

Shepherd of the Multitude

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[0 : 0 0] Back to the passage that we read in Mark chapter 6, that well-known account of the feeding of the 5,000.

I just want to spend a little time in that passage and consider it. And I must confess that it's one of these passages that is so well known to me, known to most of us, that we almost pass it by when we read it.

We see the miracle in it. Rarely we stop to consider what's happening in this account. The powerful miracle always stands in the forefront, that he fed so many people.

Christ is this supernatural power. And we mustn't forget that there is supernatural elements to the goodness that we receive.

And also, on the other hand, the supernatural side of the evil spirits that attack us and convict us.

[1 : 1 3] But in this passage, we see that wondrous working of Jesus Christ. But below the miracle, underneath the feeding of the 5,000, there's a richness to Christ that we see of his character.

And I want to look at that tonight. And as we dwell on Christ and the way he approached it and the way he provided for these people, that we ourselves would be fed in our own soul.

You can look at verse 34. 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.

It tells us there that Christ looked out over the people. As a shepherd would a flock of sheep. Sheep that were on the loose.

[2 : 3 1] And I'm sure to many of us, that is a relatable image. If we're travelling down the road, we may come across a flock of sheep that are loose on the road.

And you don't know which way they're going to go. You approach them, and they fear what is approaching them. Because it is not the shepherd that approached them.

It is not something that is known to them. And you just don't know which way they will go. And Jesus sees this group of people, this multitude as such.

Sheep without guidance. Sheep that have gathered together. And they're not really sure where to go. But they're following after this man.

And Jesus, as he looks out over them, has compassion on them. He can see in his own understanding that they are essentially lost.

[3 : 3 3] He does not leave them, though, in that condition. And by the implications of what Christ does in this passage, he becomes their shepherd.

He becomes the shepherd of the sheep that are before him. And as we look at this, it will maybe bring to mind thoughts of the shepherd from Psalm 23, which we'll sing in conclusion.

And before we sing it, I want to maybe highlight the parallels that appear from this passage. Jesus here is the shepherd of the people.

And he approaches them with compassion. But he is the shepherd that comes to the people that provides for them. He is the shepherd of compassion.

And he is the shepherd of provision when we come to this passage. So how does Jesus become the shepherd of compassion? We look at this passage here.

[4 : 40] And from the beginning, it says that 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 for a while.

For many were coming and going and they had no leisure even to eat. It tells us of the disciples that they had been away and they've returned now, expressing all that had happened to them in that day.

And there's an air of excitement in their return and reporting what had happened. The disciples were coming and going. Jesus says to them, come away.

Come away by yourselves to a desolate place now. Take rest for a while. It says that they had no leisure to eat.

There was no time. They were that busy doing good works. And you would expect them to carry on. But Jesus says, no, stop and come aside. Come aside and rest.

[5 : 50] Come aside and review. And then you'll be ready to rise again. It's what we had a couple of weeks ago in church. That's what we do when we come together here.

We take rest from our labor of our week. And we consider our own ways. We consider Jesus. We're strengthened by gathering together and giving our praise and thanks to God.

Coming aside for a while prepares us to go on. And we'll be ready to rise again. But we see that any opportunity that they have here in the passage was taken away.

People had seen them in the boat from the shore. They identified it was Jesus. And they followed. And when he reaches the shore with the intention of resting, he's met by this great multitude.

Now, this would probably be the moment where our compassion would run dry. We had been busy, tired, hungry, wanting to take rest.

[7 : 10] But we are met by people who have been following us and wanting to hear new things from us. How would we react?

Well, Jesus is our example. Jesus expresses his compassion towards them. The shepherd saw their need.

And he knew exactly how to meet the need of the people. There's obviously a need. Because the people are longing for something. They're following after.

They're wanting something from Jesus. They're longing to be fed. Not physically. But spiritually. They're longing to hear things from Jesus. And you may think, well, this is the parable about the feeding of the 5,000.

But initially, that's not the intention. Initially, it's a teaching of the 5,000. It was the initial intention of the gathering here.

[8 : 22] And so he taught them. He didn't feed them straight away. He taught them. That's what they needed. That's what they sought after. And Christ, out of his compassion, took time to teach them.

See the shepherd and the compassion that he has. It's completely selfless in his giving. In our account, he sought to rest.

He never got any until later that evening. But regardless, he does not avoid the people. He does not turn his back on the people. He does not turn a blind eye to the people.

