

Mark 6:30-56
February 21, 2010
Lynchburg, Virginia

EXHORDIUM

³⁰And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

Jesus had sent the apostles out two by two. They had gone out to preach and to teach the people. We know that the Word of God is food. The apostles are called to feed the people.

In the meantime, Mark tells us the story of John the Baptist and Herod. Upon their return, Jesus feeds a multitude, breaking bread and passing it to the apostles to distribute. We should understand that Mark is teaching us that the Word of God is food. In the feeding of the 5000, Mark shows us the principle of Communion. This scene is not the institution of the Lord's Supper but it prefigures the supper.

In this chapter, we get some more indicators about who Jesus is. He is a new and better Moses who gives the people abundant food from heaven and calms the storms of the raging sea. He is the new and better David, who with five loaves feeds not just a few men but thousands. Like a good shepherd, He settles the people in green pastures and provides a table for them in the face of His enemies, Herod and the Pharisees. He is the greater Elisha, who fed 20 men per loaf but Jesus feeds 5000 men per loaf.

EXEGESIS

³¹And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. ³²And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. ³³And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. ³⁴And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

Jesus gives rest to His ministers. They are beset with so many concerns but Jesus desires them to come to a deserted place and rest a while. The work is difficult and tiring and requires an occasionally rest and recovery.

But the people flock to Jesus. Jesus is constantly encountering multitudes by the sea. He crosses the sea, a picture of baptism, calms the sea, a picture of authority and power and ministers to multitudes from and near the sea. Jesus is the Lord of the Nations.

He looks at them with compassion because they were as sheep without a shepherd. These sheep need fed and protected. But Herod does not feed or protect His sheep. He imprisons and eats them. The Pharisees are no better than Herod for they are like hirelings who flee whenever the sheep are in danger. But a good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

³⁵And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time *is* far passed: ³⁶Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.

As evening grows on the disciples desire Jesus to send the sheep away. They speak concern for the sheep, that they may get some food. But we must wonder if the disciples are self-interested here. The multitudes are so drawn to Jesus that they do not want to leave and Jesus is not sending them away. But the disciples want Jesus to send them away. Perhaps they missed their rest and their lunch and they know that they cannot break out those five loaves and two fishes while this multitude is sitting there hungry.

Jesus has been feeding them all day and so they are being filled. But the disciples are not able to make this connection. They are rightly concerned for the body but not as concerned as they should be for the soul.

³⁷He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? ³⁸He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. ³⁹And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.

Jesus is teaching more than simply a miracle. He is the good shepherd. He feeds the sheep. He has called His apostles to also be good shepherds and feed the sheep. Why do they not understand that to feed the sheep is to give them the Word of God? So, to prove His point, He commands the apostles to feed the great multitude of people.

They are astonished again at Jesus. They constantly fail to understand what He is saying. He asks how many loaves they have.

Five. This is the same number of loaves that David asked of the priest at Nob. They were consecrated loaves meant as an offering to the Lord. David used them to feed himself and some of his men. Jesus is a better shepherd than David. Furthermore, Jesus is the rightful King, like David, only a better an eternal King.

The five loaves and two fishes make 7. Seven is the day of Sabbath. Jesus is giving the people Sabbath.

2 Kings 4:42-44 ⁴²And there came a man from Baalshalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat. ⁴³And his servitor said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the LORD, They shall eat, and shall leave *thereof*. ⁴⁴So he set *it* before them, and they did eat, and left *thereof*, according to the word of the LORD.

⁴⁰And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. ⁴¹And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave *them* to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. ⁴²And they did all eat, and were filled. ⁴³And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. ⁴⁴And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

Jesus looked up to heaven and broke the bread. This was an offering of thanks to His Father. He broke the bread and gave it to His disciples. Bread from Jesus is enough to feed a multitude.

Everyone eat of the loaves and fishes and were filled. If that is all the text said, we might think that each person's little morsel, like our communion bread and wine was enough to fill them. But that is not what happened. Each person got an abundance of food and they could not eat it all. Even after they had eaten their fill, there was more left over than what they had started with.

The disciples were reluctant to share their food. They did not think that they had enough to share and still fill themselves. But the food they had was enough and more for the entire multitude. This is why Jesus had sent them out two by two to preach and now He was making the point emphatically. They were to be men of faith who trusted that the Words of Jesus were enough to feed a multitude.

The disciples pick up twelve baskets full. It is clear that we should think of the twelve tribes. Jesus has just fed a multitude by the seaside. But He has not exhausted His supply. There is still enough food to feed all of Israel.

⁴⁵And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the

people. ⁴⁶And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

Jesus finally sends the people away with full bellies and full souls. Jesus sends the disciples across the sea to Bethsaida but He departs up the mountain to pray.

⁴⁷And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

Jesus saw them struggling against the wind in the evening but He does not come to help them until almost daybreak. We should be reminded of the time when they were in grave danger in the sea and Jesus was asleep in the boat. They thought that He didn't care that they were perishing. They were wrong. Even now, while they are struggling against the wind and in danger, Jesus is watching them and waiting for the right time to come to them.

⁴⁸And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

Jesus saw their toil. The wind is against them. This wind is not the wind of the Holy Spirit but the wind of the spirits of the sea. This is the wind of the world and her nations who will seek to kill and destroy the saints of God. But Jesus has power over the wind and the sea.

