

Nothing They Need

November 6, 2022

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Mark 6:30-44

Session Outline

1. See Jesus's Compassion (Mark 6:30-34)
2. See the Need (Mark 6:35-38)
3. See the Miraculous (Mark 6:39-44)

Theological Theme

There are people with needs all around us. We should be moved by compassion like Jesus even if it makes us vulnerable.



Leader Guide

Nothing They Need

Introduction

If you search online for wilderness survival stories, you will find several million hits. There are stories of people who lived through snow and ice storms alone in the frozen tundra. You can find tales of what happened to someone adrift alone on the open ocean or lost in the vast wilderness of forest and mountains. There are some wild stories of what people will do to stay alive in extreme circumstances, including cutting off one of their own limbs to free themselves.

Have you ever found yourself somewhere desolate with no food or drink to sustain you? Although you may not have as dramatic a story as some, we have all had times when we needed something that was not readily available and had to figure out what to do. When your body needs food or water, it doesn't take long to start feeling desperate.

- ❓ What is a survival story you've found interesting?
- ❓ When have you ever been in a place where you were desperate for food or water? What happened?
- ❓ How does it affect you when you are physically in need and struggle to obtain what is necessary?

Session Summary

The disciples had been out ministering across the region and met back up with Jesus to report in. They were tired and worn down. Jesus received word of John the Baptist's beheading and recognized that they all could use a rest, so He brought them away to a remote place. But when they arrived in this desolate area, there was a needy multitude waiting.

Focusing on their own needs, they missed the needs of the crowd, and the disciples suggested dismissing all the people so they could get their rest. Jesus was moved to compassion for the people and took time to minister to them through teaching and healing. When everyone needed food, and there was none available, the tension rose. A boy's lunch was offered to

Jesus and though it appeared to be too little, when Jesus lifted it to heaven and prayed over it, the lunch became more than enough. All the people were filled with food left over. The crowd who had nothing left with all they needed because Jesus had compassion and ministered to them in their need.

1. See Jesus's Compassion (Mark 6:30-34)

Jesus's compassion was first evident when the disciples returned and reported all they had done to minister to others. He saw that they were tired and needed rest, so He called for them to withdraw to a remote place to escape the crowds that gathered whenever they heard where Jesus was. Jesus knew the demands of ministry were taxing, and the disciples needed to find the balance between work and rest. We also need to find the balance between rest, work, and ministry. Too much of any of these will cause us to be less effective in our Christian walk.

 How have you seen too much work, rest, or ministry cause unbalance in your life and make you less effective?

Jesus's compassion for the disciples led them to a desolate place, but the crowds saw them and ran ahead so that when Jesus and His disciples arrived by boat a multitude waited on them. When God is at work, people will notice and be drawn to it. That is exactly what happened that day. Jesus and His disciples doing the work of the Lord drew attention. The people got wind that these men of God would be at a certain place, and they wanted to be part of what God was doing. They may have been looking for physical healing, spiritual encouragement, or maybe they were even drawn by something undefinable. People today are much the same. They do not always know why they come to our churches or engage in conversation with Christ-followers, but when God's people live with eyes open and ready hearts to share Jesus, God can do amazing things anytime in any heart.

The disciples did not expect to meet up with a crowd and be put to work immediately. They anticipated some down time with their rabbi. Though we need to be intentional about getting rest, we also need to be sensitive to God-ordained moments and opportunities to share Jesus. It is interesting to see the different reactions between the disciples and Jesus. When Jesus saw the people, He recognized their need and was moved with compassion. We should likewise look at others with Jesus's eyes and have compassion. He was more concerned about the needs of the crowd than about His own needs. That type of sacrificial attitude stands in stark contrast to much of our world today.

Sheep Without a Shepherd

"Sheep without a shepherd" serves as an image for God's people without spiritual leadership. Jesus' initial response to the crowd's need was teaching. The details of the crowd seated on "green grass" and fully satisfied recall the shepherd of Psalm 23 who made his sheep lie down in green pasture (Ps. 23:2, 5). The miraculous feeding of the five thousand establishes Jesus as the true Shepherd of God, but it also points to the future ministry of the disciples. Jesus' use of the Twelve to feed the crowd of five thousand suggests a pattern for future ministry in which Jesus provides the disciples with resources for ministry.

