

# Mark 6:30-52

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Date: 06 November 2022

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well do sit down and keep that Bible passage open, Mark chapter 6. In 2016 I had the privilege of going to Israel. Israel was amazing.

Oh the Bible stories came to life, the names of the places on the roads. I'd been there. But also I had to learn a couple of lessons, things that weren't quite what I expected.

Things that were a little different. You see I went with an Englishman's view, sheep, shepherds, rolling green hills of Wales.

I thought of this. Don't know whether you click your fingers or whatever it is but here you go. This is what I thought as we drove on the bus through Israel.

My eyes suddenly opened to see that actually green pastures don't necessarily look like that in Israel. They look a little more like this. Again, I was expecting, you know, cute shepherds and sheepdog.

[ 1 : 10 ] That's what they have in Wales. Herding the sheep, you know. One man and his dog, that's what I'm used to seeing. What I saw was quite different. I saw this.

The shepherd just wandering, not herding them and not chasing them up from behind but actually just leading them. As they hear the shepherd's voice, they follow.

Suddenly I saw embodied a physical reality of what I'd read in scripture. And so when we get to a passage like this and we hear about Jesus looking at a crowd, we hear that he suddenly sees sheep.

I don't know whether you're like me but I respond in her that's a bit. Come on. Sheep really? Look around, we're quite intelligent.

Isn't it a bit harsh, Jesus, to say that the crowd were sheep without a shepherd? But I want to encourage us to dwell on that particularly, especially as we look at the Bible passages around as we carry on reading.

[ 2 : 25 ] Because although I might not like being compared to a sheep, I think it is really helpful for us to grasp how sheep-like we really are.

Now you see, if I was there, I would have said to Jesus, what compare me to a dolphin? I like dolphins. They're quite intelligent, aren't they? You can get them to do many tricks.

Or to be honest with you, I don't mind being like a big, strong gorilla. Gorillas, you know, you just don't want to mess with a gorilla. There's a few in my family that look a little like one of these.

And then, but maybe even a squirrel. I've seen squirrels, this is what they look like in England.

They're black over here, I've discovered. That's very strange.

But actually, they're really, really just clever. They're crafty, aren't they? But instead, we get this. So, in today's passage, Jesus has some strong words for his disciples, for his trainee disciples.

[ 3 : 34 ] So come with me into the Bible passage with sheep-like humility and grasp what Jesus is teaching us as well as those who followed.

May we have the humility to see the sheep-like dependency and need of a shepherd. Go with me back to verse 30.

Now this actually kind of attaches to the previous story. Did you spot that the apostles were sent out? They were sent out with not much to provide for them.

Jesus sent them out. And then this little section, he's just, can you see that? Chapter 6, verse 6 and 7.

Jesus sends out the 12. And this is the point at which they come back. Verse 30. We don't get much, to be honest with you. We're not told about their debriefing. We're not told much about what happened.

[ 4 : 31 ] All we get told is that the apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. How important it is to have those moments?

It's only a line in Mark's gospel. But it's really important for us. I don't know whether you've thought about it. But how often do we send out, delegate, hand on responsibility and then invite to come back and to feed back and to hear how we've done?

Today is one of those days. I love the fact that the youth choir are going to sing a little later on for us. I love the fact that the youth are taking over the evening service. How do we as a church, how do we as parents, how do we as a church family allow our younger generation to take some responsibility and then to hear how they've done?

Even us as adults need to have those opportunities as well. It's part and parcel of a healthy culture. Well, what do we hear?

How did it go? We don't actually get told. We're not told. In fact, Jesus says, I want to move to a quiet place so we can have a good time together. Did you see that?

[ 5 : 48 ] Verse 31. Seeking to withdraw. Jesus leads them to a desolate place only to see a crowd follow. His response? Come on.

I'm trying to have a one-on-one with these guys. Clear off. No, that wasn't his response, by the way. If you look at the Bible passage. No, he responds with compassion.

These are sheep without a shepherd. Now, no one we know likes being called sheep. Our culture today likes to think of itself as independent.

But actually, you only need to look at Facebook and social media to realise how sheep-like we are often. But it's nothing new. It's not a new kind of accusation.

To be honest with you, it's the picture that God gave from the very beginning. Look at this Bible passage. Ezekiel chapter 34, verse 1 and 2. God knows that his people need shepherding.

[ 6 : 56 ] And if you've read the Old Testament, you'll realise how rubbish a job. The leaders that God called to lead his people, what a rubbish job they did.

Feeding themselves, not feeding the flock. Jesus, and we know him as the good shepherd, has compassion. And we see verse 34, and he begins to teach them.

I would have loved to have heard what he then said. What do you say to sheep who need a shepherd? But what do we get? We get two, I think, what are living parables.

Living stories that embody pretty much what he was teaching them. Two stories. They're familiar to us. Let's have a little dive in and see. As this shepherd has compassion.

As he has sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings and misfortunes of the crowd that followed. What did he say? Well, he feeds them.

[ 7 : 58 ] Picture a desolate place. The crowds had assembled. They had listened. They're hungry. Jesus, instead of sending them away and sending them back, tells the disciples to feed them.

It's a challenge. The disciples, understandably, said, look, what are we supposed to do? 200 denarii. A denario was a day's wages. 200 days wages.

That's a huge amount of money to buy the food that's needed for these people. But in an amazing act of obedience, Jesus told them, just take what you've got.

Take what you've got. And he takes five loaves and two fishes and they were transformed into enough food for all the group with some left over. Again, this is a picture of what Jesus does to us. He encourages us to step out in faith, trusting in his provision and all that we have. He's not asking us to do the impossible. Because he is sending us out.

