going from town to town preaching, Himself. Even though, when He shifted to preaching in parables, He was still getting the message out there, and then, He sends out the message by sending out the twelve. Well, now He's going to withdraw. So, He's been doing this active preaching, and now He will withdraw in a general sense. And it's for many reasons that we see Him withdrawing. From the other gospels, we learn that, in one sense, there's this increased persecution that's going to happen. Now that Herod Antipas has made known of what's taking place, he gets onboard, and he starts getting angry, and he wants to persecute as more religious leaders rise up. And Pharisees and Sadducees, as they hear more, they want to work together, and they want to end this Jesus thing, this Jesus movement. So, there's persecution that causes Jesus to withdraw. There's also the obvious that Jesus just wants to spend time with His disciples. He wants to actually have quality time with them, to be able to talk with them, instruct them, and not have crowds swarming them constantly. Matthew 14 actually tells us that there's a desire to withdraw right here in this point because of the death of John the Baptist and grieving. Jesus is grieving, even, this death of a great man, the suffering of John the Baptist a prophet of God.

Well, what do we have in our text, Jesus says, “ ‘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 recognizes the simple fact; these guys are limited. In their physical bodies, they can only do so much. They had been working so hard. He knew their limitations. He understood what they could handle, and Jesus was willing to be compassionate and kind towards that. Let’s take a break. Let’s rest. Yes, for Him to interact more with them, but for them to recharge, to recuperate, to have this surge of energy and power coming again. Verse 32 tells us, “And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.” That’s what they did. Really, what it is, if we were to look at Luke 9:10, he gives us a little more info saying, “And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida.” And if you read the gospels, you hear of this town called Bethsaida, and you think, isn’t that kind of a popular town in some sense? There’s a good amount of people there, that fishing town, I think. Well, turns out there’s actually two Bethsaidas. There’s one Bethsaida that’s on the, kind of, like the, northwest shore of Galilee, and there’s another one that’s on the northeast shore of Galilee which is on the other side of where the Jordan river dumps down into the Sea of Galilee. And so, what He was doing is taking them to that northeast location that was truly a desolate place. That was a quiet place away from people, and this is what it’s called, Bethsaida-Julius. This is where Jesus was taking them.

And you notice right away, how does Jesus view people? How does He view His own? He has compassion for them. Sensitive to their physical capacity, He is the role model and example of what a leader ought to be, spiritual speaking. He doesn’t operate like the CEO barking orders. He doesn’t tell people they’re fired, and someone else’s coming in and taking their place. Jesus appropriately deals with these men, comforts them and has compassion upon them - definitely a lesson the apostles would learn. For instance, Peter would talk about shepherds of God’s flock. He would talk about pastors in the similar sense. In 1 Peter 5:3, he would say, elders are “...not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.” As an elder, as a leader of the church, as a ministry leader, or whatever capacity that one might have in the church, there’s no room for domineering. Even Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2:6-7, states, “Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.” Isn’t this the case? Jesus, having all authority, could make whatever demand He wanted, and it wouldn’t have been too great. It

would have been completely fine. Peter an apostle, Paul an apostle, these men that were authoring scripture inspired by the Holy Spirit, leading the early church, could have made demands as apostles of Christ, but what does Paul say in 1 Thessalonians 2:7? “But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.” He followed the example of Christ. Peter experienced the example of Christ. Peter experienced this side of Christ - how He viewed people with compassion, His own with compassion, wanting to just give them rest for a while in the midst of their ministry and busyness.

Well, as we can tell from our text, that’s not really how it ends because they encounter many more characters. In verses 33-34, we have the recognition of the crowd - the recognition of the crowd; “Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 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.” Notice how it says that many people “...recognized them...” Many people “...recognized them...” An interesting way to say it. Rather than saying many people recognized Jesus, it says “...them...” And it’s this idea and understanding that the disciples themselves had just gone out. They had just gone preaching in all these different towns and villages, so it wasn’t just Jesus that people were becoming familiar with, but also the twelve. Thus, these people that are there and seeing this take place, they recognize the group. They recognize Jesus and His men, and they start to follow. And kind of the nature of the Sea of Galilee, not being very big for one, and for two, the nature of sailing not being very fast or effective, if you don’t have wind in your favor, the people were able to follow from the distance of being on shore, and they actually kind of followed and tracked them along and beat them to where they going,

