

30 , The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 And he said to them, Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while. For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32 And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. 33 Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 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. 35 And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. 36 Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat. 37 But he answered them, You give them something to eat. And they said to him, Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat? 38 And he said to them, How many loaves do you have? Go and see. And when they had found out, they said, Five, and two fish. 39 Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. 41 And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. 42 And they all ate and were satisfied. 43 And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. 44 And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men, Mark 6:30-44

Mark follows this story of the apparent weakness of God's kingdom in the eyes of this world with some stories that show its power. In them Jesus demonstrates the power of the Creator God, still in control of the universe that he had created.

The first story begins in a typically matter-of-fact way. The disciples have returned from their evangelistic mission triumphant but exhausted, so Jesus understandingly led them to a quiet place to rest. They were followed by an expectant crowd, who disturbed their planned time of refreshment and relaxation. Jesus had compassion on these people and began teaching them many things. It does not seem as though he asked the disciples to do anything. At the end of the day they came to Jesus and asked him to send the crowd away to get something to eat. They were taken aback when he suggested that they feed the people themselves. The only food that they could find was five of the flat local loaves and two dried fish. To obey Jesus and get the eager hungry crowds sat down in orderly groups must have tested their faith that he could do something about the situation. The vivid description of the scene, with details such as the green grass, must have come from an eyewitness. In

multiplying the loaves and fish God did in one moment of time what he does every day with the corn in the fields and the fish in the sea. To us, it is a miracle; to him, it is natural.

Mark rescues the miracle from appearing magical by giving it a matter-of-fact ending: the tired disciples bending double as they collected all the leftover bread and scraps of fish into baskets (possibly for the next day's meal). We should not expect to live a life entirely made up of spiritual thrills; that would be spiritually unhealthy and not help us to mature in Christ. It [p. 961] is strange that the disciples did not seem to have learned anything from this miracle; Jesus had to repeat the lesson later. This was not because they were particularly stupid and unresponsive; it was because they were just like us.

Of all of the miracles which are recorded during the ministry of Jesus, only one is described in all four gospel accounts. It is the one which we find in this chapter - the feeding of the five thousand.

This was an especially significant miracle. It was significant because it involved the most number of people. It had the most eye-witnesses. It also had the most volume. The only other miracle that ever came close to it was the turning of water into wine. Bread to the multitude; wine to the wedding guests. Bread and wine - He still offers it to us.

The setting for the story took place in a time of retreat - a time when Jesus was seeking to get away from it all.

#### RETREAT TO A LONELY PLACE

And the apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught.

And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while." (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat). And they went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves. (Mark 6:30-32).

It had been a time of great activity. There was a growing intensity to the ministry of Jesus that reached its culmination as He sent the Twelve out on a short-term mission trip.

Now they are back. They have done a good job and they are tired. And so, He determines to take them away from the crowds. They will go to a lonely place so that they can recharge.

Have you ever suffered from burn-out? You can come to the point when you are tired and just can't get the emotional energy to go on. At such a time, you need to find a lonely place. You will find Jesus waiting for you there.

### THE COMPASSION OF THE CHRIST

And the people saw them going, and many recognized them, and they ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them. And when He went ashore, He saw a great multitude, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things. (Mark 6:33-34).

It was one thing for Jesus and His disciples to make plans to get away from it all. It was another thing to accomplish it. They got away from the crowds, but the crowds did not get away from them.

Jesus could have gotten angry at the multitude. After all, they were intruding at a time when they were not wanted. The office was closed and Jesus and His disciples were going on vacation. Couldn't they make an appointment?

Instead, the reaction of Jesus was one of compassion. He saw their needs and He felt for them. He cared. The Christ event is the evidence that God cares. He did not stand aloof from humanity. He became involved. He was involved in the discipleship of the Twelve. And He will be involved in a ministry to the masses.

Mark is quoting from the Old Testament here.

This is significant to the theme, the motif we have seen all through Mark's gospel. The kingdom advancing, a new covenant era and the newness of things in this kingdom.

The verse is from Numbers 27:17 and it deals with the successor to Moses, because Moses cannot lead the people, shepherd the people of Israel into the promised land. This task will be given to Joshua who however is not the equal to Moses. He takes on some of Moses duties, for example he does not receive divine revelation from God. He must stand before the priest who by means of the Urim will communicate God's decision's to Joshua. Joshua as a shepherd is a warrior.

Mark is laying historical groundwork here for understanding the use of the phrase.

In Judaism the significance begins with the Exodus and Moses being a shepherd who is proven and then becomes shepherd of Israel. Then a similar phrase "to lead out and to lead in" is used in connection with David in Psalm 78:70-72 where the warrior king is referenced as a Shepherd.

**70 He also chose David His servant And took him from the sheepfolds;  
71 From the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him To shepherd Jacob His people, And Israel His inheritance. 72 So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, And guided them with his skillful hands.**

David is also proven as a shepherd before he becomes the warrior-king/shepherd. In this sense then, after Moses leadership, any king who fails to lead Israel properly as a shepherd, leaves Israel as sheep without a shepherd.

In the context of Christ, a new exodus is occurring. We can add this to the kingdom coming, new covenant purpose expressed in Mark's gospel

Israel understood God (Yahweh) as a strong shepherd and yet compassionate.

Although Joshua succeeds Moses to lead the people to their inheritance, it is God's servant David who is the ultimate model/picture of the warrior/shepherd who will come, and that is Jesus. Davis establishes the throne in Zion. He brings the picture to a fuller picture than Joshua.