[ 8 : 58 ] Jesus has already sent them out with no supplies to teach them a lesson to depend on him. Here we get another picture. Continue to depend on me. Not just when I send you out on mini missions. Your whole life needs to be an act of dependency on me.

He will provide. And we, like sheep being led, need to obey and use the all that he has given us. Verse 42. They all ate and they were satisfied in this wonderful miracle.

And they took up 12 basketfuls of broken pieces and the fish. And those who ate the loaves were 5,000 men. And that's not even mentioning the children and the women and everybody else that would have been there.

Now, that's a story that should ring bells for you. If I put you in Israel and told you this story, what would you have thought? Well, you'd have thought, hang on, this has happened before, hasn't it? As we talk of sheep without a shepherd, we're looking back at the Old Testament and realizing that there were sheep and they had rubbish shepherds. Surely anybody of note would remind

themselves of the wilderness, the desolate place, the hunger, the need for food, and how God provides bread from heaven.

[10:18] Does that ring a bell? Do you remember that Bible story? Or it would have been very Moses-esque as we think about this story.

12 tribes, 12 apostles, 12 basketfuls. It's rich with symbolism. What does it teach us? It teaches us many things. But particularly, we see that Jesus is taking the place of God by providing for his people.

We see that Jesus is going to be a better Moses. And we're going to see that Jesus is calling us to feed on him the better bread that will satisfy for all eternity.

And that's just our first story. Jump to the second story. Immediately, in this anticipation, Mark is transforming us to the next story where we will see again sheep-like behavior and a need of God. Then immediately, Jesus sends off his disciples to cross the water. Dismissing the crowd, he goes to pray. And between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m., his disciples are struggling.

[11:26] They're struggling without him on the water. I love this little section. Jesus, seeing their struggle, verse 48, comes to them and walks on the water and walks almost past them.

Why did he mean to pass them? There are times when I trust that Jesus does these things intentionally.

It wasn't that he didn't spot them at all. It was just sometimes he needs us to struggle. Have you spotted that in life? Sometimes he needs us to wrestle with situations that we find ourselves in. For him then to be there, ready when we realize we need him. And that's what we see. Jesus meant to pass them by, but he had compassion on them as a shepherd, a good shepherd has on sheep. Verse 49, but when they saw him walking on the sea, their response was the response that we've seen time and time again in Mark. If you've looked again previously, what are the responses?

[12:30] It's that picture of fear once again. Why is it always there? Faith and fear, faith and fear. We've seen that time and time again in Mark's gospel. And what do we see here?

The disciples still haven't learnt. Fear is their response. They're terrified. But what are the words that Jesus says that comfort them?

Look at verse 50. Take heart. Take heart. Have faith. Be of great courage. It is I. Don't be afraid. It is, in a nutshell. This picture of we need not have fear because we can replace it with faith. And how do we do that?

Because it is I. I am. Jesus is here. What is it that transforms our fear to faith? It's the presence of Jesus.

[13:30] Have you found that out in life? The transformation from fear in situations and circumstances to faith? It is this Jesus.

If you look at the translation, it is I, I am. Again, it alludes back to the Old Testament. It alludes back to that time where Moses met with God and God said, I am who I am.

And the Greek ego amy is littered, particularly in John's gospel. And I don't know how significant in some ways it is here in the use of the words, but it's definitely there.

Fear and faith. And Jesus at the heart. Transforming our fear to faith. God is with us.

That's what makes the difference in our daily lives. The key is God with us. The hope of glory. So when we see in verse 51 this living parable, and he got into the boat with them.

[14:32] Christ in you, the hope of glory. And the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. It's this picture.

They still do not grasp who Jesus is. What did they miss? Or did you miss it? Jesus doesn't just come to bring bread. He is the bread.

And we're going to celebrate that a little later on. He didn't come to tell us what to do, but to be with us. And to be in us.

And so when we face situations where there's too much wind and we're fearful. Or when we face that there's too little bread. We're fearful. Jesus says, have faith.

I am. It's all about Jesus. Jesus is the bread. Jesus is God. And so have you grasped that this Jesus, this wave walker and bread provider, he's actually working in and through all those who trust Jesus Christ, even to this day.

[15:40] He is the God who provides. I'm going to finish just with this Bible passage. Turn with me. Flick to John chapter 6, 31. John chapter 6, verse 31.

And listen to this. As we hear the words from Jesus, our great shepherd. John 6, 31. John 6, 31. Jesus says this.

Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness as it is written. He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my father gives you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. They said to him, sir, give us this bread. Always, Jesus replies, you know the answer, don't you?

Jesus replies, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall not hunger. Whoever believes in me shall not thirst. And so I, let me pray as we close, that we may trust in Jesus, our great shepherd, putting more dependence on him than we put on our cell phones or anything else that we have in life, that we would see that fear dispel, that faith replace it, that Jesus is God, the one who provides and the one who accompanies us in all circumstances.

[ 17 : 28 ] Have faith, sheep. The shepherd is here. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you. We thank you for Jesus. And we thank you for this situation.

We are so prideful. We hate being called sheep. And yet how important it is that we come to you humble. How we come to you dependent.

How we come to you fearful, but replacing that fear with faith because we trust in you. And for those who do not know Jesus as their shepherd, continue to work in our hearts and those hearts who haven't accepted Jesus as their good shepherd, that they may one day make that wonderful choice of trusting in him.

We ask your blessing. And we ask this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Thank you. Thank you. THE END