So now, this “...great crowd...” forms, and as we note from the end of our text, this isn’t a small group of people, thousands upon thousands of people recognizing this and swarming to the location. So, we notice the withdrawal, it seems, is unsuccessful as all these people from all the towns get there ahead of them. Our text says in verse 34, “When he went ashore he saw a great crowd...” And, right away, you ask yourself, how’s this crowd functioning in this story? Well, if you’re thinking of what we just read in verses 31-32, the crowd seems to be a bit of an obstacle, don’t they? They’re kind of in the way. They’re kind of messing up Jesus’ plan. Jesus wants to

spend time with His disciples. He wants to give them rest. And now, there's this "...great crowd..."? It's an obstacle. They're a complete inconvenience, getting in the way of what is supposed to be taking place. And there could even be with this... perhaps, like an aspect of the crowd, that they're not only busy and so many of them, but they're immature, and several of them are almost functioning like the modern media. Hey, Jesus, any comment on the death of John the Baptist? What do you think about that? Tell us more. Do another cool sign. Not a fun crowd of fanfare, but potentially an annoyance, an inconvenient crowd. This is what happens when He comes ashore, when "...He saw a great crowd..."

So what does Jesus do? Obviously, He has options. We've already established that He has all the authority; He can do whatever He wants. He could reprimand this crowd and say, not now; I've given you plenty of attention, give me a break. I want to be with My guys. No. He could've even done the Jesus thing and kind of been kind in it. Right? He could've said just give Me twenty-four hours, guys, just a little break, just need a little time, and then I'll come back to you. I'll answer all the questions you have. Or, He could've pulled a Luke 4 on them and disappeared through the crowd. He's done that before. When people in Nazareth tried to kill Him, He disappeared through the crowd, no problem. He has that ability. He could've done this. Or, He could just completely ignore the crowd, get back in the boat, go somewhere else. Let's go to the south side of Galilee. He does none of those things as our text clearly states; "When he went ashore he saw a great crowd [an inconvenient, annoying crowd], and he had compassion on them..." It's an amazing response.

This is one of the things that I just continue to be amazed by when I read the gospels. Is it possible to inconvenience Jesus? Every time He's doing His ministry and carrying it out, there's so many times when He's interrupted by something, and does He ever lash out in anger and tell people get away from Me? He makes time for it. Just even when He was going to heal Jairus' daughter, He gets interrupted by this crowd that's trying to touch Him and be healed by Him, and He doesn't get mad. He uses it as an example for ministry and service. It seems like it's impossible to inconvenience Him. And so, what we have here is His response, not of anything that you and I probably would've had, but one of compassion. Compassion, this strong word of compassion, of not just wondering what this crowd's all about and kind of feeling for them, but this deep-seated, in the bowels of your stomach,

moving and turning compassion for the crowd. It's the same word that we see when blind people come up to Him, and He is moved with compassion and asks them how He can help. It's the same compassion that draws Him to cast demons out of people as we see in other places. It's the same compassion that even moves Him to raise people from the dead when He sees others grieving over the loss of their loved ones. It's the same compassion that He had when He, in Matthew 9, looked out over the entire region of Galilee and saw all the people and said there's so much work to be done here. It's the same compassion that He preached as the motivation for forgiveness, and it's also the same compassion that He exhorts for you and I to have with one another as the good Samaritan did.

It's a strong word - motivates Christ and only Christ in His ministry. Every time it's used, it's referring to Him or a parable that shows Him as a symbol of the person having that compassion. This is an amazing response of Jesus to this situation. And we have to ask the question, is this a compassion that's characteristic of you? Is this what you have? Is this how you view people, or would you potentially be like one of the disciples in the boat, or many of us when we see this crowd, and we think, oh boy, great, this is exactly what we need? ...not the case with Jesus. Are people an obstacle or an opportunity? Jesus responds perfectly, right away, in compassion, seeing them as an opportunity. Why? Why does He have this compassion on these people? Because He sees need. Verse 34 goes on to say, "...because they were like sheep without a shepherd." ... "...they were like sheep without a shepherd." Yeah, they were immature. Yeah, they were potentially annoying. But they were completely abandoned. They had no leadership, like helpless and harassed sheep with no shepherd, with no leader.

