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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
July 22, 2018
9th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Jeremiah 23:1-6; Ephesians 2:13-22

Hymns: 2; 364; 783; 413:5-6 (238:3-5)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Mark 6:30-34

³⁰ "Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. ³¹ And He said to them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. ³² So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves.

³³ But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him. ³⁴ And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Expressing concern for others.

Compassion is a quality we look for in others, that there is a sense of empathy that one looks upon others with understanding and care when they are in a difficult situation. This is a quality that we

consider desirable in all people, but it is present in varying degrees. Tragically some people have very little empathy for the feelings or concerns of others. In some fields of endeavor in this world I suppose that may even be seen as a strength. A Wall Street businessman may be make some very cold hard decisions that may hurt many people, but investors realize a profit and may praise the decision. Some politicians can play both sides of this, portraying themselves as a caring for the voters but only as long as it serves their own political ambitions. A result of this is that people see through the charade and get very cynical about politician and government officials, and big business.

In things spiritual compassion coupled with the truth is necessary for serving the flock of God. Regrettably people are too easily distracted by the superficial, and pastors are too often driven by numbers and ambition. That is what the Lord saw in Judah in the days of Jeremiah when he called out the false shepherds and promised that He would send new and faithful shepherds in their place and ultimately that One whom we would call the LORD our Righteousness. (Jeremiah 23:6) Such false shepherds can still be seen today, but that is not the case with Jesus who is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. (John 10:11)

Our text this morning records events leading up to one of Jesus' best known miracles, the feeding of the five thousand. Because of this its own message concerning Jesus and the pastoral ministry is often passed by without notice. The Holy Spirit reveals the truth about --

THEME: Jesus as the Chief Shepherd of Souls.

Our text begins with the disciples returning from their first venture into society in the role of apostles. As special messengers of Christ Jesus had sent them out with both power to perform miracles, and specific instructions in both the message they were to present and the manner in which they conducted themselves while presenting it.

After the term of their assignment was expired they met back in Capernaum, Jesus' adopted hometown. Our text reports:

Mark 6:30-32 “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.³¹ And He said to them, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.³² So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves.”

What we see is what we should expect, but it is still important for us to take note of this truth. In His role as Chief Shepherd we are shown --

I. Jesus’ Supervision of the Gospel Ministry.

If you assume that a sense of excitement accompanied this report of the disciples I am sure that you are right. This was the first time that the disciples had been sent out with the gospel and the accompanying authority over evil spirits. Jesus was well aware of the adversary’s ploy to exhibit terrifying power in opposition to the gospel, in an attempt to undermine the comfort and peace offered in the gospel. So the disciples had been granted authority to do what they had only seen Jesus do, order evil spirits to leave their victims. It was of course still the power of Jesus, the power of His name that prevailed over the demons. The disciples were to report back to Jesus exactly what they encountered, and what they had done in response. The power and authority of the Word of God surely must have been impressed upon them.

Jesus also desired a report regarding exactly what they had taught, that they had been faithful to the message of repentance with which Jesus had sent them. This was not only an important part of the disciple’s training, it was also an acknowledgement of Jesus as the One who had sent them, as the One who is in charge of the ministry of the gospel.

This also is still true today. Jesus remains the Chief Shepherd of souls. It is only as Jesus’ under-shepherds that any pastors have any authority, and then only as they are called and delegated to exercise that authority on the behalf of other Christians. I serve under your call to conduct the gospel ministry in your midst in your name because the ministry of the gospel was entrusted to Christ’s Church on earth. So it is that groups of Christians call others to conduct the public ministry on their behalf. So your

calling me as your pastor is dependent upon the authority entrusted to you by the Lord Jesus. When we look to the great commission we see there how Jesus authorized the gospel ministry to go out into all the world. It remains under the power and authority of Jesus. It is His gospel. It is His ministry of the gospel. Even as the disciples were held to give account of what they had done and what they had taught, so we also are not free to conduct the ministry as we see fit, or to alter the message to please ourselves or our audience.

We should note that Jesus regarded this important enough to take time away from the crowds that were coming and going in such numbers that they didn't have any time even for their daily needs of food and rest. Jesus called the disciples to a boat and they left for open country where they might be away from the crowds for a time. As it turned out the only time they had to be alone was the time it took to get from shore to shore. The crowds anticipated Jesus' destination, and hurried to meet Him there. So that time together on the boat was precious, and may have served well for the conversation, meditation, instruction, and prayer Jesus desired to have with His disciples.