The fourth watch of the night is from 3am-6am. This is the darkest and coldest part of the night. The disciples should have long ago arrived at their destination. They were weary and needed rest. They should have come to port and been sleeping on the seashore. But they were up all night, sea tossed, sleep deprived, in darkness and cold. They were no doubt imagining horrible things and in fear of what might happen. They were longing for daybreak, light, warmth, a glimpse of the shore.

It was just at this time that Jesus comes to them, hovering over the face of the waters like the Spirit of God. The text tells us that He would have passed by them. Perhaps Mark does not know what was in the mind of Jesus but makes the observation that He was walking by not looking their way intent on reaching the other side. It appeared it was His intent to not help them.

I think the clear teaching here and in the other passage where Jesus is sleeping, is that He desires them to call out to Him, to pray and seek His ever present help in time of need.

⁴⁹But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: ⁵⁰For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

The disciples see Jesus but in the terror of the night and cold, wind and sea, they do not recognize the help that has come to them. God has come to help but they think a demon has come to kill them all. Perhaps this reveals some of their superstitions about the sea and the gods of the sea.

The cry out but not to Jesus. They cry out in fear of Jesus. This does not make Jesus angry. He responds to their fear and confusion and sets to work to calm their fears. He talks to them and speaks words of cheer and peace and comfort.

What does He say? Ego eimi. I am.

⁵¹And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. ⁵²For they considered not *the miracle* of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

Just at the point of complete desperation, when the disciples were perishing with fear, cold, darkness, wind and waves, doubt, and superstitions, just at that moment when all seemed lost, Jesus climbed into their boat. The wind immediately ceases and all the danger and fear come to a sudden end. The disciple's fears are relieved. Their hope is restored. Their renewed respect and adoration of Jesus redoubled.

They were sore amazed, beyond measure.

The disciples have very short memories. Jesus keeps doing things that are beyond anything anybody ever heard of. The miracles He is doing harken back to the prophets of old but so far exceed them that the point is clear. And yet, the disciples witness this and then it simply falls right out of their thick skulls. As the reader we are amazed. How could they be so stupid, so unthankful, so thoughtless? But we should consider our own frame and what troubles sometimes do to us.

But why did it take all of this trouble to once again bring them to their senses? Just a few hours before this, not more than 12 hours before, they had eaten miraculous bread and fish, multiplied by the Lord of Heaven and

Earth. They had previously seen Jesus command the wind and sea. But their hearts were hardened.

Somehow, in just a few short hours of trial, they had forgotten who they were in relation to Jesus. They seem to have forgotten the power of God and their place before Him. They had forgotten that Jesus was the fulfillment of Moses, David and Elisha, thus making Him the promised Messiah. All of this because they were in trouble, scared, hungry, cold. Jesus considers their frame and helps them.

⁵³And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. ⁵⁴And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him, ⁵⁵And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. ⁵⁶And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

EXHORTATION

Consider the Miracle of the loaves.

It is truly amazing and reveals to us a God who is intimately acquainted with His people. Jesus is the good shepherd and is faithful to feed His sheep. And man shall not live by bread alone but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Jesus sees the need. He looks out at the multitude and sees the people as sheep without a shepherd. And what does He do? He tells His disciples to feed them. In our story, the disciples are dismayed by this. They do not know what to do. They only have five loaves and two fishes for many thousands of people. But Jesus says, what about it? That is provision enough, feed them? But Lord, how can we? We do not have enough food, or money. What do you expect us to do? It would take a miracle to feed all these people!

Ah yes, now you are starting to understand. But Jesus feeds them, using His disciples to help them begin to see what they are being called to do.

We can take courage from this passage in many ways. Jesus came to feed His people. He did so with constant preaching and teaching of the Word of God. This meant that the kingdom of God was among them and it

was growing. These people would see the first fruits of the kingdom and should rejoice.

But there is still opposition. Herod would kill John the Baptist. The authorities will resist the disciples teaching, persecuting and killing them. But the kingdom of God would still grow, making men like Herod fear those whom they have already killed. There is suffering in this world but there is hope beyond the suffering, in this life and in the life to come.

The disciples hearts were hardened for they had not considered the miracle of the loaves. Are you as forgetful as they were? We just read the miracle of the loaves. Do you believe it happened? Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah? The greater Moses that leads his people through the Red Sea? The greater David that shepherds his sheep, killing bears and lions? The greater Elisha, who feeds the sons of the prophets with miraculous soup and bread? Then take courage, He is here, "Do not be afraid."

But consider the loaves of your own life. Has God not called to you out of darkness and brought the light of Jesus into your life? Has He not repeatedly climbed into your boat at the most opportune moment? Has He not spoken peace to you whose forgetful and fretful mind is wandering, watching the waves, wondering if the Lord is near to answer? Consider the loaves of your own life. If you consider, if you remember, if you give thanks, take faith, and gain hope, then your heart will not be hardened.

You will be like a soft-hearted apostle in the bow of the boat. The others are huddled in fear, forgetful of the Lord's promises. But the soft-hearted man of faith is stationed in the bow, watching for Jesus. The storm is still blowing, the sea is high and tossed, the darkness is thick, the cold is unbearable but he waits with the thought, "He will come."

Consider the loaves of your life. In your distress, Jesus came to you, like the Spirit, hovering over the waters. So, in this storm, or the one that will one day break upon you, wait upon the Lord and He will come and shall renew your strength. He will feed your soul and grant you peace.