This is not just a strong phrase or expression because of the picture that you get in your mind and when you think of helpless sheep when they need a leader, but it's also strong because it's drawing on the Old Testament. This expression is used several times in the Old Testament whenever God is basically indicating and showing the spiritual bankruptcy of the leadership of Israel. Even though Israel had kings, and even though they had prophets and priests, when all of them are corrupt and selfish and going their own ways, God would say, My people are "...like sheep without a shepherd." And it's a slap in the face to the leadership because they're not doing their job. They're not shepherding the people of God. It's, really, strongly stated in Ezekiel 34. I'd encourage you to read the whole chapter sometime, but let

me give you a little snippet of it. In Ezekiel 34:1-5; “The word of the Lord came to me: ‘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? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. 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. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered...’ ”

God addresses what would then happen next. In Ezekiel 34:15-16, God says, “I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. 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...” And Ezekiel 34:23, again; “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.” God says it’s terrible. The situation of leadership is nonexistent. It’s oppressive. It’s wrong. God says I’m going to have to do it now. I need to step in and lead My people, and the indicator of who it’s going to be is a descendent of David that will shepherd His people. And here we have Jesus in this scene.

Here we have Jesus, one who is descended from David, encountering this large crowd, moved with compassion, seeing them as “...like sheep without a shepherd.” And what does He decide to do? Not just be moved with compassion, not just get emotional, but the end of verse 34; “And he began to teach them many things.” He took on the role. These people are helpless. It’s amazing that they have Pharisees and experts in the Law, and these scribes. They have all these people, and yet, they’re untaught. And Jesus rises up to meet that need. Jesus sees a crowd and He doesn’t view them as an obstacle. He sees need. He sees people, and He sees need, and He rises up to meet that need. The Good Shepherd is committed to feeding the flock by teaching them the Word of God. Today’s shepherds, too, must be committed to feeding the flock of God by teaching God’s Word that we continue to have. This must be our commitment, and so, too, for the flock, for the people of God, a desire and appetite for the Word of God and nothing else because nothing else will satisfy and fulfill. It’s as Jesus said, “Man shall not live by

bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” It’s amazing to see this compassion in action as Jesus sees the need, rises up and meets the need by teaching them.

Especially since there’s so many organizations and mercy ministries and humanitarian things that are... endeavors that are out there, and they do a lot of good. They identify people need food. They identify they need clothing, and they build houses for people all over the world. And these are great things, but then they leave it at that. And really, it’s lacking true compassion as we see modeled by Jesus here. True compassion goes the next step and gives people what they ultimately need; that’s the truth. They ultimately need the Word of God. They need truth. They need the Good News. Showing compassion in the physical sense is great, but Jesus did the greater thing here in feeding them by teaching, teaching truth, truth for their soul, not just food for their body. How do you view people? Do you view people like Jesus does with this compassion, seeing an opportunity, seeing need and acting upon it, or are they an obstacle, a nuisance?

It’s not long before the disciples interact and engage again in verses 35-36, and they have a recommendation for Jesus - the recommendation of the disciples. Verses 35-36; “And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, ‘This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.’ ” ...and seems like, actually, a good idea. The disciples are kind of coming up with a noble thought here. They’re thinking of the people. They recognize some obvious things. It’s getting later. It’s getting later in the day, and they kind of remind Jesus of the fact that they’re not, really, close to anything; they’re in the middle of nowhere so to speak. People have walked several miles to get to this place, to be there when they landed, and now there’s no near market place or anything of that nature. So, the disciples speak up and say this might be a good time to wrap things up, let people go from here. They need to go. They need to get food. We can call it night. We can all get our rest. This is a good time for this. The disciples coming up, and you think, yeah, that’s a good thought they’re considering. We don’t know how far away the surrounding countryside is and where their houses might be, but it’s their idea of being thoughtful and compassionate. It’s their idea of considering what needs to be done for these people.

