

The Shepherd, His Students and Some Scattered Sheep

Sunday July 22, 2012 - Proper 11 Pent 8

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Mark 6:30-44 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.

Intro: Perhaps some of you saw the article in the South County Times (holding up paper) about a medical mission trip to Honduras. Marilyn Price (an RN from Grantwood Village)

experienced just how needy the people of rural Honduras were when she gave away a few extra safety pins in her visit to a small village there. Suddenly there was a crowd. “We were surrounded by people asking for a safety pin” she said, “it was their one and only chance to have one.” Dr. Abbe Sudvarg of Des Peres commented “we saw a lot of children who were 4 or 5 yrs old that only weighed 20 lbs. that’s the average wt. of a 1 yr. old in a Western country. Almost none of the adults weighed over 100 lbs.” (July 20-26th edition pg. 8a)

What moves people to take the time, effort, and finances to go help people they don’t even know? Compassion! That’s a key word in our text this morning.

splagcni, zomai is the Greek word for it. (Matt Harrison’s favorite word – because it sounds like what it is) It means to be viscerally moved – feeling s/o else’s pain or problem in your guts. Compassion is what Jesus felt for the crowds that day by the Sea of Galilee. Compassion He also had for His disciples whom Mark calls Apostles here because they’ve just returned from being sent out by Jesus on a local mission trip. It had been both exciting and exhausting. They were telling Jesus all about it. Their preaching of “repent and be forgiven”; their ministry of casting out demons and healing the sick was so successful that even now that they returned they were besieged with people in need coming and going.

They had no time to call their own. No time to visit; n/t for reflection; n/t for prayer; n/t

even to eat. Jesus as their shepherd had compassion on His students (disciples). He said to them, **“Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.”** Who says Jesus doesn’t understand our rat race, “work-a-holic” society and the need to get away. Jesus, out of compassion planned a retreat for some R & R for His disciples and Himself. This, we would expect. What we don’t expect is when they, by boat, get to that desolate retreat spot for rest & relaxation and are met with the same mob of people who followed them on foot, that Jesus would have compassion on them – as sheep w/o a shepherd.

Lutheran Hr. speaker Ken Klaus writes: “Imagine the scene. Jesus & disc’s land at the beach and are greeted by a great crowd. Later that day the Lord will miraculously feed about 5,000 men. Add to that a fair amt of women & children. The crowd could easily have reached 10,000. 10,000 people with eager, expectant faces. . . .expecting . . . well, they didn’t know exactly what. . . and Jesus, tired Jesus, mourning Jesus (John the B), worn out Jesus, had compassion on every one of those 10,000. He doesn’t say come back another day. He doesn’t hide or run away from them. He doesn’t explain . . . how badly He needs a holiday. . . .He has compassion on them because they were like sheep w/o a shepherd.” (Aug. 13, 1999 CPR Vol. 10, Part 3, pg.32)

You’d expect a shepherd on vacation to say – “these are not my sheep. What do I care if they have a shepherd! Let ‘em fend for themselves. That would be the perspective of those shepherds Jeremiah is prophesying against in our O.T. for today. But our Lord, Jesus, reveals H/S as a very different shepherd who see’s abandoned sheep and cares for them as His own. There’s a nice connection also to the latter part of our OT reading where YHWH says,

❖ “I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. . . .**I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.** (Jer. 23: 3-5)

❖ **How does Jesus’ compassion express itself?** “He began to teach them many things.” “He guides them in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” (right out of the 23rd Ps.) It’s no accident that it’s the Ps of the day today. Give’s you a whole new perspective on Bible Study, doesn’t it.

While **Jesus has compassion** on them, His **disciples are not exactly on board** with this. (seems they were **still looking for a break** after the Bible Study & they **want to send** the people **away** to buy s/t to eat for themselves. We see **mirrored** in **their thinking** again that of the sinful shepherds of Jeremiah “You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them.” **They want** to remain **uninvolved**, but **Jesus** has a **plan to engage** them in the **shepherding** process – **“You give them s/t to eat.”** When they balk at the cost and seeming impossibility Jesus takes what they have lifts it to the Father, blesses it, breaks it, & distributes it through the disciples. He turns the event into a catered banquet with the disciples as waiters. There’s banqueting language in the Greek text – they’re reclining as if at tables and the disciples are “setting food before the people” in groupings of 50 & 100 - **Psalm 23:5 (ESV) “You prepare a table before me”** **And** on the new green grass in the desert. + **Psalm 23:2 (ESV) He makes me lie down in green pastures. (vs. 39)**

- ❖ **it is also in fulfillment of Is 35:7 “in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. – the desert will bloom when Messiah comes.**
- ❖ **All of this imagery harkens back to YHWH in desert w His people 12 tribes camping around the tabernacle.** He provided, manna, quail, water from a rock.
- ❖ We know that Jesus is God Himself Shepherding His people. As prophesied in Ezekiel 34:11-15 "thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. [12] As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. [13] And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. [14] I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. [15] I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God.

To paraphrase Ken Klaus in his application: “Don’t think of God’s compassion as s/t once upon a time, long ago. Jesus not only felt all the pain and problems of those 10,000 in the wilderness. He has the same compassion for you! Your situation, your pain and your trial was on His heart and mind when He came assuming your sin and suffering and taking it to

the cross. Jesus showed compassion when He called you by name and made you one of His sheep, a member of His household thru the washing of Holy Baptism. He comes to meet us today in our deserted place (in fallen and sinful world). He Preaches & teaches many things thru His Word and then from meager bread and wine creates a feast of salvation for the forgiveness of our sins here and now that is but a foretaste of the feast to come in the resurrection to the new creation.

On this Lord's Day, what burdens you. I can't see your situation in detail, but Jesus does. He knows the hidden hurts, the wounds you keep secret from everyone. He knows and has compassion on you. As your Good Shepherd with divine power and might He wishes to heal those hurts. They are . . . you are important to Him. Don't think they are too large for Him to conquer in His time and way – He who has dealt w death & won eternal life for sinful humanity can deal w your problems as well. Don't think you problems are too small for Him to consider. He who knows the flight of each sparrow can deal with the details of your life. Large or small, Jesus has your situation in His heart, mind, and guts. Large or small, Jesus has compassion for you.

And we are, like the disciples are called to respond with compassion on others as we have opportunity. We all know people who are like sheep without a shepherd. You as a believer in Christ, who has received His compassion, are just the one who can introduce them to the Good Shepherd. Certainly praying for others is a place to begin – like the victims' families in Aurora, CO or the 120 international students who lost everything in the local apt complex fire on Lindell last week. As you leave today ½ sheet yellow handout at ushers table and in narthex gives detailed info on how you can have compassion on these students. You could bring these items specified here and I will deliver them to one of the distribution points. You may have your own project of compassion with a neighbor or friend, or one of our homebound members. Take a Portals of Prayer to give away in the process, that you might point the recipient to the love of Christ, the Savior, who provides all our needs of body and soul. In the name of Jesus, Amen.