

Mark 6:30–56

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Preacher: Ben Panner

[0 : 00] Mark chapter 6 verses 30-56. The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught.

! Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.! He 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 200 denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?

And he said to them, How many loaves do you have?

[1 : 20] 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.

They took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men. Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.

And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea. And he was alone on the land.

[2 : 23] And he saw that they were making headway painfully. For the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night, he came to them, walking on the sea.

He meant to pass by them. But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out. For they all saw him and were terrified.

But immediately he spoke to them and said, Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid. And he got into the boat with them. And the wind ceased.

And they were utterly astounded. For they did not understand about the loaves. But their hearts were hardened. When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore.

And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him. And ran about the whole region. And began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was.

[3 : 21] Wherever he came in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces. And implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment.

And as many as touched it were made well. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Amen. Thank you, Paul.

As we come to the preaching of God's word, let me offer a word of prayer for us. Father in heaven, we come before you today. And we're so thankful that you give us the gift of your word. We come here today weary, even in weakness.

And that you are powerful, Lord, to meet us in these moments. To strengthen us. To help us. So God, I ask that you give us ears to hear. All that you want to speak to us in your word.

Give us eyes to see. All that you want us to see in your word. And give us hearts this morning that are ready to receive what you've given us in Mark chapter 6.

[4 : 25] May you receive all the glory and honor. And help us today. And help me as I preach. In Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen. Well, when I was on staff at my previous church, I often had the opportunity to watch some of my friends go through a process called an ordination process.

And they went through this process. And the church was using that to test and affirm these men for their call to ministry. And part of this process is they would develop a theological statement and write it in a paper.

And give it to those who were going to examine them. And they would ask them questions on this paper on their beliefs. And I remember one question during one of these examinations for one of my friends.

It's in my memory. And as they were going through his theological paper about his beliefs, one respected voice entered into the conversation. And in essence asked this about the man's paper. Do you think your Jesus is too small? And then he went on to describe to the candidate that he had a very strong statement of beliefs.

[5 : 33] But he needed to give the church a big picture, a big vision of Jesus. Do you think your Jesus is too small?

I think that's an interesting question for us to consider today. And I think that's what Mark 6 is wanting us to reflect on at the end of chapter 6. How big is your vision of Jesus?

Well, what happens when we have a small vision of Jesus? Maybe a tunnel vision that is not seeing the bigger picture. A small understanding of who Jesus is and what he came to do.

Well, someone with a small vision of Jesus will easily dismiss him or write him off. Or maybe when times of difficulty start to come, someone with a small vision of Jesus can easily lose sight of him and all that he wants to offer us.

Or worse, when we have a small vision of Jesus, it makes it easy to neglect him and then turn to other things to meet the very needs that we have. When we have a small vision of Jesus, in some ways we're thinking that he actually is not big enough to meet the needs that we have in life.

[6 : 48] But the Bible and our text here today in Mark chapter 6, it's aimed at expanding our vision of Jesus. Expanding our understanding of him for our good as a church.

So as you heard it read today, we encounter three miracle scenes. There's first a miracle in the wilderness. This deserted place, this desolate place, the word for that is also the word for wilderness.

So we have a miracle in the wilderness. And that's followed by a miracle on the water as Jesus and the disciples are at sea. And then if you look at verse 55, we have the whole region coming out to see Jesus and meet him.

We have miracles for the whole region. Three miracle scenes. What is Mark doing with these scenes for us today? Well, these three scenes are intended to reveal something about Jesus for us, but also to reveal something to us about the disciples' heart.

You see, in the Gospels, we are learning about Jesus himself, but we're also learning from the disciples. As they're walking with Jesus and seeing Jesus and even ministering on behalf of Jesus, we want to see Jesus, but we also want to see how the disciples are responding and engaging and following because that's instructive for us.

[8 : 13] So we want to think through what can we learn based on their responses to Jesus as he's displayed. We get insight, at least up to this point in their journey of following Jesus, how big their vision of Jesus was.