And Jesus would use this as an opportunity to take their understanding of compassion to a whole other level. Jesus would say that's not enough - can do more. In verses 37-38, we see Jesus responding to them with the more that can be done. The response of Jesus in verses 37-38; "But he answered them, 'You give them something to eat.' And they said to him, 'Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?' 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.' " Clearly an instance where the disciples and Jesus aren't really on the same page. Right? They come up with this idea, this recommendation, of calling it good and calling it quits for the day, and then Jesus responds in saying, why don't "You give them something to eat?" You can do this. We can minister. We can continue to minister to this crowd and serve them and show compassion on them by not just teaching them truth, but now we can actually feed them.

And you can tell that this challenge seems completely unreasonable. As we already know, thousands of people there, and Jesus is telling twelve men to feed them. And so, you think initially, yeah, this is a little unreasonable on the part of Jesus, like, come on, this is obvious. Why would He do that? But consider the context a little bit. Where did the disciples just come from? They just came from a mission where they were all out doing what? ...preaching the gospel and performing miracles. They were healing people and casting out demons. Not only did they see the ministry prior to that where Jesus was doing all these things, and He clearly has that ability and power, but they themselves were now authorized with this same ability and power. They've seen a lot of supernatural things lately, a lot of things kind of defy logic and what you see in science and nature. A lot of this has been taking place, and yet when Jesus says, "You give them something to eat." ...they immediately go right to the natural mind, and it's somewhat understandable. They do a little calculation; "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" A denarii's being about a day's wage for a laborer, so in total, we're talking about seven months of income. Seven months of income, that's not a big deal for one meal. Right?

Some commentators take this and try and, you know, do the whole... from that time, two thousand years later, to what it would be about today; it's about, maybe, a ten-thousand-dollar meal for these thousands of people. And this is their solution. Is that what You're actually suggesting, that we just

kind of whip up that money real quick and go buy everyone food? And Jesus says, well, no, no no. “How many loaves do you have?” And you think, what for You? I mean, what kind of question is that? “How many loaves do [we] have? “Go and see.” So, in verse 38, they go, and they find out, and they have to do some investigation and see what they can come up with. And you think, come on, something impressive, five, five loaves and two fish - clearly making the point - this is meager in terms of how much it is. It’s close to worthless to what you would do with that in context with this crowd. Bread and fish being the common things you would expect to find in this region of Galilee, the food that would be kind of prominent. But this is practically nothing - definitely on different pages here, as the disciples were thinking, okay, we’ll try to cooperate, but how in the world is this going to help? We’ll do what You say. We’ll do the research, and we got five loaves and two fish, but I don’t know what You’re going to do.

And this is where Jesus, in verses 39-44, blows them away with the replenishing of the food, and not just for a supernatural and another miraculous display, while that is part of it, and He continues to show them His authority and who He is as the Messiah, but also to show this compassion; this compassion that He continues to model, first to them, then to the crowd, in teaching them and now in the way that He would physically feed them. In verse 39, we read, “Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties.” ...kind of sets up the crowd and getting them ready for this miracle that’s to come. It’s interesting to note that He sets them up in these groups, and then we’ll see that He gives it to the disciples to distribute. It’s almost as if in Mark’s account and the way that he records it, it’s so vague and ambiguous that we don’t even know if the people even realize what happened. We don’t even know if the people even knew how the food got to them. They’re sitting in a group, and here comes a basket of food, and you take some and pass it along, and everyone’s happy. It’s a great picnic. Right? But did they even know where it came from? Did they even...? All they got was a disciple handing them a basket of food. Who really saw this? And who was this really for? According to Mark, it’s for the disciples to see and to understand.

