

Mark 6:30-52 (NLT)

The Gospel of Mark Jesus, the Shepherd who feeds and fills

Introduction: Mark is written for disciples. It's a road map for discipleship to Jesus. So in a time where there is a lot of confusion about what's going on, who we are and what we are to be doing - Mark's gospel is a road map for the people of God in how to follow the way of Jesus.

Mark is also a book of mystery - Mark's Gospel is so filled with mysterious references to Jesus and his identity. Mark, though rarely quoting the OT, is a master of the Biblical text and has told the story of How God is cryptically and mysteriously present and bringing his kingdom on earth through the suffering, crucified and resurrected messiah, Jesus.

"For Mark, the character of God's presence in Jesus is a mystery that can be approached only by indirection, through riddle like allusions to the Old Testament." - Richard Hays

As we've noted Mark's Jesus speaks cryptically and mysteriously on purpose because he wants us to press into his story of Jesus so we don't miss what God is doing, so we don't miss how God is bringing his kingdom into this world and how we get to be a part of that kingdom.

1. The Feeding of the Multitudes

- a. We need to remember that this story comes right on the tails of the news concerning John the Baptist, (as recorded in Matthew 14), as well as the return from the successful mission of the Apostles to preach and cast out demons. Jesus calls the disciples to a ministry retreat, a debrief as it were because as things are they have no time to eat, fellowship and debrief because of the crowds. So they go by boat to the other side of

the Lake but the multitude take note of this and follow them on foot..

- b. The plan is to retreat, to get alone time, to re-connect, to rejuvenate and it doesn't work. It doesn't happen!
- c. Because they get out of the boat at this remote, deserted location and the whole multitude is waiting for Jesus.
- d. Have you ever had the experience where you wanted to be alone, or needed to be alone maybe for a work project, some much needed alone time. Rest from the kids, a time to read and refresh, and you run into someone who sits down uninvited and spoils your time?? Maybe you've been on a date and were so looking forward to alone time with your boyfriend/girlfriend, spouse and you run into friends, or another couple and they join your table uninvited.... NO!!!! That's what this must have been like.
- e. We've all had frustrating and disappointing moments like these, and yet the way Jesus responds to the crowd in the midst of his own grief over John, his need to connect with his team and disciples, his own desire to get away and be alone, is not annoyance and frustration but Compassion - It says, **"He saw them like sheep without a shepherd and he began to teach them many things."** He didn't just give them a parable, or a teaching, one for the road. No, he gave them his time, attention and care and taught them many things... Wow!
 - i. Now this reference of the people being like sheep without a shepherd is purposeful for two reasons - first we've just been told about King Herod and about his lack of godly leadership _ the people are without a true king. So Jesus, his compassion, his presence, his feeding, forming and filling the people is a juxtaposition to Herod but it is also a [hyperlink back to Numbers 27:17](#) - Moses is going to die soon and his concern is for God's people and their

leadership. Moses pleads with the Lord that the people of Israel would not be leaderless, that they would not be like sheep without a shepherd. And there God commands Moses to anoint -Yeshua as their new leader - he is the one to shepherd the people and lead them into the Land...

But there are in fact many little hyperlinks and proverbial bread crumbs being dropped by Mark all throughout this story.

1. Three times Mark mentions that they are going to or in a desolate place - an uninhabited area or a wilderness.
2. We're told there is a great multitude. There are 5,000 men as well as women and children who have come to listen to Jesus and receive his teaching.
3. Then there is the miraculous feeding of this multitude and Jesus dispute with his disciples on how this can be done.
 - a. The disciples tell Jesus to send the crowds away - Jesus tells the disciples to feed the crowds and they like Moses complain - where am I to get meat to feed all these people?? Would they have enough if flocks and herds were slaughtered for them or if all the fish in the sea were caught..... even if we had 8 months wages that wouldn't be enough!! (You hear the exasperation in their voices)
4. Jesus then has them seat the people in of groups of 100 and 50 (similar to how Moses organized the camp of Israel) And then of course he multiples the 5 loaves and two fish and feeds the multitude and

even after there is an abundant amount of leftovers - 12 baskets

5. The point here is that Jesus is doing Moses type stuff and the people catch onto this (as we know from John 6) All of this should cause us and the people who were present to be asking Mark's BIG QUESTION - Who is Jesus? Is he the New Moses, is he the Shepherd King, like David?
6. Yes, but he is so much more. The reference to the sheep being without a shepherd is also found in the prophets. In Ezekiel 34 God was upset with the shepherds of Israel (The Kings and leaders) for they, like Herod, fed themselves, clothed themselves and used the people for their own selfish desires and benefit. Injustice and unrighteousness were rampant (vs.2-4) Therefore God says - **"I will tend (My people) in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.... I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. I the Lord will be their**

God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the Lord have spoken.” - Ezekiel 34:14-24

7. Who shepherds God’s people and feeds them with miraculous bread in the wilderness??
8. In this Ezekiel passage it is the Lord God himself. Jesus is here symbolically declaring what Ezekiel 34:31 states - **“You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God.”**)
9. I mean even Mark’s detail that Jesus has the people recline on the green grass as he feeds them (A strange thing to note**) sounds a lot like Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want, he makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me by still waters...

