

Jesus the Shepherd and His Unlikely Rest

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Date: 19 July 2026

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at Christchurcheastbay.org. Good morning, Christchurch. My name is Suzy Shin, and I'm part of the Monthly Oakland Family Group.

Today's scripture reading is from the Gospel of Mark, chapter 6, verses 30 to 43, as printed in your liturgy. 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.

[1:10] 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. This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Christ.

[2:15] Good morning. Christ Church, it's good to be with you. My name is Jesse Robinson. I am not a pastor on staff here. I'm a friend of Christ Church, friend of Jonathan's and Andrew's.

I'm a pastor of a church called Indelible Grace. We're in Hayward, North Hayward. But Andrew is a dear friend of mine. And since he's taking a sabbatical, I'm trying to give him a favor.

With the hope that he'll give me a favor, too. That's how the kingdom works. It's a tit for tat. You might know this, but we're halfway past the middle of summer, right?

If you're anything like me, summer is always a tease. I have all these hopes of rest, a slower pace, vacations, catching my breath.

But summer never delivers. It never delivers. Actually, many things that we look for, look to for rest, don't deliver.

[3:23] Are you going on vacation or holiday this summer? You know the saying, right? That I need a vacation from my vacation, right? You get back and you're more weary in a couple of days to recover.

Recover. Or just the daily places where we go for rest, right? A brief break on your phone. To check Instagram. Or some TikTok.

Does it really give us rest? Maybe after you collapse on the couch from putting the kids down, you turn your brain off and just put on a show or a movie.

Does it give us rest? So in honor of summer and of the fact that Christ is going on a retreat very soon, I want us to think about rest.

Now, while I do it through a text, we might not think about as about rest. The feeding of the 5,000 in Mark 6. As we look at this, I want us to look at three things.

[4:21] We're going to first look at the offering of rest, the subversion of rest, and the shepherd of rest. The offering of rest, subversion, and the shepherd.

So first, the offering of rest. It's largely overlooked in this story that the feeding of the 5,000 begins with rest.

The disciples have been commissioned by Jesus. They've been on an extended missions trip since they come back. And they're reporting to Jesus everything they said and did.

And they've done a lot. They've been on the move nonstop. Meeting people. Confronting demons. Healing the sick. Teaching. They are spreading the word about the kingdom of God.

And Jesus' response when they get back? He doesn't say, Oh, you didn't do more? What does he say? Look at verse 31. And he said to them, Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.

[5:24] Let's grab an Airbnb down by Yosemite. Right? Or the Santa Cruz Mountains. And let's rest. You're depleted. You're tired.

You've got no gas in the tank. Let's get away just you and me. And let's go somewhere with no cell service. And rest. Jesus offers rest.

And that's on brand. That's who God is. Maybe you've been a Christian your whole life. Or maybe you're not. And you're just curious about this church thing.

But it's easy to miss. Christians and non-Christians alike miss how much the Bible is actually about rest. In fact, the Bible opens with rest.

God creates everything in six days by just speaking. But then this all-powerful God, all-creating God, he does something strange on the seventh day.

[6:20] It says, And he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. The rabbis, the Jewish rabbis in their commentary on this, say this is not about God needing rest.

God's setting an example for us. Setting a pattern that we are created for rest. Rest is not a bug. It's a feature of our humanity. And it's like that our culture easily loses sight of. Journalist Oliver Berkman has a book, 4,000 Weeks.

Your pastor, Andrew, referred me to it. And it's a great book. He points out how much anxiety, modern anxiety comes from thinking that we can do everything.

How anxious we get. This optimization culture that we live in. I'm going to optimize so I can get the most out of my work, my vacation. He says, this is a farce.

[7:23] It's a farce. We can't do everything. That's the first step of wisdom, is to learn our limitations. Berkman is not a Christian, but he's talking about the Christian concept of creatureliness.

That we are made by an infinite God, but we are finite. We are made to rest. And God cares about that. He built it into the very fabric of our creation.

This was so important, it even made it into the Ten Commandments. Right? This doesn't get much publicity. Usually it's don't murder or don't steal. But right in the middle, right in the middle, no less morally important, superior, is this command to rest.

God says, honor the Sabbath. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath. Your boss, your divine boss, wants you to take a break every week.

week. Is this who you thought God was? He actually cares about your rest. Jesus is offering his disciples rest. In fact, this Sabbath command comes on the heels of the Hebrews being freed from slavery in Egypt.