-  When have you experienced a change in what you expected that turned out to be a God-ordained opportunity? What would you have missed out on if not given this opportunity?

Jesus viewed the people as sheep without a shepherd. Sheep without a shepherd are vulnerable. They are defenseless. They are without direction. They may follow the wrong leader. They might struggle to find provisions and suffer needlessly. Though they may have thought they came for a different reason, Jesus knew their greatest need, and He began to feed them the Word of God. A good shepherd will take care of his sheep and meet their needs. Jesus responded to the crowd as the Good Shepherd.

-  Application: How do you need to be involved in sharing Jesus with people who need Him?

2. See the Need (Mark 6:35-38)

Jesus saw the crowd and had compassion on them. The tired disciples who were expecting a quiet get away saw the same crowd with the same needs and reacted differently. After Jesus taught the people, feeding them the Word of God, it was late in the day, and everyone had a new need—food and physical nourishment. But they were in a wilderness area with no options to meet their overwhelming need. The disciples gave both a good and bad example in what happened next.

The good example we can learn from is the disciples saw a need and had no answer, so they took it to Jesus. Who better to come up with the right response than Jesus? When they talked to Jesus about the issue, He listened to their ideas first. In that moment the disciples came up with a solution they thought would work—make the people go away. This isn't so different than many in the church today. We see the need. We want to help to a certain degree or at a certain time, but when it is overwhelming or we have no idea what to do, we often want to send them away.

-  What situation do you need to ask Jesus about instead of assuming you know how best to respond to a need or neglecting the opportunity to minister altogether?

In turning the situation back to the disciples, Jesus offered them a valuable learning opportunity. The disciple's response that they would need a year's worth of wages to go buy food for everyone revealed the shock at Jesus's suggestion. They had not realized Jesus was planning a miracle. Maybe they were too caught up the moment and the inadequacy they felt for dealing with a need of that magnitude. Whatever the case, the disciples were surprised when Jesus told them to feed the multitude.

Jesus said to go and find out what was available. God's provision starts with what we already have. He wants us to use those resources with wisdom and to trust Him every step of the way. They reported finding a little boy's sack lunch—but that was all. Circumstances and common sense would tell them that two small fish and five loaves could never be stretched enough to feed the 5000 men plus the women and kids, but Jesus could see beyond the circumstances.

 What do you need to trust God with so that He can do more than your circumstances would suggest?

Jesus not only saw the needs of the people, but He also saw the needs of His disciples. They needed to be stretched in their expectations and realize that when God works, nothing is off the table. Our job is not to lower our expectations of how and what Jesus can do but to believe that He is who He says He is and that He can do more than we can imagine. How much do you need Jesus to see your need in this moment? Where do you need to know His provision is not limited by your resources? Where do you need to see Him at work in a new way? Where do you need to trust that your needs will be met by His righteous hand?

 Application: How does God want to stretch your faith through this story of Jesus seeing the need of the crowd and responding with compassion?

3. See the Miraculous (Mark 6:39-44)

Jesus asked the disciples to organize the people into manageable groups. This feeding of the multitude wouldn't be a chaotic frenzy of people grabbing food and trying to make sure there was enough for them. Jesus grouped them into orderly sections and set the stage for the miracle to take place so everyone would receive what they needed and could see what was happening. Asking the people to sit in groups would make it easier to distribute food and make sure all were fed.

It didn't look like there was enough food for everyone. Those five loaves and two fish wouldn't make it very far in the crowd. But Jesus took the food, looked up to heaven, and blessed God for His provision. The practice of saying a blessing over our food at a meal resembles this moment. We need to recognize and acknowledge that God provides for us. In asking a blessing at a meal, we thank God for that food and recognize that He has met our needs once again.

In the hands of Jesus, the single meal was more than enough. Jesus broke the bread and divided the fish until everyone had eaten their fill, and the disciples gathered the leftovers. In life, we often feel like we don't have enough. We are not smart enough. We don't fit in enough. But just like Jesus did with the loaves and fish, when we place our "not enough" into His hands, He uses it to bless others and minister in His name. Jesus didn't just want to fill the need of the moment—He multiplied it above and beyond so that there were baskets left over. God is not limited by our lack. He asks us to trust Him with what we do have so that He can turn it into what we, and others, need.