So the question is, how big is our vision of Jesus? And are our hearts ready to receive what Mark 6 presents for us?

So let's start in the wilderness, a desolate place. You see, the apostles, the twelve, they were sent out by Jesus with authority to preach and to cast out demons and to heal the sick.

And they came back with stories of the great work that God had accomplished in and through them. It was a successful mission, but they were tired. And so Jesus wants to bring them away from all the noise and to come to a desolate place for rest.

Like I said, that word desolate place is another word for wilderness. And as we think about how God has worked with his people in the Old Testament in the wilderness, often God shows up pretty big in the wilderness.

[9 : 26] And that is no different in this text. But they hop on this boat intending to go into the wilderness to find some rest. But once they arrive on the shore, these crowds meet them.

And the goal was to get away from the crowds, but they couldn't do it. Their popularity was so big. People simply wanted to be in the presence of Jesus and of his apostles.

But what Mark tells us next is extremely instructive for us. Because again, remember this, Mark is expanding our vision of Jesus. I wonder if your vision of Jesus includes him as a shepherd.

In verse 34, Mark tells us that when Jesus sees these crowds, even though he was trying to get away and get some rest with his apostles, as he sees them, he has compassion on them.

Because they were like sheep without a shepherd. This big crowd needed leadership. This big crowd needed care. This big crowd needed guidance.

[10:31] They needed help. Help. And Jesus sees them. But let me tell you, Jesus really sees them. He had compassion on them.

He knew who they were and what they needed. I don't know what your experience is with Jesus. But I wonder if sometime you've concluded that Jesus is just simply uninterested in my situation. Or maybe you think he's just unavailable to help me right now. Or maybe you wonder if he's just actually not able to do anything about what I am facing. Friends, we need a bigger vision of Jesus. As a shepherd who sees us and comes to lead us. In relationships, there's deep contentment. When you know that you are seen.

When you're understood. When you're known by another. I wonder if you've ever experienced that in relationships. With your friends. Maybe with your family. Finally, Jesus looks at the crowds on that day.

[11:36] And as he had compassion on them. As he knew them as weary sheep who needed his help. So too, he looks at us. And he sees us. And he knows you. And he wants to have compassion on you.

He wants to lead you. In a way that only he can. He is interested. He is available. He is able. So what does this shepherd, Jesus, do?

Well, he provides for the weary sheep. He feeds them. But first with his teaching. Did you catch that? The crowds gathered. The sheep without a shepherd.

And what does he do first off? As he teaches them. He gives them the spiritual food that they need to strengthen them for their life. What a good shepherd Jesus is. But as he's teaching, time is going on.

And the disciples, who are likely still tired from their journeys and their ministry. They approach Jesus. And they let Jesus know that the time and the day is starting to shut down.

[12:36] And the people have no food. They want Jesus to send them away. But again, Jesus is a compassionate shepherd. Even for the disciples. Jesus challenges the disciples to feed them.

But their only response in that moment is they don't have enough money to do it. In their minds, it's going to take 200 denarii. That's eight months wages.

All they can think about is the physical and financial realities. But as we see more in the next scene a little bit later, the disciples just are not quite getting things.

They're not seeing the big picture yet. Didn't they just come back from a mission in which God had acted powerfully through them, casting out demons and healing the sick and calling people to repentance?

And didn't Jesus even in that moment send them out to say, go out with nothing because you can just depend on God to provide in that moment? And he did. Isn't it easy for us as well?

[13:46] Even though maybe we've seen Jesus show up in the past with provision and even after seasons of depending on him, that in times of question or difficulty, our vision of his work can start to get a little too small.

But just like the disciples, we need a bigger vision of Jesus. And so Jesus steps forward as the good shepherd. And he provides for his sheep.

How does he do that? He takes the five loaves, the two fish, that's all they had. It's not enough even for the disciples themselves. He commands the crowds to gather in groups on the green grass.