[8:44] In his little book, The Sabbath as Resistance, scholar Walter Brueggemann, he connects a culture's economy to its religion. The God of Israel is different than the Egyptian gods, the Egyptians.

Pharaoh is a slave driver because his gods are slave drivers. He makes the Hebrews produce more and more bricks for less and less.

When you read the passage, the story in Exodus, the Egyptians actually accuse the Hebrews. They say, why have you not done more bricks?

You are lazy. You are lazy. The God of Israel, meanwhile, has a different value system. Rest is baked in.

God tells us there's something more valuable, more essential, more human than productivity. In fact, modern labor laws were profoundly shaped by Judeo-Christian values about work and Sabbath.

[9:50] the work week, the 40-hour work week, was originally championed by Christian reformers. But in a secular economy, if there is no God to regulate either work or recreation, then what happens?

In the absence of God, something must rule our work or rest. And when there is no God, what is it? Profit. Greed. If profit is ultimate, there can be no true rest.

The more you work, the more money you'll make. But how much different is Yahweh, the God of Israel? God is not a slave driver.

He's not an angry middle manager trying to squeeze out more productivity from you. He's not Pharaoh. He's a God who frees the slaves and gives rest.

Last year, I was on a pastor's retreat in the Rocky Mountains. I'm in a cohort of younger pastors and we're led by this gray-haired pastor named Scott. And we went on a group hike.

[10:57] Now, I have a moderate condition of cerebral palsy, a disability. I like to say that my balance is impaired, but my sense of humor is improved by this condition.

And so, we're going on this hike together and we're hiking up some moderate inclines. We're 8,000 feet. So we're breathing, I'm breathing kind of heavy.

This is very different to the Bay Area. And there were some difficult parts and Scott, our leader, over and over kept checking with me. Hey, are you okay?

Hey, do we need to stop and rest? His sensitivity was attuned to my work, my output. my exhaustion. Prince, that is who Jesus is to us.

He knows you better than you. He sees you. He sees your exhaustion even when you deny it. That is who Jesus is. Jesus takes a look at his disciples and says, you need a break.

[11:58] And they don't even ask for it. He just gives it. He initiates. He offers it. So here's a question for you this morning. What would Jesus say to you this morning? How are you doing?

Are you depleted? Are you tired? Maybe you're physically tired. Maybe it's emotional. You're carrying a lot of disappointment and hurt.

Or maybe it's spiritual. Listen, maybe you're living a life where you are serving a slave-driving God. Maybe you are the slave-driving God.

You are Pharaoh constantly pushing yourself or others. And you're exhausted. Or maybe you're the disciples and you're simply coming off a season of faithful ministry and you're like, hey, Jesus, I'm tired.

Whatever it is, God sees your weariness and he offers rest. And he said to them, come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while. That's our first point, the offering of rest.

[12:58] Second point, the subversion of rest. Now, emotionally, Jesus is a bit like summer here. He's a bit of a tease. He offers a retreat and on the way to the Airbnb, an instant crowd appears.

Look at verse 33. Now, when he saw them going and recognized them and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. And when he went ashore, he saw a great crowd. So instead of a retreat, we have a needy crowd. And so Jesus starts to teach them. That's what Jesus does. He's a teacher. And then verse 35, it says, it grew late.

And the disciples are like, hey, Jesus, this sermon is fantastic. But the call of the pillow is starting to be stronger than the Holy Spirit.

Right? Can we go get some rest? And they see an opportunity. The crowd's getting hungry. In verse 36, they tell Jesus, send the crowd away to go buy themselves food.

[14:04] They take control. They tell Jesus what to do. Now, that never goes well in the Gospels when you tell Jesus what to do. Look at verse 37.

But he answered them, you give them something to eat. Wait. Wait, what? Jesus, you offered us rest.

And now you want us to cater 5,000 people in the wilderness? You know when you're exhausted and life springs something on you?

Back when our kids were little, we had this getaway plan. My wife was grinding in her job. I was trying to work on a PhD while also working part-time. We had two little ones.

We were exhausted. And we had this weekend on the calendar. We're going to go to a lake house. We're going to go to a lake house. We're so excited. There's beautiful waterside views. We're just going to sit in the window and just watch the lake.

[15:06] That's all we wanted. We're still ready. And the morning we're about to leave, my wife wakes up with a fever. A fever.

I still feel the disappointment and the rage. Like, I'm mad at God, but she's, I was a very, very terrible husband in this moment.

I'm like, this is your, you're sick and you're ruining everything. Now I'm solo parenting this weekend with two babies. Right?

