

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH?

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56 Text vs. 34 “*When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So, He began teaching them many things.*”

Our passage this morning begins shortly after Jesus was rejected by the people in his hometown of Nazareth. Not only had Jesus been rejected in his hometown, but we learned a few weeks ago He had also been rejected by Israel’s leaders. They said He did His miracles because He was demon possessed. “... *He is possessed by Beelzebub...*” They said, “...*by the prince of demons He is driving out demons...*” Then we learned about the beheading of John the Baptist.

And our text this morning is Mark 6:34 which captures a moment when Jesus, despite His own need for rest, was affected by the sight of the crowd following Him. And He responded with love and care. Jesus was taking the Twelve disciples away for a rest. But a crowd of five thousand men, plus women and children making thousands more (Matthew 14:21) quickly followed Him. And as much as Jesus needed to spend time with His disciples who were His *shepherds-in-training*, His compassion wouldn't let Him neglect those thousands who followed Him like “lost sheep.” That word “*compassion*” in our text is from a Greek word meaning “*to be moved with love in the deepest part of a person.*” So, Jesus delayed His time of rest with His disciples to remain and heal and teach those people. (Matthew 14:14) Now, in Jesus' time there was no lack of Jewish religious leaders and teachers. Scribes were the teachers of the Law. The ones who drew up legal documents. They also copied the Old Testament Scripture and devoted themselves to the study of the law and how to apply it to daily life. They studied Scripture as it related to doctrinal and historical matters. Well-known Scribes, or teachers of the Law, had their own disciples, many of whom were members of the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin, which was the supreme legislative and judicial body in ancient Israel.

After the 70-year Babylonian Exile of the Jews ended in 597 B.C. (Ezra 7:6) Scribes had to make sure the Mosaic Law was copied and interpreted correctly. Gone was the glory of the former kingdom and temple. Gone was the great population. All that was left was the rubble of Jerusalem, the remnant of the people, and the task of restoration. Jews were to obey not only the written Mosaic Law, but also the Oral Laws which covered every aspect of their daily life. The Oral Laws were highly detailed. And they were not things covered in the Written Law of Moses. They were about codes of conduct, rituals, worship, personal relationships, dietary laws, festivals, marital relations, and claims for damages which placed a heavy burden on the Jewish people that God had not intended. (Matthew 23:2–4). It caused the priests to walk a fine line between keeping the people in-line bound to the Law of Moses, while planning just how much they could rebel against their Roman occupiers without risking destruction. And local synagogue leaders? They had to choose Scripture readers for the weekly Sabbath worship from among men who questioned the meanings of Old Testament passages. And the people? They had to deal with Herod Antipas, the self-styled king who ruled Galilee and Perea and who killed John the Baptist as we learned last week. And then there was Pontius Pilate, the Roman senior official of Judea. Very few of these leaders were what you would call a *shepherd*. They controlled. They manipulated. They didn't provide protective, loving leadership. Jesus saw those men as “fat sheep” who took from the weak to feed themselves. (Ezekiel 34:17–24) So, Jesus was the fulfillment of Ezekiel 34:23: “*I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.*”

Now, Jesus had become the shepherd of Israel. By His actions and teachings, Jesus established Himself as the spiritual shepherd of Israel by fulfilling ancient prophecies and providing a model of selfless leadership and care. He could not refuse those who came to Him. So, the love and care of Jesus became central themes throughout the New Testament. They show His deep compassion. And His unselfish actions are here in our lesson today. Jesus saw a large crowd. He had compassion for them. They were like sheep without a shepherd. So, He began to teach them many things. He showed them His concern for their spiritual well-being. And here in Mark 6:34, the specific teachings of Jesus are not detailed; however, this verse underlines Jesus’ compassion for the crowd. It describes them as “*sheep without a shepherd.*” And it's this compassion that led Jesus to teach them many things.

