

Why is Jesus Worth following?**The Feeding of the 5000***Mark 6:30-44***Pastor Tom****July 7, 2019**

I pray that it is well with your soul. Maybe it was when we first came to Christ. And sometimes our souls are well. Maybe when we first came to Christ; maybe when we experienced a great blessing in our lives, or we were on a spiritual high. Maybe last year at this time, maybe your soul is well right now. But there's other times when our souls are not well. Maybe something happened this last year that troubled your soul, and you're trying to find a new normal after this major disruption in your life. Maybe somethings going on in your life right now that's troubling you, and you're disturbed, and you're not sure how this is going to turn out. Maybe you're just going through the motions as a Christian, and though your soul is not troubled, when it comes to the things of God, your soul is not well.

Our souls can become unwell when we let circumstances cloud our vision of the past, present and future. Or when we continually worry about something that's coming up. And though we appreciate all that God has done for us in the past, we may slide into that thinking, "What have you done for me lately, God?" Or, as we look at our difficult circumstances we may wonder, "What is God doing? When is He going to show up? When is He going to bring some sort of relief? Sometimes we may wonder if it's even worth it, to keep following God, and we wait for Him to prove Himself to us before we make our decision. If we have had thoughts like these, or we see these kind of expressions coming out of our souls, we are not the first to think like this. Back in the Old Testament, God had rescued the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Then He brought them through the Red Sea and delivered them from the Egyptian army. Then He miraculously provided water in the desert when they had none. But they still weren't happy. They still complained because they didn't have the same kinds of foods they had in Egypt. What have you done for us lately God? So they talked about turning back from following God and returning to Egypt. This was a very unhealthy place for them to be. What did they think would happen if they went back to the Egypt? Would the Egyptians welcome them with open arms? No it would be a return to slavery!

So what must we do when we hear our souls asking questions like "what have you done for me lately God" or "where are you in my situation?" What do we need to remember? Well today's text from the Gospel of Mark will give us more reasons why Jesus is worth following, even when we're in a wilderness; even when we've had our world turned

upside down; even if we're just going through the motions; even when we might admit that when it comes to our souls "It is not all well."

My prayer for today is that God will speak to you through His Word; wherever your soul is at. I pray He will assure and encourage you of the supreme value of following and trusting Jesus no matter where our souls are at today.

Mark 6:30-44 (ESV) (Page 710)

³⁰The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹And 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. ³²And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. ³³Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴When 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. ³⁵And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. ³⁶Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." ³⁷But 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?" ³⁸And 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."³⁹Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. ⁴¹And 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. ⁴²And they all ate and were satisfied. ⁴³And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

This text follows a section in chapter 6:7-13 where Jesus sent out the 12 disciples to engage in ministry. Jesus sent them out 2 by 2 with authority over unclean spirits. So if you look back to Mark 6:12-13, you see what happened. "So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them." So this has been an incredible time of ministry for these disciples. In verse 30, they return to Jesus to tell him "all they had done and taught." This must have been an exciting time for them all to hear one another's stories and to celebrate what had been accomplished in the Lord's name.

But in verse 31, Jesus responds to the disciples. He commands them to "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest awhile." Jesus perceives that though the disciples have experienced a great ministry time, they need rest. Their current circumstances won't allow it because Mark tells us "many were coming and going and they had no leisure even to eat." So there was so much demand for Jesus' ministry and the disciple's attention to it, that they would not have time to look after the basic physical need of feeding their bodies. Therefore, Jesus wants them to go to a desolate place.

We see the word translated “desolate” in verse 32. Some of your translations might say remote, uninhabited, quiet or solitary. It needed to be away from the crowds so the disciples could actually get some rest. The translation “desolate” gives the idea that it was kind of a barren place – maybe even desert like. But later on we find out that the people sat down on green grass. So it seems the most important facts about this place is that it’s away from the towns and villages.

So Jesus and the disciples set out to the place by boat. But verse 33 tells us that Jesus and the disciples will not succeed in their quest for relief from the crowds. Somehow the crowds sense or discover where they’re going. In fact verse 33 says “Many saw them going and recognized them.” Maybe word was passed down the shoreline that this was happening. So at the end of verse 33 we see many people running on foot from all the towns. They arrive at this place even before Jesus and the disciples. The boat approaches the shore and Jesus gets out.