Also interesting to note that as you kind of look through this and see the different aspects of how this unfolds, there’s a lot of parallels to the Old Testament. You have Jesus getting the crowd... already seeing them as

sheep, and then He gets "...them all to sit down in groups..." and Mark says "...on the green grass." Well, that's good. I thought grass was green to begin with. Right? But this emphasis - why say that? Why emphasize this? This continuing to make this connection between God's Shepherd, a descendent of David, who would come and feed the people - and here He is, the Shepherd of God. Jesus functioning in this way, and Mark connecting it with imagery that will help you see connections. And then, as He does this miracle of taking food... they're in this desolate place, and He's feeding them all, giving them their sustenance, and it's almost like Moses in the wilderness with the people of God. So, Jesus is like a new Moses in feeding the people in a desolate place, and He's also like Elisha the prophet who himself had done a miracle, multiplying food, although not to this extent, when working with his men. And so, Mark just keeps throwing these illusions at us to show us, wow, He is that Shepherd. He is a greater Moses. He is a greater Elisha. This is the Man. This is God's chosen One; He far out exceeds everyone from the Old Testament just in this one miracle, just in this one event.

We go on and read in verse 40; "So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties." In verse 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." We're left to imagination. We don't know how this is done. ...love to know the details of this, how this exactly happened - waving His wand, pulling out a wand? No. Definitely not that. He wouldn't do that. But how? We don't know. ...left to the imagination. But it's simple. He simply broke the bread, blessed it, and passed it out. Some people notice the chain of verbs being interesting here - that He's taking the bread - He's looking, and then He's saying a blessing, and then He's breaking it. And that's the same exact chain of verbs that will come at the end of Christ's life when He sits down and has the Last Supper with the disciples. He'll do the same exact thing. Almost as precursor, Mark, once again, hinting ahead as he does to the ultimate final meal that Christ would have as the Passover Lamb Himself.

Verse 42; "And they all ate and were satisfied." This is an important detail. One because we live in the twenty-first century, and so it's pretty easy for us to get our hands on food, and if we really wanted to stuff ourselves, we could and feel satisfied, not just one time a year at a holiday. We could do this if we wanted to. We kind of have this luxury, but at this time, that's not

really the case; it's not your every meal that you actually eat to your satisfaction and fullness. Verse 43; "And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish." ...tons of leftovers. This is important, too, because some commentators will actually look at a passage like this, and they'll say the real miracle here is the amazing generosity of the people to share their lunch with each other. They all brought their snacks, and they opened it up and they just shared and had a great little party, and that's the true miracle of what's taking place here. That's obviously bogus and completely wrong because you have a starting point of five loaves and two fish, and you have an ending point of twelve extra baskets of food and people that are satisfied in what they're eating.

And to kind of give a climactic kind of punch and ending, the last thing you find out is how big this group is. The last thing that Mark reveals to us is that "...those who ate the loaves were five thousand men." If you had no idea, if you didn't have the little chapter heading in your Bible, you might think, well, how big is this group? ...the whole time, until you get to the very end and realize it's thousands of people. And not just five thousand, because Matthew adds you have women and children there as well, so easily a crowd of fifteen to twenty thousand people being fed on this one occasion. Jesus taking what, really, the disciples thought and their natural frame of working and reference and expanding it, showing them that He has compassion not just for them His own, and not just for this crowd, that He wants to teach them Spiritually, but also, that He wants to feed them, and He can do it. He continues to show He has the ability and the authority, the power, to do such a thing.

This passage began as an opportunity for Jesus to show His compassion on His disciples, and that He did in trying to bring them to this desolate place, but the compassion only continued when He encountered this crowd. They were not an obstacle. They were not an annoyance to Jesus. They were an opportunity, an opportunity to show compassion, to act, to see need, and to do something about it. And we have to ask ourselves as we encounter this aspect of Christ, and you and I are called to be Christ-like, is this the compassion that we show? Is this how you see people, or is it the typical default of an obstacle, an obligation, kind of have to do it, a means to an end, an agenda, that you have, using people to get what you want? Or, will it be like Christ, and it doesn't matter how interrupted we are. It doesn't matter how much we have going on, we can see people, and what we see is need,

and our first thought is that true compassion for the people around us, people of God and the people that are lost that need the truth. We need this true compassion that Jesus shows here. Mark continues to show this amazing picture and portrait of Jesus in all of His authority and ability in feeding thousands of people. And that is what we normally think about but, also, recognize this unparalleled compassion that would move Him to see need and to meet that need; may we, too, have that compassion and pray for it every day.