

## Bible Study Guide: Week of 7-12-2021

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

### Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

<sup>30</sup>The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup>He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. <sup>32</sup>And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. <sup>33</sup>Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. <sup>34</sup>As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

<sup>53</sup>When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. <sup>54</sup>When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, <sup>55</sup>and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. <sup>56</sup>And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

**<sup>30</sup>The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup>He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. <sup>32</sup>And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. <sup>33</sup>Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. <sup>34</sup>As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.**

There are two main things that stand out about this Gospel lesson that are not in the text itself. The first is the sharp contrast from last week’s Gospel lesson (the flashback of the beheading of John the Baptist). The second is the decision of the Revised Common Lectionary to omit verses 35-52. This section contains the feeding of the 5,000. My guess is that the Consultations who produced the RCL in 1994 decided to leave this passage out of this week’s reading because next week’s reading is John’s version of this feeding miracle from John 6. In fact, the next 6 weeks we are in a time preachers often dub “the Bread of Life Sundays” in which we spend a month and a half in John 6 reading about the feeding miracle and its aftermath.

The RCL’s decision to omit Mark’s version in this week’s reading, however, makes our gospel passage awkward to read and, perhaps worse, we do not get to hear Mark’s own version of this important story. You can read it on your own (in fact, I encourage that), but I will not spend too much more time talking about this omission. Suffice it to say that one reason I focused on the feeding of the 5,000 in my sermon on Sunday is the contrast Mark presents between the sumptuous, opulent, and wicked birthday bash Herod held for himself and the simple but bountiful meal of life Jesus set for 5,000 people who couldn’t buy bread for themselves. By extension, we see the contrast between Herod, the King who was supposed to be the “shepherd” of the people and Jesus who looks upon the people with compassion, for he saw that they were shepherdless sheep.

Interestingly, though the disciples return from the mission Jesus sent them on with joy and eagerness, Jesus invites them to become isolated for a time of rest. Rather than “striking with the iron is hot,” Jesus urges them to take time to recuperate. Their joyful return is somewhat surprising given that it was their work and preaching that caused Herod to fear that John, whom he had beheaded, was back with a vengeance. The Word of Jesus sent through the apostles apparently had the power to heal and cast out demons and teach, but also to worry the powerful and the ruling class.

We may wonder why Jesus and his disciples took a boat to the other side if the crowds were able to beat them there by foot. Perhaps their time in the boat was indeed their only opportunity for rest. Rather than expending their energy marching in a crowd on tired feet, they could instead rest as their boat carried them across the sea.

**<sup>53</sup>When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. <sup>54</sup>When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, <sup>55</sup>and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he**

was. <sup>56</sup>And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

The second part of this passage highlights once again the fame Jesus was achieving as well as the faithful, if rather desperate, response of the crowds. It is difficult to believe that such a ministry—preaching, teaching, casting out demons, healing the sick, and so on—could earn the wrath of both Jerusalem and Rome as Jesus' ministry did.

**Discussion/Reflection Questions:**

- 1. How does it change the meaning of this passage or the focus of this passage if we add in verses 35-52?**
- 2. Where do you find rest and rejuvenation in the midst of life and ministry? How can you make more time for rest and for Jesus' teaching in your life?**
- 3. Why do you think Mark emphasizes both the disciples' teaching (v. 30) and Jesus' teaching (v. 34)?**