

Mark Chapter 6 Continued

Verses 31-32: Jesus recognizes their need for a break.

Mark 6:31 "And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."

“Ye yourselves”: Jesus’ invitation for a retreat into the desert was restricted to the 12. He knew they needed rest and privacy after their tiring ministry expedition and the continuing press of the people.

We see from this, that even ministers of God should find a time and go aside and rest. These disciples had been out ministering from village to village and this terrible thing with John the Baptist had just happened as well. This was supposed to be a time of rest and relaxation.

Mark 6:32 "And they departed into a desert place by ship privately."

“They departed ... by ship privately”: The disciples obeyed Jesus’ proposal, departing from His headquarters in Capernaum using the same boat (as in 5:2).

Mark 6:33 "And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him."

“Ran afoot”: The direction (toward the northeast shore of the lake), and speed of the boat, along with the immediate lack of other available boats, caused the crowd to follow by land.

“Came together unto him”: Contained only in Mark’s account, this does not necessarily mean everyone arrived before the boat, because the land distance was probably 8 miles, twice as far as the 4 miles the boat had to travel.

Rather, those young and eager in the crowd were able to outrun both the rest and the boat (probably because it encountered no wind or a contrary wind), and actually arrive at the shore before the boat (Matt. 14:13-14, Luke 9:11; John 6:3, 5).

We see here, that the fame of Jesus had spread so widely that even in this hiding place the multitude had found Him and gathered to Him.

Mark 6:34 "And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things."

“Moved with compassion” (see note on Matt. 9:36).

“Sheep not having a shepherd”: An Old Testament picture (Num. 27:17; 1 King 22:17; 2 Chron. 18:16; Ezek. 34:5), used to describe the people as helpless and starving, lacking in spiritual guidance and protection, and exposed to the perils of sin and spiritual destruction.

Even though Jesus was headed to the desert to rest and recuperate with the disciples, His heart was still moved by these people with such great needs. The scribes really could not have been called shepherds, because the good and welfare of the sheep was not their purpose.

Jesus was never too busy to help them, and He is never too busy to help us in our needs. Jesus is the great Shepherd. His concern is for His sheep.

This next part of Mark right here, is so important that this same miracle is told in all four of the gospels. This really made an indelible picture in the minds of those who saw it. Now we will get into the story of the five loaves of bread and the two fishes.

Mark 6:35-36 "And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time [is] far passed:" "Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat."

Jesus had probably set the scene for this whole thing so that He could show this great miracle to the people and to the disciples. He knew it was a desert place. He had ministered late; so there would be no chance to go for food, and the people would be very hungry as well.

The disciples had not yet learned that no situation was impossible to Jesus. The disciples could only think of the physical, so they suggested that Jesus send them away into the country round about to buy food.

Mark 6:37 "He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?"

“Two hundred pennyworth”: (Denarii). A single denarius (see note on Matt. 22:19), was equivalent to a day’s pay for the day laborer (Matt. 20:2). “Two hundred” would therefore equal 7 month’s wages and be quite beyond the disciples’ (or any average person’s), means.

The Roman denarius, a silver coin used in Palestine. A “pennyworth” amounted to the wage for one day of a rural worker’s labor.

Jesus, just matter of factly said, feed them. This "two hundred penny" was actually the wages of a man for 200 days, so it truly was a large amount of money. This crowd was so large, even this large amount might not even be enough.

Mark 6:38 "He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes."

“Loaves”: Literally “bread-cakes” or “rolls.”

Jesus already knew how much there was, but asked them to make a point. Their answer was five loaves. The number five, as we have said before, means "grace". This people would be fed by the grace of God.

Mark 6:39 "And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass."

“Green grass”: This detail indicates it was the spring rainy season, before the hot summer would have turned the grass dry and brown.

Mark 6:40 "And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties."

“In ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties”: A symmetrical seating arrangement, possibly 50 semi-circles of 100 people each, with the semi-circles one behind the other in ranks. Such an arrangement was familiar to the Jews during their festivals, and it made food distribution more convenient.

In the Matthew account, it seems that just the men were numbered. A rank here is possibly, "one hundred".

Mark 6:41 "And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave [them] to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all."

“Looked up to heaven”: A typical prayer posture for Jesus (7:34; Luke 24:35; John 11:41; 17:1). Heaven was universally regarded as the Father’s dwelling place (Matt. 6:9).