2. Missing the Revelation

- a. And yet, we know that both from this Gospel and from the Gospel of John, that no one sees that Jesus is not just Yahweh’s prophet, like Moses, or Yahweh’s king like David. He is Yahweh himself shepherding his people
- b. But why, does no one see it, especially the disciples?
Next section....The apocalypse on the waters vs-45-52
(Read it)
- c. There have been quite a few attempts to make sense of this passage - Most commentators just settle that this once again shows us Jesus’ divine power of the elements of creation. Sure, but we already saw him rebuking the wind and the waves.. why the need for a second recording of similar power?
- d. Others see in this passage a reference to the Exodus - as God parted the waters and the people crossed on dry land. But that doesn’t actually work for this passage since Jesus is walking on the waters, not parting them. Not only that but here we find

one of the strangest sentences in the Gospels - "He (Jesus) intended to go past them or he meant to pass them"??? WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?

- e. Well in Job chapter 9, Job is speaking about God's incomprehensible power - it's so far beyond him, and so high above him!!
- f. (I'm Quoting from the Septuagint here) He says, **"Who commands the sun, and it does not rise; who seals up the stars; who alone stretched out the heavens and walks upon the sea as upon dry ground. Who made the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the chambers of the south; who does great things beyond understanding, and marvelous things without number. Look, he passes by me, and I do not see him; he moves on but I do not perceive him."**- Job 9:7-11
- g. Here we have this picture of YAHWEH trampling the seas like dry ground and passing by Job without his knowledge! This "passing by" is used again with both Moses and Elijah and It's this incredible picture of human inability to grasp God's power and greatness.
- h. And that's exactly what we see here in our passage. Jesus is not just YHWH's servant or anointed King he leads and feeds; he is the incomprehensible God teaching, feeding and caring for his people - preparing a feast in the wilderness. He blesses, breaks and gives the bread that is his body that we may have life and that we might have his presence with us always! He is the Lord who tramples the sea like dry ground - and when we cry out in fear, he says - **"Take heart, I AM, Do not be afraid!!"**
- i. Jesus is the Lord who is a shepherd to his people - who makes the wilderness a retreat - reclining on the green grass - Feeding (instructing), forming (organizing), and filing (leaving all

satisfied)... and there is an abundance leftover - an overflowing cup as it were.. He is the Lord who tramples the storm!

“The transformation of the desert into a place of refreshment and life through the power of God is an aspect of the wilderness tradition in the Prophets...” - William Lane

Ezekiel 34:26-27 reads, **“I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. ²⁶ And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. ²⁷ And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land.)**

Isaiah 35 envisions - Streams in the desert!! And

- j. Through the wilderness motif Mark present Jesus as the Eschatological Savior, who is the Lord, delivering Israel from Exile and Slavery and bringing them safely through the wilderness and transforming it into -A Garden Paradise...

This is what is being presented and offered to disciples, to the multitudes..

But the disciples, the ones who would have been the recipients of this hope filled vision, the ones who should be blown away don't get it. They're afraid, they're not in tune, they think Jesus is some ghost or sea demon.. it says all of this is lost on them, this incredible epiphany, this huge hope filled vision of provision in the wilderness, because their hearts were hard concerning the loaves...

What was it about the loaves? Disappointment, frustration, annoyance?

This is fascinating because as we've noted in Mark's Gospel, followers of Jesus reading this gospel should be identifying ourselves with the disciples - sometimes they get it right, sometimes they don't. Sometimes they see, and believe other times their hearts are hard as in this passage.

Closing: Which brings it all back home to us - At this moment we are in a proverbial wilderness as we experience the fallout and residual effects of this pandemic - and the temptation is to harden our hearts - This should not be! Did God bring us out here to die; we long for the provision and comfort of what we've lost - this is not what we planned for!! - But our Shepherd is able to make the wilderness, the desert into a paradise because he is with us! Because he is the source of life, the fountain of joy and blessing - The Great I AM!

What does Psalm 23 even mean, if not comfort and assurance of God's presence, guidance, care, sustenance and protection through all of life's twists and turns!! What is the point of telling us God is a tower of refuge and strength a present help in times of trouble.. therefore we shall not be moved? - what are these passages for? God tells us he's the one that makes streams in the desert! All of this is hope filled truth for the journey, All of this is to sustain us, to make us resilient people, through the knowledge of God's presence, provision and protection.

But it's not just for us - God wants to show himself, and his gracious offer through us, to others!

Jesus wants to feed and lead the leaderless multitudes because he is the compassionate shepherd - God wants

to be an oasis to people in the midst of their wilderness journey- **Will disciples help or hinder Jesus in this work??**

If our hearts are hardened, through unbelief, through fear, through anger - we need to ask and pray for a revelation of Jesus like these disciples had; to see the Lord who walks upon the stormy waters, to be led by the Shepherd who makes the wilderness A Garden!

Prayer: Holy Spirit, do for us what we cannot do for ourselves! Breathe life into us, replace our hearts of stone with hearts of flesh - open our ears to hear your voice, open our eyes to see you glory and presence! Help us to not hinder others from seeing you!

Lord give us a fresh revelation of you so we don't miss you passing by us! Open our eyes to the ways that you are already at work in the world, in ways we might miss because of the hardness of our hearts. You are the Lord who shepherd's us and leads us through the wilderness. having compassion on us, teaching us, organizing us for mission, feeding and sustaining us through this pandemic! Lord open our eyes, open our hearts!!!