He blesses the food. He breaks the loaves. And he feeds the masses. Five thousand men with likely hundreds, maybe even thousands more of women and children.

All of them sitting down, provided for, all fed, all satisfied, and a bunch left over. Twelve baskets full. Stunning miracle.

[14:48] Absolutely stunning miracle. It defies all of our rational conventions. It's beyond our experiences today. And it's something no mere human can accomplish.

Thousands are fed in the wilderness and are satisfied and filled. We're starting to get a bigger picture of Jesus. But this miraculous story, it's recalling for us as the reader a pattern from the Bible and the Old Testament.

You see, way back in Exodus 16, it describes a weary people of God, of Israel. And after being rescued from God, they are brought into a place called the wilderness. And they're hungry. But God meets them in that moment. And Israel received abundant provision called manna as God was caring for their daily needs. God provided for his people.

And then think of Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. You prepare a table before me.

[15:55] God promised in the Old Testament that a shepherd would come himself to provide for his people. Or think about Ezekiel 34. This depicts God's people as helpless sheep under the care of ungodly shepherds.

And here's what God says to the people in promising to them. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths. Behold, I will search for my sheep.

I will feed them on the mountains of Israel. I will feed them with good pastures. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep. You see, God promised that he was going to show up and provide for his weary, helpless people.

In the Old Testament, it's God who was going to show up. So what's happening in Mark chapter 6? The people are under unrighteous leadership called the Pharisees.

And Jesus sees the crowds in need of a shepherd. And he steps forward and he feeds the masses on the green pastures. The promises of God providing and caring for his people are fulfilled in Jesus as he steps onto the scene.

[17:10] Right here. How big is your vision of Jesus? He's not just a shepherd. He's the divine shepherd who provides for the sheep. And he satisfies abundantly.

His provision is available to us even today. Friends, what did you bring with you to church? Church, what lack, what experiences in your heart and in your life?

I want you to know Jesus looks at you. And he sees your need. And he looks at you with compassion. And he wants to shepherd your heart and your life.

And he set up the church, has he not? So that we can actually experience shepherding through the continual teaching that God wants to provide and feed us spiritually. And he wants to provide for your needs and satisfy your desires of your heart.

He doesn't always do it in the timing or in the ways that we think. But he does meet our needs as we depend on him for daily bread. Christ's church, he sees you.

[18:19] He knows you. And he wants to lead you and help you to lie down in green pastures. How big is your vision of Jesus? Well, Mark wants to keep expanding that vision.

From a miracle in the wilderness, it moves to a miracle on the water. After satisfying the hunger of the crowds, he sends them away.

And he tells the disciples to get into a boat and go to the other side as he stays behind to pray. What was he praying for? I have no idea. But I wonder if maybe he's praying for the disciples as he's about to encounter them on the water.

If you're going down in the second scene, you can see that the disciples are going through the water in the night. And they are absolutely struggling against the wind. It's hard to get across the lake.

Mark says that they are making headway painfully. The image here is that the winds are almost torturing them. That's the image. This is a group of people being tortured as they're trying to get across the lake and absolutely struggling in their situation.

[19:33] A severe struggle in the middle of the night. Can you imagine the pain? And the weariness? And the tiredness? Struggling.

Struggling. But guess what? Jesus sees them. And he decides to come to them. He doesn't get a taxi boat. He doesn't have a speed boat.

He doesn't even have a pontoon. That night he just decides to walk on water. We need a bigger vision of Jesus. He's not only the divine shepherd with compassion.

He's the divine son of God with control. Job 9 says that God alone stretches out the heavens and tramples the waves of the sea.

Jesus is doing what only God can do. See, the Bible teaches us that Jesus is the one who created all things.

[20 : 35] That by him, through him, and for him, all things are created. And in him he holds all things together. Jesus is not a mere man.

But he is God in the flesh. He's the son of God in control of all creation. And the one who spoke creation into existence.