We also should recognize the value of these activities for restoration of our own spiritual well-being. We may need to get away from the busy-ness of life not only for physical rest but that we too might meditate upon the Word of the Lord, and pour out our hearts to Him in prayer.

When they arrived at the other shore Jesus saw the crowds coming. You might think that He would be a little disappointed that He was still going to be denied the quiet time He desired to have with His disciples. But that is not the nature of the Chief Shepherd of our souls. The reaction our text reports is --

II. Jesus' Compassion for Wandering Sheep.

Mark 6:34 "Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things."

What is important to the Lord when He looks down from heaven above on the people of this world? Yes we are assured in many scriptures that the Lord sympathizes with us in our weaknesses and in our afflictions. He surely demonstrated that countless times in the three years of His public ministry by healing many hundreds and even thousands of people of their diseases. He took their sufferings on Himself; He felt their pain.

He still does. He cares for you. He also encourages us to do good to all people, especially to those who are of the household of faith. But this is the lesson of the event that follows our text. It is the secondary concern of our Lord Jesus. The Lord's primary concern for this multitude of people He saw as He climbed out of the boat that afternoon was their spiritual condition. The Lord sees the heart. Jesus addresses the needs of the soul. Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep not having a shepherd.

What about sheep not having a shepherd? If they are out in open range they will be wandering all over the place clueless as to the dangers that surround them. They will be vulnerable to attack of any predator lurking about.

That is what Jesus saw in this multitude. Physically they were together in a large crowd, but spiritually? Spiritually they were all over the place. We know from the gospels that the people of Judah and Galilee didn't have a proper understanding of the kingdom of God. They were looking for an earthly kingdom, an earthly paradise. They didn't understand repentance. They didn't understand righteousness or how to attain righteousness before God. They didn't understand the Old Testament promises regarding the Messiah that was to come being a spiritual Savior. So many basic truths of God's Word had been lost to them because of unfaithful shepherds. The politics of the chief priests and the work righteousness of the Pharisees had undermined the truth. The local rabbis who taught in their synagogues were inclined to suggest various meanings for the same scripture, quoting varying opinions from the Talmud, the books of commentary accumulated in the last centuries of the Old Testament era.

The country was left in a state of spiritual confusion. This is what Jesus saw as He looked over the multitude that was approaching,

and He was moved with compassion. His heart went out to them because spiritually they were like sheep without a shepherd. He was moved with compassion, moved to act, and the action necessary for this situation? Jesus taught them. Jesus taught them many things.

Teaching is what Jesus' ministry was actually about. He taught them the truth about the kingdom of God. He taught them the truth about repentance, and the forgiveness of sins. He taught them what they needed to know for eternal life.

If one goes to the conclusion of this event as it is recorded in John's gospel one might wrongly conclude that Jesus could have saved His breath, and simply gone away and taken that rest He and His disciples needed. By the conclusion of the following day many who had believed on Jesus turned away from Him, leading Jesus to ask even the twelve, "Will you also go away?" (John 6:67) But Jesus didn't operate that way. He was moved by compassion. He taught them many things, teaching the doctrines of Holy Scripture. That is what matters at the end of one's life on earth; does one know and believe in the one true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent? Do we know the truth that saves the soul, that opens the door to Paradise?

This is what the Lord Jesus would have us understand as important as we conduct the work of ministry among us, and in our community, and as far as we are involved in world missions. If we have a love for souls as Jesus did; if we care for those for whom the Lord Jesus poured out His holy precious blood onto the ground, then let us be moved with compassion. Let us see that there are so many lost and wandering souls out in this world who need the one thing needful, the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord has entrusted us with His truth, the truth of a Redeemer who died for us and rose again, a Savior who delivers us from sin and death through faith in His name. Jesus would have us take this truth and share it. Through us, Jesus would continue to teach the multitudes the many things God has revealed to us in the Scriptures that we might have life in His name.

This is the work for which Jesus was training the disciples, imparting to them the necessary knowledge and gifts to take the

gospel out into the world. This is the ministry which Jesus has entrusted to us as His disciples today, as a congregation, and especially to the elders and pastor of this congregation. Peter exhorts congregation elders near the end of his first epistle:

1 Peter 5: 1-5 “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ² Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

These inspired words of Peter communicate well the serious nature of the charge entrusted to us as under-shepherds of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are called to share Jesus’ concern for souls. But who is worthy of such a high calling, and who among can take on such a task? The power is not of us, but of the Lord Himself. To this end we are blessed with benediction closing the Epistle to the Hebrews:

Hebrews 13:20-21 “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, ²¹make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.”

And -

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.