This is the opposite of that. This is what the disciples are feeling. Like, Jesus, we want rest. We're tired. And now, you want us to feed these people?

What is Jesus doing? Why is he moving the finish line on them? Right? They're on fumes. They're running a marathon. They see the finish line. All of a sudden, Jesus is like, nope.

[16:02] Why? You see, we think rest comes from changing our circumstances. Don't we? Go on the vacation. Get away from the demands.

Oftentimes, one of the primary ways that our culture envisions rest is really escapism. It's escapism. But you know that doesn't always work.

Right? On vacation, you are still the same person. Your kid is still going to tantrum. Or maybe your spouse is going to tantrum. Or maybe you're going to tantrum.

The scenery changes, but your soul doesn't. Jesus isn't being cruel here. He's exposing the poverty of our rest. And he subverts their notions of rest in two ways.

First, there's self-protection. The disciples' instinct are like, hey, let's send them away. Let's send them away. Then we'll get rest. And we do that too, right?

[17:06] We think that rest comes from self-protection. I've got to block off my time. I have to have better boundaries. But Jesus calls them to compassion.

To feel for others' rest. There's a contrast there. When Jesus sees the crowd, it says he saw them and had compassion because they were sheep without a shepherd.

Actually, the Sabbath command in the Old Testament, in the law, the two commandments, it's the first law, the commandment, to mention others. All the others to this point mention God alone.

It's your vertical. The Sabbath rest, he says, God says, remember the Sabbath day you shouldn't work and neither should anyone in your charge.

Not your spouse or your child or your employee or your servant or guest. In other words, compassion was built into the Sabbath law. Jesus got this.

[18:07] This is why, when did Jesus heal? He healed people on the Sabbath. It angered the Pharisees, but he was restoring the meaning of the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is about serving other people's rest. It's giving yourself so that someone else can rest. You see, the world says to us that rest comes from self-care.

Camper yourself, indulge yourself, treat yourself, in the words of Donna in Parks and Rec. There's a whole lot less millennials in this room than there is in my church.

Parks and Rec. It's a great show. Great philosophical show there. Jesus says, look to give rest. Look to give rest. That's the backwards kingdom.

Oftentimes, the way to get rest is to get rest. And we know this, right? Have you ever sacrificed this Saturday morning to help a friend move? Or maybe you stayed up late to fix a meal for someone else?

[19:13] It's tiring, but in a restful way. Like, you've done something good and beautiful. But the second thing he does, so he confronts their, subverts their self-protection.

He also subverts their self-sufficiency. Jesus says, you feed them. And they're immediately like, we can't cater a party for thousands. We're in the middle of nowhere.

And it would cost a fortune. A denarii is a day's wage. So 200 denarii, that's like a, that's almost an annual salary. We're going to, we're going to drop that.

On this like, impulsive feeding these people? They don't have that. But Jesus knows that. He knows he's asked the impossible.

And what if that's the point? He wants them to realize that they don't have what it takes. He wants them to come to the end of themselves.

[20:15] Listen, the self is our primary issue when it comes to rest. The self is exhausting. It's not your spouse or your kids or your boss or your parents, but you.

You are your most worst enemy when it comes to rest. And the stronger your self is, your ego, your ambition, your reputation, the stronger your hold on life, the more you think that life is about you, the more exhausted you will be.

Why? Because you're constantly trying to get what you want. The control. And you'll be constantly anxious that you won't get what you want.

It's all up to you. You see, self-protection and self-sufficiency are really the same root. One says, I'll protect myself, and the other I'll provide for myself.

And they're both exhausting. Both assume that I know it's best and I'll get my rest. And here's the deeper truth about rest and religion.

[21:21] Rest reveals your true religion. Where you rest, what you do to get rest, it actually says something about what you believe life is about, about who your God is, about where you get renovation, or restoration.

Maybe you rest in your bank account. And you think, once I get this amount of money, then I can rest. And I can retire easy. Or maybe you look to your family.

If I can just, if everyone, if all the members of my family can just be okay, then I can rest. Listen, that's a recipe for never resting. They will never be all okay, moms.

All you anxious moms out there, they will never be all okay. If it's not money, you will never have enough to rest. You will never have enough.

All these are forms of self-sufficiency. But the Bible says we're made to rest in God. That's what we are made for. The African theologian, St. Augustine, put it this way.

[22:29] You probably know this. He says, you've made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you. Any other thing that we rest in, our accomplishments, or our reputation, or our pleasure, it will ultimately leave us restless.