And knowing the background of Jesus’ ministry, His teachings always included the Kingdom of God. Jesus spoke often about the Kingdom of God, explaining its nature. Its values. And how people could enter it. He taught love and compassion. He emphasized loving God and loving others. He highlighted the importance of compassion and mercy. And faith and trust in God? Jesus encouraged people to have faith in God. Trust God for supplying your needs. Seek His guidance. He called people to ask forgiveness of their sins. He emphasized God’s grace and mercy. Jesus taught about living a life that reflects God’s righteousness, which included the Beatitudes that highlight the values and attitudes that are respected in the Kingdom of Heaven.

So, the love and care of Jesus are obvious by His actions, His teachings, and His ultimate sacrifice on the Cross. His compassion. His healing. His guidance. His personal care. His forgiveness and service should provide a model for you to follow. Do your utmost to stand for these qualities in your own life. Show love and care for those around you. In this verse, you see Jesus’ compassion wasn’t just a fleeting emotion. He wasn’t putting on an act. It was a deep, gut-wrenching response to the needs of the people. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd. Lost and vulnerable. Now, sheep without a shepherd are in danger. They can easily get lost. They can fail to find nourishment. Similarly, without Jesus, we are

spiritually lost. Open to the dangers of sin and in need of guidance and spiritual food. Jesus, the Good Shepherd saw the needs of those people and responded with care and guidance. Despite being very tired and seeking rest, Jesus didn't turn away from the crowd. Instead, He began to teach them many things. And His teaching was significant providing spiritual nourishment, guidance, and truth that met their immediate need for direction and understanding. He showed that His compassion led to action. *"35 By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to Him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. 36 Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." 37 But He answered, "You give them something to eat." They said to Him, "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" 38 "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish." 39 Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. 41 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, He gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then He gave them to His disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. 42 They all ate and were satisfied, 43 and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. 44 The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand."*

And as followers of Christ, we are called to match His compassion. We live in a world where many are like sheep without a shepherd. Lost. Searching for meaning. And we are called to see to their needs like that little boy who went into a pet shop to buy a puppy. He looked and looked. Then he told the owner that he would be back with the money to buy the puppy in a couple of weeks. During those weeks he worked hard washing cars, and mowing lawns, doing chores around the house. Finally, he had the money and went back to the pet shop. He had picked out a puppy that was crippled. He walked up to the store owner and handed him the money. When the owner saw the puppy, he told the little boy to go pick another puppy because this puppy would never be able to play or run. It was crippled. The boy just smiled, and said it was just the puppy for him. This was the puppy he wanted. As the little boy walked out the door, the owner started to say something, but then remained silent. He knew why the little boy had picked out that puppy. Sticking out from the little boy's trouser leg was a brace on his leg.

Why did the little boy want that puppy? For the same reason Jesus wants to you. He knows how it feels to be alone and lonely. And He knows you are very special to Him! There may be someone here this morning who doesn't think God can use their life for His Glory. Perhaps you've done a lot of things you aren't proud of. You wonder if God can ever forgive you? Perhaps you've failed God many times and you wonder if Jesus is even willing to give you another chance. Perhaps you've hungered and thirsted for something, but you haven't been able to find anything to satisfy you. I want you to know, Jesus is here. And He will take you just as you are. Just as that little boy took that puppy, Jesus will take you with all your faults. With all your sin. With all your doubts and fears. With your limited talents and understanding He will begin to break you, to mold you, and use you in small ways. Then, when your life has become a miracle in progress He will use you in greater ways. Jesus came so that your life could count for something. Jesus came so that you could be delivered from your sin. Jesus came to give you eternal life. And Jesus will take you just as you are. He will make you into what He needs to build His kingdom. All you have to do is surrender your all to Him and let Him work in you.

And as you go along your way this week, strive to be like Jesus. Show compassion to those around you. Lead them to the Good Shepherd who cares for their souls. Be moved with compassion. Respond with love and action. This might mean offering a listening ear. Providing for physical needs. Or sharing the hope of the Gospel. Mark 6:34 reminds all of us of the boundless compassion of Jesus. He sees needs. He feels pain. And He responds with love and compassion. And so should you! AMEN