 What do you need to trust Jesus with instead of complaining that it is not enough?

Jesus could have provided just enough to take the edge off the people's hunger, but He chose to lavish food on them until they had all eaten their fill. The only way someone would have left hungry that day was if they refused to accept what Jesus offered. No one forced the people to eat, but it was available to all who chose to take it and be satisfied. It seems impossible that someone would be hungry and without sustenance and yet refuse to eat. But isn't that exactly what happens when people in need encounter Jesus and refuse to accept what He offers them?

 When have you missed out on what Jesus offered because you wanted something else? How did that work out?

The miracle the people witnessed that day was incredible. If they had not been chasing after Jesus, they would have missed it. If the disciples let their own desire to rest and retreat take over, they would have missed it. When you read about great miracles in Scripture, you might shake your head at how some of the people missed the point. Because both groups were open to what Jesus had for them that day, they witnessed the miraculous.

 Application: What keeps you from experiencing God's work in your life? What needs to change?

Conclusion

Jesus saw the people and their need and was moved to do something about it. The need of the people set the stage for God to work and for everyone present to experience a miracle. Because the people chased after Jesus and brought their needs to Him, they received even more than they expected.

The disciples trusted Jesus with unfavorable circumstances, and He surpassed their expectations as well. We need to be aware of the needs around us and willing to be part of the work God is doing. Instead of running to anything else, we must take what we have to Jesus even when it seems insufficient. When we trust Him with our lack, He can turn it into even more than we can imagine. Ask God to let you be part of the miraculous and to help you be courageous enough to jump into His work when the opportunities come your way.

- ❓ What is God prompting you to be part of that He is already doing? How do you need to chase after Jesus instead of trying to fix your needs on your own?
- ❓ Who have you been sending away in their need that God may be calling you to minister to today?
- ❓ What have you refused to trust God with that He is patiently waiting for you to give Him? How will you respond?

Prayer of Response

Thank the Lord for His provision. Ask Him for discernment to see the opportunities He is opening around you so that you can be part of ministering to others. Ask for eyes to see the miraculous and courage to join what He is doing.

Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in Mark* by Daniel Akin
- *Be Diligent* by Warren Wiersbe
- *Mark* by R.C. Sproul

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



For Next Week

Session Title

- A Lament

Main Passages

- Habakkuk 1:1-11

Session Outline

1. Taking Problems to God (Habakkuk 1:1-4)
2. God Answers (Habakkuk 1:5-6)
3. Trusting God's Judgment Will Come (Habakkuk 1:7-11)

Memorize

When he went ashore, he saw a large crowd and had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Then he began to teach them many things.

- Mark 6:34

Historical Context of Mark

Purpose

Mark's Gospel is a narrative about Jesus. Mark identifies his theme in the first verse: "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." That Jesus is the divine Son of God is the major emphasis of his Gospel. God announced it at Jesus's baptism in 1:11. Demons and unclean spirits recognized and acknowledged it in 3:11 and 5:7. God reaffirmed it at the transfiguration in 9:7. Jesus taught it parabolically in 12:1–12, hinted at it in 13:32, and confessed it directly in 14:61–62. Finally, the Roman centurion confessed it openly and without qualification in 15:39. Thus Mark's purpose was to summon people to repent and respond in faith to the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1:1, 15).

Author

The Gospel of Mark is anonymous. Eusebius, the early church historian, writing in AD 326, preserved the words of Papias, an early church father. Papias quoted "the elder," probably John, as saying that Mark recorded Peter's preaching about the things Jesus said and did, but not in order. Thus Mark was considered the author of this Gospel even in the first century.

Setting

According to the early church fathers, Mark wrote his Gospel in Rome just before or just after Peter's martyrdom. Further confirmation of the Roman origin of Mark's Gospel is found in Mark 15:21 where Mark noted that Simon, a Cyrenian who carried Jesus's cross, was the father of Alexander and Rufus, men apparently known to the believers in Rome.

Because Mark wrote primarily for Roman Gentiles, he explained Jewish customs, translated Aramaic words and phrases into Greek, used Latin terms rather than their Greek equivalents, and rarely quoted from the OT. Most Bible scholars are convinced that Mark was the earliest Gospel and served as one of the sources for Matthew and Luke.