Because we were made to rest in God alone. So Jesus subverts these false notions of rest because he loves us. Which brings us to the surprise in our last point, the shepherd of rest.

So Jesus gives them an impossible task and they bring it back to him. Verse 37. Should we go and buy this? 200 denarii worth of bread? And Jesus says, no.

Go see what we have on hand. And they come back with five loaves and two fish. This is a very pitiful haul. There are 5,000 men.

We don't know how many others and that's all the food they have. This is a massive failure. Okay? Appearance throughout. They brought no snacks.

[23:42] Then what does Jesus do? Look at verse 39. Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups in the green grass. And they sit down. Verse 41.

Jesus takes 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.

Jesus breaks off piece after piece after piece. And the disciples pass the meal out to the people.

Can you see this in your mind?

Imagine a beautiful field of soft green grass. It's like Berkeley and March. Clumps of people seated hungry and hopeful. All eyes on Jesus.

Mark usually doesn't fill us in on the condition of the grass. Why does he say green grass? It's one of several Easter eggs within this passage.

[24:42] The line in verse 36. They were like sheep without a shepherd. shepherd. Jesus has a great herd of people on green grass. And they're beside the water, still water.

And this shepherd is preparing a table for his people. This whole passage evokes Psalm 23, the most famous of psalms.

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green and green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul. He prepares a table before me. My cup overflows. Psalm 23 is the premier psalm of rest, of peace, of provision.

You see, when you have the Lord as your shepherd, there is rest and peace and ample provision.

Mark is telling us who Jesus is here.

[25:51] He is the shepherd of Psalm 23. He's the God who fed Israel with manna. Remember that in the wilderness? How God miraculously rains down bread?

And then here in the wilderness, Jesus, not raining down bread, but he is multiplying abundantly, miraculously. Why? Because he's the good shepherd.

He is the Lord. He is God. Mark is making a claim about Jesus' identity. Jesus is making a claim about his identity.

The shepherd has finally come. He is not merely performing a miracle. He is telling us who he is. And he is God.

He is the manna giver. And the bread he gives is the bread of life. What about rest?

[26:49] You know, the disciples never get the retreat Jesus promised. Or did they? Jesus says, come away and rest.

And then comes the crowd, the teaching, the hungry people, an impossible task, the serving food, and the cleanup. But it says, and they all ate and were satisfied.

They all ate and were satisfied. That includes the disciples. And that word satisfied, the Greek means filled, gorged. It's that pleasant feeling when you haven't eaten all day and you come home and you have a tasty meal.

One that you get seconds on and you just sit back and you're like, yes, life is good. They're satisfied. Jesus always fulfills his promise, although it is rarely in the way that we think it's going to be.

Rest did not come from a retreat. It came from him. This rest that he was offering is fulfilled in him. He gives them himself. He is the shepherd who alone can give his sheep rest.

[28:00] He is the manna giver who gives the bread of life. It satisfies not only our stomach but our souls. rest is a person.

The miracle here is not that Jesus gives exhausted people a day off. The miracle is that Jesus gives exhausted people himself. Himself.

He is God come in the flesh. That quote about Augustine that our souls were meant to rest in God. The way we rest in God is through Jesus. It's only in Jesus.

He is how we enter into the rest of God. And this rest, if you think about it, it's freely given. It's utterly free. What did the crowds contribute to this meal?

Nothing. What did the disciples contribute? Their skepticism. Jesus satisfies for free.

[28:59] He does all the work. And actually verse 41 is the foreshadowing of another work. Jesus in 41, he takes the bread, he blesses it, he breaks it, and then gives it.

And that's the same order as Mark 14 at the Last Supper. Jesus takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it. But then he says, this is my body.

See, at the end of Mark, we find out the bread is really Jesus' own life given for us on the cross. My body broken for you, my body given for you.

And on the cross, Jesus did all the work of salvation, that you might rest. And what did Jesus cry on the cross? He said, it is finished.

My work is finished. Your work is finished. finished. His work of salvation is a finished work, and you don't have to add anything to it.

[30:07] But Jesus did not stay dead. In order for him to be the good shepherd, he had to walk through the valley of the shadow of death and conquer it. Conquer it. And so he is a living shepherd.

He's a living shepherd. And he did all this that you might have rest. That you may rest from all your strivings to justify yourself.

Rest from all the guilt before God and before others. Rest from all the shame before man. Rest from all the condemnation that you feel, the self-hatred.

Rest from all the fear and the anxiety. You can have rest. All you must do is become his sheep, is to accept the shepherd as Jesus.