And the one who spoke a word to calm the seas in Mark chapter 4. And the one who made the waters in the very beginning is the one who walks upon them in this scene.

The son of God in control comes to meet the disciples who are struggling. We need a bigger vision of Jesus.

He meant to pass by them. What does that mean? Well, it seems to refer to, potentially, just like God in the Old Testament, passed by Moses so that Moses could see the glory of God and find assurance.

[21 : 44] It seems as though Jesus is passing by that the disciples might see the glory and the authority of God who has come in Jesus Christ. That they might experience a level of assurance and confidence in the midst of their struggle.

But they see Jesus walking on water and they mistake him for a ghost. And they're full of fear. And yet Jesus, in full control, he comes to them to bring a steady confidence and a reassurance to their struggle.

Take heart, he says. It is I. Do not be afraid. Church, does your heart's vision of Jesus include him as the son of God in full control?

As the one who has powers to settle our fears in the midst of our struggles. Just as he has authority to calm the raging seas in a moment.

That same Jesus is the one that we serve and meets us in our struggle and in our fear. As you experience the strain and struggle of life, I wonder if you will relinquish your tight hold on whatever you are experiencing and relinquish that to experience the peace of the divine son of God who's in control of all things, that he might bring peace and calm and steadiness into your situation.

[23 : 15] Well, the most striking thing I think of this passage, though, is at the end of this scene, verses 51 and 52. Look there with me. After he makes this statement, Take heart, it is I.

Do not be afraid. He got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astonished. For they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

Jesus, the divine son of God, with control over all creation, calms the waters and he steps into the boat. And the disciples are just not quite seeing it.

They're just not quite understanding it. One commentator put it this way as he reflects on this verse. Hard hearts make for blind eyes. Their hardness centers on their failure to embrace the man Jesus as more than a mere man.

The disciples, they were with Jesus. And they saw Jesus. And they encountered the miracles of Jesus. But their heart was not quite ready to see the grand, glorious identity that he's been revealing for them.

[24 : 30] The divine shepherd. The divine son of God. To boil it down, their vision of Jesus was simply too small. Their vision at this point was not him as the shepherd.

Not him as the son of God. But thank God the story is not done for us in the Gospel of Mark. Their hardness of heart kept them from seeing Jesus for who he truly is.

So we have to ask ourselves this question. Are we learning not only about Jesus, but are we also learning from the disciples and their hardness of heart?

Because the last time we had this phrase in the Gospel of Mark, hard hearts, was actually from Mark chapter 3. And this is when Jesus faced the opposition from proud, arrogant religious leaders whose hard hearts led them to want to destroy Jesus.

Now, the disciples are not expressing at all the same level of opposition as the Pharisees. But the truth is that someone can only be on one of two trajectories.

[25 : 37] And it's either one that is softened by this revelation of Jesus, wanting to receive him, or one that is hardened by the revelation of Jesus, actually wanting to resist him.

Which trajectory are we on this morning? The amazing miracles are revealing something grand and beautiful and big about Jesus. Jesus, is your heart today ready to embrace it?

The divine shepherd, he's ready to provide for your needs. Compassionately looking at your situation and wanting to give you abundant satisfaction.

The divine son of God in full control over all things can calm the winds in a moment as the one can meet us in our struggle and our difficulty and actually bring confidence and calm.

How big is your heart's vision of Jesus today? Hard hearts have a small vision. But if the first two miracles are helping point us to the disciples and their hard hearts that we should learn from, by way of contrast, this last miracle scene actually gives us a group to learn from by way of example.

[26 : 50] We'll look at this briefly in this third scene, but it helps to round out our reflections. We have miracles now in the whole region. From the wilderness to the waters to the whole region.

You see Jesus entered into the boat and now they arrive on shore and the whole region is hearing about it. And Jesus encounters people from all over who bring the sick to him.

And while the disciples in the boat on the water thought Jesus was a ghost and did not quite understand him, the crowds recognize Jesus immediately as he hits the shore.