Instead of seeing an empty field or plain, he sees a great crowd of people. But Jesus does not let this get to Him. Verse 34 tells us “He had compassion on them.” The word compassion here means “to be moved to the inward parts.” Jesus suddenly feels a deep sense of pity for the crowd. But why? Mark tells us they were like sheep without a shepherd. This moves Jesus to compassion.

Perhaps the fact that they had shown such abandon in getting there pointed to their desperate need. We will soon discover that they didn’t plan out a trip and stock up on provisions. They didn’t bring along sleeping materials. They ran to where He was. They desperately sought a shepherd. One commentator describes the plight of these people like this. “They had questions but received no answers. They were in distress but had been given no relief. They suffered anguish of conscience but had received no deliverance. They cried tears but had no consolation. They had sinned but received no forgiveness.”

So Jesus responds with compassion. When I think of someone offering a compassionate response I would imagine them showing empathy, offering practical help like food, shelter and water or maybe offering a listening ear to hear the stories. But look how Jesus responds at the end of verse 34. “And he began to teach them many things.” So His compassion leads to teaching. He offered answers to their questions; relief for their distress; deliverance for their anguished consciences; consolation for their tears and forgiveness for their sins.

So in these first verses we see another reason why Jesus is worth following and a reason to turn to Christ when our souls are not well. **He compassionately attends to the needs of His Sheep. Mark 6:30-34.** He does this twice in this short passage. First, he discerns that the disciples need rest and renewal. So he calls them away to a desolate place. He looks after them like a shepherd who realizes that his sheep are tired and now need to rest. But then he shows compassion to this crowd. He sees their need as shepherd-less sheep. They have run after Him for spiritual food. So he teaches them which addresses their soul needs.

Now think about how this reality about Jesus can impact you and me. Jesus compassionately attends to the needs of His sheep. When is the last time that you just rested in the reality that Jesus is Your Shepherd? I find great comfort in reflecting on the fact that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, looks out for me. I experience relief in my soul when I remember I have a Shepherd who pays attention to my needs.

And Jesus will not just shepherd us when it's convenient for Him. For not only does He pay attention to us. He protects us. And He attended to our greatest need – our lostness, our separation from God, our slavery to sin – by giving up His life for us. Listen to Jesus' Words from John 10:11-16.

John 10:11-18 (ESV)

¹¹I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

So Jesus, the good shepherd, attends to His sheep's needs. Ultimately, He gave up His life for His sheep. Now He continues to shepherd and guide us if only we will listen.

Our problem is that we regularly wander from the shepherd. We may not like having someone over us so we think that we can do better going our own way, or we think we're doing pretty well on our own. But eventually we will discover that we are in trouble or lost or in danger and our soul is not well. Then hopefully, we will run back to our shepherd like these people ran to meet Jesus.

There's a tremendous verse in First Peter that talks about coming to the Shepherd. Peter instructs servants about how their attitude as they work must change now that they've come to Christ. After giving them instruction, he points them to Jesus attitude as He went to the cross. 1 Peter 2, starting in verse 21. "For to this you have been called, because

Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.” But now here comes the verse about the Shepherd – 1 Peter 2:25 – “For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” Do you hear that friends? Jesus is our Shepherd. Jesus oversees our souls. So when our souls are troubled, that is when we need to draw nearer to Jesus; not pull away.

If you’re here today and your world has been turned upside down this year, you must turn to Jesus every day and ask for His shepherding help. Maybe you need to do that several times a day. As you try to figure out life in your new normal, ask for His guidance. Though it is a disorienting time, it can also be sweet fellowship as you connect with Him constantly throughout your day. If you’re in a situation where you face something tough right now and you can’t see what God is doing, continue to stay close to your shepherd. Sometimes, sheep had to follow shepherds in the dark or through the rain while he or she led them to a safer place. So we need to keep following even though we’re not clear yet what he’s doing. If you’ve wandered from your shepherd, it’s time to return to the Shepherd and Overseer of your soul. If you hardly read your Bible, it’s time to get back into that so you can hear from Him. It’s time to let God reshape your thinking and perspective to His. Jesus is worth following because He is the ultimate shepherd and overseer of our souls.

But the account does not end with Jesus meeting the spiritual needs of the crowd with his teaching. In Mark 6:35,36, the disciples come to speak to Jesus maybe during a break in His teaching. Mark tells us “it grew late.” So it’s probably later in the day. The sun may be setting. Remember these people have run to this place with no plans or provisions. So the disciples say “This is a desolate place. The hour is now late. Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” This is the third time in this passage that the place has been referred to as desolate or remote. The point seems to be that there is no easy access to a market or town. There’s no food nearby.