In Numbers 27:12-14 Moses, after his disobedience at Meribah, asks God to appoint a successor in military language.

"15 Then Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, 16 "May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, 17 who will go out and come in before them, and who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the LORD will not be like sheep which have no shepherd.'" Numbers 27:15-17, NAS95.

So Jesus completes the Moses/Joshua/David picture in all its components. He leads, he wins battles over the demons, disease and death. Like God He commands the creation so in this way He is more than Moses, Joshua and David because He is also the God who is with us of the messianic prophecies of Isaiah.

### THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THE CHRIST

And when it was already quite late, His disciples came up to Him and began saying, "The place is desolate and it is already quite late; 36 send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." But He answered and said to them, "You give them something to eat!" And they said to Him, "Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them something to eat?" (Mark 6:35-37).

Imagine the scene. Jesus and His disciples have left the crowded cities and have made their way to a lonely place. They were followed by the crowds, so instead of spending the day in rest and relaxation, Jesus and His disciples have a day of teaching.

Now at the end of the day, the disciples are tired and hungry. And they aren't the only ones. The people are getting hungry as well. And so they come to Jesus with a suggestion. It is that He send the multitude away to surrounding areas where they will be able to purchase food.

The plan of the disciples is entitled: "Every man for himself." But Jesus has another plan. He says to them, "You feed them."

A denarius was a small silver coin. Its name meant "ten-piece" because it took ten copper coins to make a single denarius.

This was an impossible request. I can picture their consternation. They pull out his pocket calculator and begin punching buttons: "Price of hamburgers multiplied by 5000 equals 200 denarii." A single denarius was considered to be an average day's wage. At this rate, it would take all Twelve disciples working for three weeks could make

This was an impossible situation. But Jesus has the answers to those kinds of situations. He is trying to teach you something in the midst of your impossible situation. And it is in the understanding of that lesson that impossible situations become bearable.

What is your situation? No matter what it is, don't forget to look for the lesson. Listen for the instructions of the Christ. Listen, because Jesus has the answers to the questions that trouble you.

You see, this situation did not come about by mere chance. It was brought about purposefully. It was brought about to manifest the power of God. The same is true of your situation.

#### THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE CHRIST

And He said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go look!" And when they found out, they said, "Five loaves and two fish."

And He commanded them all to recline by groups on the green grass. 40 And they reclined in companies of hundreds and of fifties. And He took the five loaves and two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food and broke the loaves and He kept giving them to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all. 42 And they all ate and were satisfied. (Mark 6:38-42).

The grass is green. The sun is low in the sky. The cool breeze is blowing off the Sea of Galilee. The disciples are quietly obedient in organizing the people into groups of 50's and 100's. They may have been weak in faith, but they still OBEYED. And as a result, God will do something wonderful.

Having problems believing? Have a difficult time in the faith department? Welcome to the crowd. There is a lesson here for you. It is a lesson for when you find it difficult to believe. When you are having trouble believing, obey anyway. Obey as though you

The disciples obeyed the words of Jesus. He has them divide the people into workable groups. There is a prayer of blessing.

I cannot help but think that the disciples were peeking during the prayer to see where the delivery trucks were going to come from. And yet, when the miracle takes place, we are struck by its simplicity. The heavens did not open. Trumpets did not sound. We are not told how Jesus did it.

“God’s blessings are dispensed according to the riches of His grace, not according to the depth of our faith.” - Max Lucado

We simply read that the disciples begin to disperse the food. And there is more food. And still more. And people are getting seconds. And there is still more.

It isn't that Christianity has been tried and failed, it is that it hasn't been tried.

Are you afraid? His courage is sufficient for you.

Are you alone? His presence is sufficient for you.

Are you in sin? His grace is sufficient for you.

Are you in need? His abundance is sufficient for you.

#### THE ABUNDANCE OF THE CHRIST

And they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish. 44  
And there were five thousand men who ate the loaves. (Mark 6:43-44).

When it is all over, the disciples begin cleaning up. Twelve disciples. Twelve full baskets of food. One for each disciple. Do you see the lesson? It is a lesson in abundance. Jesus is not just sufficient for our needs. He is ABUNDANTLY SUFFICIENT.

The reason that the disciples are assigned this cleanup duty is so that they will learn this lesson. They had wondered earlier where they would get enough food to feed the

multitude when there was barely enough food to feed themselves. They may have thought, "If we give what we have to everyone else, then we will have to go hungry." Instead of going hungry, each disciple will end up with a load of food.

The disciples were being taught a lesson. It is the same lesson that we need to learn. It is the lesson that Jesus is sufficient for our needs.

Dr. David Livingston, the famous missionary-explorer to Africa, had a medical condition which required a regular diet of milk. He kept a goat which supplied the necessary milk. Dr. Livingston was praying one morning and he told the Lord, "Everything I have is Yours, Lord."

He was visited that same week by the tribal chief and he noticed that the chief was eyeing his goat. Desiring to show God's love, he took the goat and gave it to the chief. In return, the chief presented him with the staff which he was carrying.

Later that day, Livingston confided in one of his friends, "I don't know why I was so stupid as to give my goat away. All I have to show for it is this stupid stick." His friend replied, "You don't understand. That isn't just a stick; it is a scepter. You no longer own one goat. Now you own all the goats in the village."

When we come to the Lord in faith, giving Him our lives, we find that He has given us a scepter in return. And we have been walking around, thinking that it was just a stick.