Judaism forbade taking food without thanking God.

Mark 6:42 "And they did all eat, and were filled."

“All eat and were filled”: The hunger of everyone in the crowd was completely satisfied (John 6:11).

Jesus prayed over this food as He breaks it and distributed it. This reminds me so much of the widow who fed Elijah during the famine.

1 Kings 17:9-16 tells the story. Verse 14 pretty well tells how the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil kept replenishing itself, even though there was just enough meal and oil for one meal when they started going to the cupboard the first time. Each time they went back; God had placed enough for another meal, and this went on until the famine was over.

1 Kings 17:14 "For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day [that] the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth."

You see, in both instances, God multiplied the food until all the need was met.

Mark 6:43 "And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes."

“Twelve baskets full”: The “baskets,” apparently the same ones used to bring the food, were small wicker containers like the ones the Jews used to carry food.

Mark 6:44 "And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men."

Five thousand would be an immense crowd, towns like Capernaum and Bethsaida numbering perhaps only two to three thousand inhabitants. But they were all filled, and there was an excess of food remaining, and the number does not include women and children.

This means that there were actually over 10,000 people who ate counting the women and children. Whether the twelve baskets had something to do with the twelve disciples, I know not. We see from the amount of leftovers that all of these people were full with extra left over.

We might also realize from this, that Jesus is the Bread of Life, and whosoever will can partake. There is always enough for more.

Verses 45-52: In the wake of the miraculous feeding, Jesus performs yet other wonders, namely walking on the lake and stilling a gale.

Mark 6:45 "And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people."

“The ship” (see note on verse 32).

“Bethsaida”: A town on the west side of the Sea of Galilee and south of Capernaum (Matt. 11:21).

We see from this, that the Lord had sent them out on the sea so that He could show them another type of miracle. They could learn more of His nature, and they could learn to have stronger faith in Him.

Mark 6:46 "And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray."

“A mountain”: The entire east side of the Sea of Galilee is mountainous with steep slopes leading up to a plateau. Upon one of the slopes was a good place to pray, away from the crowd (John 6:15).

We see from this, the necessity to get alone and talk to God. God wants us to have time alone with Him when there is no one there, but Him and you. In the hurry up life we live in, most people will just not take time to pray alone. This prayer is the most effective, because God knows you are praying just for His benefit (no one else hears).

If the Lord Jesus needed to pray, think how badly we need to pray.

Mark 6:47 "And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land."

“Midst of the sea”: Normally in traveling across the northern end of the lake they would have been within one or two miles of shore. But on that occasion, the wind had carried the boat several miles south, closer to the center of the lake (Matt. 14:24).

The scene was set for the great miracle. Jesus would show them and us (who are on the great sea of life struggling to make it), that our strength is not in ourselves, but in Him. They were paddling their hearts out trying to make it to the other side. We are struggling with the trials (sea), of this life trying to somehow make it to the other side (heaven).

Mark 6:48 "And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them."

The “fourth watch” was from 3 to 6 a.m.

“Walking upon the sea”: The verb’s tense depicts a steady progress, unhindered by the waves.

“Would have passed by them”: The more literal rendering “desired to come alongside of,” indicates Jesus’ intention here. He wanted to test the disciples’ faith, so He deliberately changed course and came parallel to the boat to see if they would recognize Him and His supernatural powers and invite Him aboard.

We see a very stressful situation; they were rowing as hard as they could, but the west wind was blowing so hard that they were making no headway at all. This fourth watch is the darkest of the night, just before the dawn. This too, has great significance; because in our darkest hour, the Lord will come to our rescue.

Mark 6:49 "But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:"

“Spirit” here means an apparition or a ghost. A ghost or an apparition or imaginary creature. The Greek term gives us the English “phantom.” Because of the impossibility of such an act and their fatigue and fear in the stormy conditions, the 12, even though each one saw Him, did not at first believe the figure was actually Jesus.

They cried out for His help. This is exactly when the Lord will help us as well. He will help us when we realize that we need Him and cannot do it by ourselves. We know that they had never seen a person walking on the water before. It frightened them.

Mark 6:50 "For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid."