Special Features

Mark's Gospel emphasizes actions and deeds. Jesus is on the go—healing, casting out demons, performing miracles, hurrying from place to place, and teaching. In Mark everything happens "immediately." As soon as one episode ends, another begins. The rapid pace slows down when Jesus enters Jerusalem (11:1). Thereafter, events are marked by days, and his final day by hours.

Extended Commentary

Mark 6:30-44

6:30-31 Mark refers to the Twelve as the apostles only here and in 3:14 when they were appointed. Reported to him all that they had done and taught refers to the mission of vv. 7-13. A remote place recalls 1:3-5, 12-13, 35, 45 and provides the ideal setting for the miracle that echoes the provision of bread in the wilderness. They did not even have time to eat recalls 3:20 and prepares the way for the story that follows.

6:32 Mark does not name the remote place (cp. Lk 9:10). In Mark this was Jesus's third journey by boat (4:35-5:1, 21-22).

6:33-34 The word for compassion refers to intestinal organs, which were thought to be the seat of the emotions. The word is only used of Jesus in the NT. Jesus saw the people as leaderless and needy (like sheep without a shepherd). In fulfillment of Is 40:11, Jesus cared for his flock.

6:35-44 The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels (Mt 14:13-21; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-15).

6:35-36 The words this place is deserted mark the third mention of the remoteness of the place (vv. 31-32, 35). After pointing out it was late, the disciples commanded Jesus to send them away.

6:37 Jesus responded with a command of his own. You is emphatic. Obviously the disciples did not have two hundred denarii (a denarius was a day's wage). In fact they had just returned from a mission on which they had taken no bread or money (v. 8). Feeding this many people was a big challenge. (Cp. Moses's wilderness situation in Ex 16:1-35; Nm 11:13, 22; and Elijah's in 2Kg 4:42-44.)

6:38 The disciples focused on what they lacked, but Jesus focused on what they had—five ... loaves and two fish. The loaves were probably small, round, flat barley biscuits; the fish were probably dried.

6:39-40 Matthew (14:19) and John (6:10) mention the grass on which the people sat, but only Mark says it was green, indicating springtime.

6:41 Looking up to heaven was a position of prayer (cp. 7:34). The Gospel writers did not record Jesus's prayer, but the traditional Jewish blessing over bread would have been appropriate: "Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, King of the world, who bringeth forth bread from the earth."

6:42 The verb was satisfied is used of fattening animals. Thus Jesus provided abundance, not just sustenance.

6:43 The twelve baskets matches the number of apostles and tribes of Israel. The word for "baskets" denotes large, heavy containers.

6:44 A total of five thousand men were fed. Mark’s word (Gk) andres (“males”) is gender specific. Matthew adds “besides women and children” (Mt 14:21) which mean that considerably more than five thousand people were fed.¹

References

1. *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

Author Bio

Daniel Akin (Exalting Jesus in Mark)

Daniel L. Akin is the president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He holds a Ph.D. in Humanities from the University of Texas at Arlington and has authored or edited many books and Bible commentaries including *Ten Who Changed the World* and *A Theology for the Church*.

Warren Wiersbe (Be Diligent)

Warren W. Wiersbe, former pastor of the Moody Church and general director of Back to the Bible, has traveled widely as a Bible teacher and conference speaker. Because of his encouragement to those in ministry, Dr. Wiersbe is often referred to as “the pastor’s pastor.” He has ministered in churches and conferences throughout the United States as well as in Canada, Central and South America, and Europe. Dr. Wiersbe has written over 150 books, including the popular BE series of commentaries on every book of the Bible, which has sold more than four million copies. At the 2002 Christian Booksellers Convention, he was awarded the Gold Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. Dr. Wiersbe and his wife, Betty, live in Lincoln, Nebraska.

R.C. Sproul (Mark)

R.C. Sproul (1939–2017) was founder of Ligonier Ministries in Orlando, Fla. He was also copastor of Saint Andrew’s Chapel, first president of Reformation Bible College, and executive editor of *Tabletalk* magazine. His radio program, *Renewing Your Mind*, is still broadcast daily on hundreds of radio stations around the world and can also be heard online.