But Jesus surprises the disciples with His response. “You give them something to eat.” The disciples have had time throughout this day to not do ministry. Jesus has done all the teaching. But now He instructs them to do a ministry that is humanly impossible. But they’ve just come back from casting out demons and healing people which they’d never

done before meeting Jesus. You'd think they might have some idea that Jesus could provide them with something miraculous to address the needs of this crowd.

Yet they respond with a question. Was it serious or sarcastic? "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" A denarii was a day's wage for a laborer. So they're talking about 200 days of wages. Given that they worked 6 days a week, that's about 8 months of wages. But Jesus will not miraculously provide money. He directs them to go find what is available.

They come back with a mere 5 loaves and 2 fish from this great crowd. It again shows how the crowd had forgotten everything else in their running to meet Jesus at this place. Then Jesus commands the people to sit down in verse 39. Here we see the green grass. That indicates it was probably spring when this happened. But they sit down in groups like they are preparing to receive a meal.

Then Jesus prays a blessing and breaks the bread and the fish. He begins to give out loaves and fish to the disciples. They just keep on coming for more and more. They gather up armfuls of loaves and fish. They pass them out to one group. Then run back for more and pass them out to the next. But they don't have to ration the bread and fish. According to verse 42, "They all ate and were satisfied." No one remained hungry. No one wished they could have one more loaf or another piece of fish. They were all full. So the disciples begin picking up leftover pieces. They fill 12 baskets full of pieces. This may have been their lunch for the next few days. Mark concludes the account by informing us that the men alone accounted for 5000 people. If they were accompanied by wives and children, there was even a much larger crowd.

This whole incident gives us another reason why Jesus is worth following. Not only does Jesus compassionately attend to the needs of His sheep. **Jesus miraculously provides for the needs of His sheep. Mark 6:35-44.** Jesus not only met the spiritual needs of the crowd. He met their physical needs while they are in a desolate or remote place. In doing this, Jesus does something that brings to mind another event that God did in the Old Testament. Remember, back at the beginning of the message when we talked about the complaining Israelites in the wilderness? So there they are in a remote or desolate place. There is a great number of them. They have no food provisions left. God miraculously provided manna or bread from them in heaven. Through their delivery, Jesus is like Moses, the deliverer of Israel, but greater than Moses. Moses prayed and depended on God to provide the bread. Jesus provided the bread Himself. Moses led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Jesus is leading people from all nations out of slavery to their sin. The Israelites turned

to Moses and trusted Him to bring them God's Word and provision. We now need to turn to the greater Moses to bring us God's Word and Provision. Yet Moses stumbled and ultimately disqualified Himself from entering the Promised Land. But Jesus, the new Moses, did not stumble or fail along the way. He will faithfully lead and guide us to the very end of our lives and into eternity.

So when we see Jesus like this we need to revise our expectations and approach to Jesus. We can fall into that, "What have you done lately for me Jesus?" For we can treat Jesus as our personal assistant. We expect Him to do whatever we want to make our lives easier. But Jesus, in feeding the 5000, demonstrates a sovereignty and authority far greater than Moses ever had. Jesus does what God did in the wilderness. So he is not our personal assistant. He is the all-powerful and resurrected Lord. Instead we must approach Him humbly. **Since Jesus compassionately and miraculously provides for the needs of His sheep, we must admit our spiritual poverty to receive His provisions.**

We must not come demanding that Jesus do this or that or else. We don't come commanding. We come humbly bringing what we have and asking Him to take it and do what He will. The disciples had 5 loaves and 2 fish to feed 5000 men and their families. You and I might have little to no resources when it comes to dealing with the situations we face in our lives today. Yet Jesus responds to those who recognize their lack of resources and call out in faith. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." In admitting our spiritual poverty and coming humbly, we are ready to receive what Jesus has for us. It will be what we need not necessarily what we want.

If you have never come to Jesus, the Good Shepherd in faith before, there is room for more in God's family. Jesus desires to be your shepherd and the overseer of your soul. But you must first come humbly and admit your spiritual poverty. You must repent or turn away from that life of wandering apart from Jesus' care. Instead you must entrust yourself and life to Him. If you would like to do that today you can talk with me after or a Christian that you know to take that step.

If you are already a Christian, will you now bring to our Good Shepherd that situation where you need the shepherding guidance? Or just acknowledge that you need His guidance today on how to live in light of your new situation. Or that your soul is not well and needs His care Or confess that you have been wandering and that you will today come back to Him.