And what do they do? They implore Jesus that they might even touch the fringe of his garments and be healed. As we hear this language, it actually brings us back to a story that we heard a couple weeks ago in Mark chapter 5.

We find a woman who is suffering from a medical condition with no relief and no healing. And here's what this woman thinks. If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.

[27 : 56] And so she did. And immediately what happened? She was healed. And Jesus looks at this woman and says, Daughter, your faith has made you well.

Go in peace and be healed of your disease. Back in our text in chapter 6, what do we have? We have those who are sick and suffering. And they're imploring Jesus for even the opportunity to touch the fringe of his garments.

And as many touched it, were made well. I think the implication for us of our text based on the context of chapter 5, and in contrast to the disciples just before in their hard heart and unbelief, it's that these people ran to Jesus in faith.

They implored Jesus in faith. And they touched his garments in faith. And they were healed in faith. We need a bigger vision of Jesus.

Jesus. He's the divine Savior with power to heal our suffering. He's not obligated or forced to heal our sufferings in this life, but he's free to do so.

[29 : 05] And he's powerful enough to do so. And while this crowd didn't know everything there was to know about Jesus, what they did know, their hearts were softened to him and reached out to him in faith for him to meet them in their suffering.

How big is your vision of Jesus? The divine shepherd who provides. The divine Son of God who controls. The divine Savior who heals.

We talked about how there was this Old Testament pattern of God showing up and Jesus finds that fulfillment in the wilderness. Well, so too, these miracles in some ways act as another foreshadowing of what's going to happen.

Three miracles here are actually pointing us to an even greater miracle that Jesus would accomplish. As the divine one who came to meet us in our need, in our struggle, in our situation, that he actually came and entered in, in the flesh, that he might meet our ultimate need of our sin against the holy God.

That the divine shepherd would willingly lay down his life for the sheep. That the divine Son of God in control would actually go down this path of death and then even rising again in full control to forgive our sins.

[30 : 20] And not only heal us of our sufferings here, but ultimately heal us of our sin against him. There's a greater miracle yet to come. And all of this is pointing us to this grand vision of who Jesus is.

How big is your vision of Jesus? How big? And how is our heart going to respond? Is it hardened, maybe, to him as a divine shepherd?

Or this week, will you implore him? Say, Jesus, help me. Is your heart hardened to the sovereign control of Jesus?

Or this week, will you implore him in your struggle? Say, Jesus, help me. Is your heart hardened to the loving care of Jesus, the divine Savior?

Or will you implore him this week and say, Jesus, heal me. Help me. Meet me. Forgive me of my sins.

[31 : 25] We need a bigger vision of Jesus. You may feel like the disciples today, though. And your heart may be feeling hard. You're not quite sure if you want to receive him by faith.

Well, know that the story of Jesus and the disciples is not finished yet. Though they are slow to understand in this moment, they're continuing to receive a picture of Jesus.

And Jesus is patiently walking with them. And I think Jesus looks at you and sees you as you have your questions and wants to patiently walk with you as we journey through the gospel of Mark. Jesus has divine power to provide for your needs and mine. You know, sometimes we sing this song with our kids.

My God is so big, so strong, and so mighty. There's nothing my God cannot do. Well, God has revealed himself in his son, Jesus Christ.

[32 : 31] My Jesus is so big, so strong, and so mighty. There is nothing my Jesus cannot do. Praise God for a big picture of Jesus from Mark chapter 6.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we come before you. I pray that you would give us eyes to see your son, Jesus, in all of his glory and greatness, as the shepherd that we need, as the son of God in control for us, as the savior who heals us, not only of our physical ailments, but ultimately of our sin against you.

God, help us to see and have hearts to respond. Soften our hearts, Lord. Forgive us for any hardness or calloused heart that's still there, Lord. I pray that you would work that out.

But help us to see, expand our view of him. And help us to sing even now in response to who you are and how you revealed yourself to us in Christ.

And we pray this in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen. What church?