But rather, he goes towards them. He approaches them willingly. Stepping into and up to the role of the shepherd to lead the people.

were the sheep without the shepherd he would be that shepherd figure for them and his compassion it's something it's something we can come back to again and again and i think we we gain when when we do so the description of it in the dictionary is i love it it says when you consider christ it says a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering christ knew their need and he knew exactly what they needed christ he knows more he knows more than we do of ourselves and how our own sin has left us stricken so also he knows how lost we are without him and so more so he knows what is needed to alleviate us from that condition of being lost of being trapped and stricken by sin in our lives he knows what is needed to alleviate our suffering not only does he know but he understands and is capable of meeting the need and he is willing to do what is required to alleviate it this is true of the sin that is in our lives lived out and it is true even of the sin that leads to death the sin that leads to death jesus knows our need and is willing to provide a way that will set us free from being stricken by that power of sin he sets us free by being our shepherd and so each of us have the assurance of this good shepherd to meet our need he knows us greater than we know ourselves and he knows how to meet our need christ's life in a sense it's tied up in this word compassion compassion and the word here where it expresses compassion it appears 12 times throughout the new testament and every time it is an instance directly relating to the reaction or action of jesus the compassion is in circumstances where the compassion is in circumstances when he meets people he has compassion on them or pity or whether it's within the parables where he is expressing what he is like in the good samaritan he expressed compassion compassion in the prodigal the father of the prodigal son expresses that compassion when he returns every time it's reflective of christ how he acts in the circumstance of how how he would act or react the other time is where a father pleads to christ that he would have compassion on his son for being possessed by an evil spirit so you can see this this word compassion whether it is whether it appears or compassion or pity

[13 : 24] it's compassion in a greater sense and we understand compassion it is christ's compassion it exceeds our understanding of compassion with our compassion run that runs dry his compassion abounds as we see in this passage he sought out to rest but his compassion abounded when he came ashore and he saw the need of the people it's wondrous it's wonderful it's a compassion that we heard of in prayer and there's no earthly comparison to truly what christ's compassion means but his compassion although we can speak about it we don't fully fully understand what it meant for christ to feel compassionate but we know it because he provides for us christ's compassion knowing our need sets out to alleviate us from the pains and needs of our lives we see the results of his compassion coming to us in his provision he is the shepherd of compassion but as a result of his compassion he is the shepherd who provides for us and his teaching here seems to be the initial provision that he gives to the people he's not feeding the 5 000 initially as we said he is teaching them to begin with that's what they needed that's what they sought after till such a time that we read that it grew late and the disciples themselves wanted that rest now it would seem in verse 35 they are it grew late and the disciples came to jesus and said this is a desolate place that said this is a desolate place the earth is now late send them away to go into the village he was wanting to send them away so they could rest themselves and they could be provide they could provide for themselves they wanted to sit and eat together but jesus isn't ready to send them away yet jesus has more to teach them as he does the disciples and he tells the disciples you you feed them and they will ask well how can we feed them do you want us to go and buy 200 denarii worth of bread and and give it to them to eat this cost would be near on a year's wage for one person if we understand this passage correctly it's it's the number far exceeds five thousand we're likely talking about a figure of uh 10 to 15 000 with all the women and children gathered so so you can see the the the massive amount of money for them as we would compare it in our own standards today to feed a similar number it's it's a vast need that is set before them and it's almost impossible for them to meet that need so jesus says to them in verse 38 how many loaves do you have go and see so they went and found out and said five five loaves and two fish and he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass the word there sit down it's it's not necessarily just sitting down it implies to recline or lie down in preparation for a meal or a feast

and intentional banquet if you will a meal together jesus is saying to them get them ready for a meal with what you have given me i will provide a feast for them to enjoy a banquet on the green grass the people the disciples they didn't understand how jesus told them to prepare for it but they didn't there's no slightest idea how they would feed such a number how is it be possible but jesus blessed the loaves and the fish and then asked his servants to disperse it to the people servants who trusted in his word and the people received the goodness of his provision the shepherd and in a sense we are like that multitude in the passage we are the sheep and we gather together to hear his word to be taught from scripture to be taught by the spirit speaking to us this written word as he speaks to us speaks through us today and he is glad that we may hear of it he is not to with he's not withholding this from us he wants us to seek him out to know more about him to understand his compassion and the riches that we can experience at his hand and to know ultimately the riches of christ that he provides through his sacrifice at calvary and is extended to each and every one of us to receive he is the compassionate shepherd that looks out over the multitude he loves him and we are the people who are blind to what lays ahead we don't know what is in front of us and in many ways you know we must kind of confess that we don't really know our needs we know our pains we know our worries we know the uncertainties of our lives but in a way we don't really know our needs what we what we what we need we we make our own efforts to meet that need to alleviate the the pains the worries the uncertainties of our lives to do it of our own strength but we poorly we poorly judge our needs we don't really don't really know what is the best thing to be administered to us in our need but jesus knows what is ahead and through whatever difficulties and uncertainties his compassion is such to alleviate the need to sufficiently provide for us as he extends that compassion down to us and what he gives to us you know it may not be what we want