“Be of good cheer”: This command; always linked in the gospels to a situation of fear and apprehension (10:49; Matt. 9:2, 22; 14:27; Luke 8:48; John 16:33; Acts 23:11), urged the disciples to have a continuing attitude of courage.

“It is I”: Literally “I AM”. This statement clearly identified the figure as the Lord Jesus, not some phantom. It also echoed the Old Testament self-revelation of God (Exodus 3:14).

“Troubled” speaks of abject terror. Spirits of the night were thought to portend disaster.

He immediately told them not to fear. We studied in Matthew how at this same occasion, Peter walked on the water. He tells us, "Fear not, I am with thee even unto the end of the earth".

Mark 6:51 "And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered."

See the disciples' earlier response (4:41).

Just as in this ship tossed by the sea, we will find when we are tossed by the sea of life and we ask Jesus to come aboard, it brings peace. A troubled life needs Jesus to step in and bring the peace which passes understanding.

Mark 6:52 "For they considered not [the miracle] of the loaves: for their heart was hardened."

“They considered not ... the loaves”: An explanation of the disciples' overwhelming astonishment at what had just happened. Because they misunderstood the real significance of that afternoon's miracle, they could not grasp Jesus' supernatural character as displayed in His power over the lake.

“Their heart was hardened” (8:17). The disciples' minds were impenetrable, so that they could not perceive what Christ was saying (4:11-12). This phrase conveys or alludes to rebellion, not just ignorance (see note on 3:5).

The disciples' terror and confusion were rooted in not perceiving the true significance of Jesus' words and deeds. They were unable to grasp that He was the divine Son of God, the Lord incarnate.

It is amazing to me, that these disciples so quickly had forgotten about the miracle of the feeding of the 5000. We today in our church, forget so fast the miracles; and we tend to say, "Jesus, what have you done for me in the last five minutes?"

Verses 53-56: This scene summarizes Jesus' wondrous and compassionate activity.

Mark 6:53 "And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore."

They had wanted to land at Bethsaida (verse 45), but the wind blew them off course.

Gennesaret means a "fertile garden". This was on the shore of the Sea of Galilee (see note on Matt. 14:34).

Mark 6:54 "And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him,"

By this time, Jesus had gained fame throughout the region. When Jesus got off the boat, the people already knew Him.

Mark 6:55 "And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was."

It seems that His fame had already spread throughout this region. And now that He was here, people ran quickly and brought everyone who was sick or crippled to Him. They believed that even if they could touch His garment, they would be healed; and that was just what happened.

Mark 6:56 "And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole."

Open spaces, usually just inside city walls or near city centers where people congregated for various business and social purposes. Here the term might indicate its original meaning of any place where people generally assembled. The people brought the sick to such locations because Jesus was more likely to pass by.

“Border of his garment” (see note on 5:28).

Their faith was activated as they touched His garment, and He healed everyone who believed strong enough to reach out to Him. Their faith touched Him, and He healed them. All we must do is reach out to Jesus and believe, and He will help us too.

Mark Chapter 6 Continued Questions

1. In verse 31, what can we learn about ministers of God?
2. When Jesus went to this desert place, what did the people do?
3. When Jesus saw the multitude, how did He feel toward them?
4. What did He see them as?

5. Why were the scribes not called shepherds?
6. Who is the great Shepherd?
7. What two things did the disciples tell Jesus was the condition of the people before the miracle of the bread and fishes?
8. How much money did the disciples have altogether?
9. How many days work was this amount?
10. How much food did they find among the people?
11. The number five is symbolic of what?
12. Why was the green grass mentioned?
13. How were the people grouped?
14. What did Jesus do before He distributed the food?
15. Who in 1 Kings, saw the food miraculously multiplied?
16. How many men were fed?
17. How much food was left over?
18. Where did Jesus send the disciples after the miracle feed?
19. Why had Jesus sent them away?
20. Where did Jesus go and why?
21. Why is a prayer, when you are alone with God, so effective?
22. What does this ship in the midst of the sea symbolize in our lives?
23. When is the fourth watch of the night?
24. When they saw Jesus walking on the water, what did they think?
25. When they were frightened, what two things did Jesus tell them?
26. When Jesus got into the ship, what happened?
27. What had the disciples forgotten?

28. What does Gennesaret mean?

29. What happened when Jesus and the disciples got to the shore?

30. Who did Jesus heal?