Jesus. And he says, I will do everything for you. It's all you have to do. This is why Jesus invites us in Matthew 11, 28. He says, come to me.

[31:07] Come to me. All who labor and are heavy laden. All of you who are cynical and exhausted. All of you who are broken and bruised.

Come to me and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls.

I want to end asking the question, what does it look like to rest in Jesus? And I want to give you three quick portraits. First, come to the shepherd.

Maybe you're not a Christian this morning. What does it look like to rest in Jesus? Let me ask this question. Who is your shepherd? Do you have one?

Who is looking out for you? Are you on your own? You either have God as your shepherd or you have no one. Is that you?

[32 : 15] Jesus wants to be your shepherd this morning. He offers you true rest. And for you resting in Jesus is simply coming to him. All you must do is simply ask him for rest.

And you must know it's dangerous. It's a surrender of control. You will no longer define your own rest. But the gains are tremendous. Jesus is a generous shepherd. He provides far beyond our imagination.

Look at how many baskets they took up. There were 12 full baskets. That's symbolic. They say, hey, Jesus is extravagant. You will have leftovers when you come to the shepherd.

And you will know true satisfaction and true filling deep in your soul. Stop trying to provide your own salvation. Or maybe secondly, maybe you are a Christian.

And the lesson here is to rest for the shepherd. A lot of us are learning to daily rest in Jesus. It is a daily discipline. In the wilderness, God gave manna every day.

[33 : 18] And Jesus taught us to pray. Give us this day our daily bread. Which means that you need him every day. You need him every day.

So many of us live life like the disciples. All we see is the hard facts. Hey, we need 200 denarii to make this happen. But resting in Jesus is trusting him as the provider for everything.

Everything you need. Berkeley people, one of the primary problems for us is that we don't realize how much we need Jesus. We think because of our skill and our bank accounts, we can provide for ourselves.

But it's an illusion. The way that you are meant to live is actually to live daily, asking Jesus for his provision. No matter how big your bank account, no matter how skilled you are, intelligent, this is what life is.

And the rest in Jesus is actually prayer. That's how we rest in Jesus. It's praying, seeking him, pouring out your life to him.

[34 : 27] So many of us, our prayer life is so deficient. We're like whispering up little SOS prayers here and there. That's not how life resting is.

Resting in Jesus is these prolonged periods of Jesus, I need you. I need you. It is pouring out your heart, your weariness, your lack, your thanksgiving, your praise, and saying, Jesus, I need you today.

I need you for my kids. I need you for my work. That is rest. And when you rise from prayer, you will have been with the shepherd and you will feel rest.

He is rest. And finally, we need to rethink our rest. Remember how Jesus subverts our instincts about rest? We think that rest comes from getting away, going on vacation.

Why? Because we listen to the credit card companies. It tells us all about this amazing rest, right? Go to a resort and you will feel rested. You might not. In fact, being in vacation mode is a very spiritually dangerous mode to be in.

[35 : 36] You know why? Because we tend to indulge, to splurge, we overeat. There's a sin called gluttony that no one talks about. We over drink.

Our desires are inflamed. And we lack the routines that keep our desires and indulgences in check. Some of us become little tyrants, bossing everyone around.

We've got to keep on scheduled. This is how vacation happens. Others become hedonists, right? Others become slothful and lazy. But at the heart of it, the reason it's dangerous, vacations are not bad.

We need them. But at the heart of it, it becomes my kingdom come, my will be done. That's not where rest comes from. Rest comes from surrender.

Your kingdom come, your will be done. It comes from Jesus. So stop asking vacations to provide what only the shepherd can give you.

[36 : 36] Jesus offers you rest this morning. He wants to give you rest. He offers it freely. So friends, sit in his green grass.

Look at his hands of provision. He says, I will feed you. I will satisfy you. I will give you rest. Would you pray with me?

Oh, Father in heaven, we are so silly about what we think will satisfy us. Oh, Father, we thank you that when you look at us, you don't condemn us, you see us through the eyes of compassion. Oh, Father, and your Sabbath is actually work to give us rest. Oh, Father, I pray that we would avail ourselves of that rest, even this morning.

Oh, Jesus, you are a provider beyond our imagination. Oh, Father, you love us so much, so much that you died for us. Oh, Father, we come to you.

[37 : 41] Please feed us with Jesus. And I do pray for Christ's church as they go away to a desolate place, that they would meet Jesus there, that he would be where they get rest, that they would enjoy the love and the beauty of your covenant grace to us.

Oh, Lord, we love you. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.