it may not be of our own reasoning of what we need but he he knows what we need where the people that gathered here the multitude did they want more than the basics of bread and fish they probably did we like all the added things that aren't necessary in our lives we enjoy them they're not always what we need did the multitude here sit and enjoy the best meal that they had ever tasted no where they left hungry no they weren't it was what they needed was it sufficient for them yes more abundantly sufficient jesus you know he he knows our needs and he meets it it's not always the way we would want it but he knows what is best for us and maybe we can only at times it's when we look back in our lives and see the need we had and the way he met it for us us but we really see his wisdom and his hand at work his provision for us in our time of need it's maybe not what we wanted but it was exactly what we needed during that time how he has kept us how he has provided for us through the year maybe even in miraculous ways ways we could never have imagined and from these experiences as we look back we have an assured confidence that the compassion that was extended to us in these days will continue that he will not leave us nor forsake us but we are people prone to forget we often forget and we often need to come back to these passages that we we know so well and remember what jesus has done we forget what jesus has done for us in our lives and we must come back and remember how he led us through these uncertainties we read about the disciples again in the boat where they only had one loaf between them all in chapter eight and they're essentially pointing the fingers to each other and disputing with one another who's fault it was who was it that forgot to take the bread with them jesus has to remind them of what he has done in the past in their experience and what he has done for his people there's much more to this passage but they're arguing over one loaf they've seen jesus provide in miraculous ways in the past in the past in the past experience and jesus is asking them when i fed the five thousand what what did you bring and what did what did you leave with like other kind when he fed the four thousand what did we have what did you bring to me what did you leave with who did i feed was there more than enough for you did i abundantly provide for you and they were saying

well yes every time they were saying we had baskets full my basket each of them in this account each of them were fed each of them left with a basket of bread the bread that they began with was just a cup five loaves between so many would have been nothing but jesus provided abundantly for them now in our own lives we may feel like we have so little spiritually maybe we feel it empty we feel hungry maybe you feel like you've got less than you ever had maybe you feel like you've got one loaf you feel so bare you feel so unprepared you feel so unprepared for what lies ahead but he's saying remember what i've done for you remember how i've provided for you to this moment you feel like you're not a good friend stop reasoning by worldly ways turn and follow me trust in me i love you i love you and i extend my compassion to you which will not fail you i will not leave you hungry and i will sit you down at my banquet in table to enjoy a feast with me and ultimately this is the christian's hope and though we have often failed to trust in jesus we have often reasoned by our own understanding we try and figure it out ourselves he still does not abandon us it is good for us to remember what he has done for us and here he has extended his compassion to us how he died on the cross at calvary for us no greater love as any man that he would give his life for another this is the self-sacrificing good shepherd who stands in all comparison to all other shepherds in this world that lead us astray he leads us in the right way in certain ways in assured confidence that if we trust in him we will be provided for in this life and the one to come by his hand and by his power he will meet our need he will alleviate us from the power of sin even the sin that leads to death he will take us from that and even in the experience that we are all so familiar with and leave such a personal scar in our hearts he will be with us through that and we will just have a rise to look upon the good shepherd and say yes you love me and you provided for me and it is beyond my understanding his compassion to me is assuredly true it was his desire to alleviate my needs and to alleviate you from your needs

to rescue us from death and abundantly satisfy our souls satisfy the needs the multitude we're craving something Jesus satisfies us abundantly and we trust in him him when we follow him you know we don't we don't understand it how he will feed us the people didn't understand he said trust in me sit down i will feed you we must have that faith in his words that we will receive the riches of his provision it will come to us no greater riches and when we are welcomed into his presence to be at peace with him sing sam's version of sam 17 says and expresses that but i in righteousness your face will surely see and with your likeness when i wake i satisfied will be but i in righteousness your face will surely see and with your likeness when i wake i satisfied will be the one who has provided for us and will satisfy us when we are in his presence and in his likeness we are in heaven and eternal rest with him can we turn to psalm 23 together in the scottish soldier that's on p