

The Heart of the Good Shepherd

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[0 : 00] Beautiful songs, huh? The Heart of the Good Shepherd is the title of my message this morning.

I'll have you in the Gospel of Mark. I had mentioned to you last Sunday that I have been focusing in my own walk with the Lord on the compassion of Jesus for this Christmas time.

Just allowing my mind to my heart to think about, contemplate, meditate on the goodness of God in showing compassion to people who are undeserving of that compassion.

We don't deserve God's goodness to us in the Lord Jesus. We don't deserve what God has done for us in Christ. Boy, I hope that's more than just words for you.

I hope when you think about that truth, it really sobers your soul about how much God loves us to have given Jesus Christ to die on the cross as our substitute, taking on our sin and being punished to death for the wrongs that we've done in our lives so that we could be forgiven for all eternity for those sins and be made right with the Father through faith in Jesus.

[1 : 21] What an incredible, incredible walk we have as we understand these truths from the Scriptures. And this morning, we get to think about and take a hard look into one of the many, many acts of Jesus where He demonstrated this kind of beautiful compassion in practical ways to people who were needy.

And Jesus did this getting nothing from them. He did it out of the goodness of His own soul for the need of these people. We're going to be here in Mark chapter 6, but I wanted to, as usual, make a few introductory remarks before we actually read from the text.

In the previous passage, just in order to set the context of what is happening in the flow of Mark's gospel, the previous context in chapter 6, verses 14 through 29, hard-hearted King Herod and his wicked wife, Herodias, have killed John the Baptist.

One of the final prophets that came in from the Old Testament age into the New Testament age, John being a faithful, faithful prophet and foreteller of events in the name of Almighty God, John had remained faithful to the truth in his ministry, and so that truth meant that he had to speak against the illegal ways that Herod had come to marry his brother's wife by murdering him and taking this woman to himself, and now he has killed John the Baptist because of the jealousy of Herodias, this wife that he took, and so John's been martyred.

Now as tragic a blow as that was for Jesus and his disciples in that time and how it grieved their hearts, Jesus Christ keeps his disciples focused on God's purposes and designs.

[3 : 33] In other words, Jesus sends out his disciples in the midst of all of this political intrigue and all of this upheaval as Herod has killed John the Baptist, he sends his men right out into the midst of the danger of all of that to continue Jesus' ministry of preaching, teaching, casting out demons, and healing the sick.

And Jesus is letting them know these events are not going to control who we are or what we do, and they don't define the way that we approach ministry and life as we serve the Father.

We have a purpose. And the stuff that's going on around us, the stuff that's impacting us, will not change who we are or the mission that we've been sent to accomplish in the Father.

Now that's resolve, isn't it? Jesus loved the Father and He loved doing the Father's will. And nothing, nothing of humanity was going to stop Him from that.

But at the same time, we need to understand what humanity has to do with that mission. And that's what this story is about. In chapter 6, verse 30, we can pick it up where the disciples, after Jesus has sent them out on this mission for a brief time and window, go out and do these things and then I want you to come back and report to me and we'll talk about what happened.

[5 : 04] This is just great leadership on Jesus' part. We pick it up in 630 where the disciples have returned. They're going to offer this report about their adventures.

It's very brief in Mark's Gospel. We have a little more in some of the other Gospels. It says, the apostles gathered together with Jesus and they reported to Jesus all that they had done and taught.

And Jesus said to them, come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while. And then there is a parenthetical note here, for there were many people coming and going and the disciples, the apostles, didn't even have time to eat.

They were so busy with ministry. Listen, y'all, and they were so welcomed in terms of what they were doing. It was so well received and God was doing such a powerful work among these people that the disciples didn't even have time to break away for a meal.

They were so pressed by the people for ministry. The ministry is very demanding. It's real and nothing's changed in that regard.

[6 : 15] The ministry is a very taxing and demanding enterprise. It's not a nine-to-five job. And so these men are feeling some of the effects of that. In verse 32 then, what happens as a result of what Jesus says?

They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves. So Jesus puts them all in a boat and they have to go out into the water in order to get away from the constant pressure of ministry and the constant neediness of people so that they can, as it were, come back and minister another day.

And that's what Jesus does with these men. Right away then, we are allowed to see Jesus' concern for His disciples.

That's important. These men needed time with Christ to what we might say debrief, decompress. They needed physical rest.

They needed to sleep. They needed some down time. They needed to sit around the fire with the Lord and talk shop with Him in ways that took the pressure off of them.

[7 : 27] But, life and ministry didn't stop because they were tired. Did it? No. So Mark's characterization of Jesus as the suffering servant of God, that's Mark's main theme in this Gospel.

Jesus as the suffering servant of God. That characterization also involved the disciples in that suffering as well. The disciples are going to become more and more like their teacher.

And so more and more of what Jesus is feeling in the way of physical exhaustion because He's a human being. He gets physically tired from all that He's doing and His body begins to feel the effects of that.

These men are becoming like their teacher in the way that they give everything they have as they seek to shepherd God's people. That's what true shepherds do.

It's part of the process of being called into ministry. Greg and I are under shepherds of the great shepherd and we are called to be like Him even as you are and to shepherd in the way that He does.

[8 : 38] And so being exhausted in ministry, being taxed in ministry, feeling like the threads are getting bearer in ministry. That's just part of what it is. I'm being truthful with you.

That's just part of what it is. We bear your burdens with you. We weep the tears of suffering with you. We carry very soberly the pains and heartaches and griefs that you carry.

And that's what shepherds do. So I admit to you, this is one of the reasons as I began to weigh up what God was doing and calling me into the ministry as a very young man and a new Christian, it scared me to death to think about those kinds of things because I just felt like there is no way I could be up to that.

And I was right. I was right to feel that way. I can't bear those things. Greg cannot bear those things in our humanity, can we? It is by the grace of God that we're able to do those things.

Now please don't hear me whining about this. I am bringing out to you what the scripture tells us here about the reality of being human. What am I saying to you?

[9 : 51] Here's what I'm saying. You are weak. Did you know that? Is that news? I am weak.

And we all have this in common. It's because we're human. We haven't received our glorified bodies yet. We're not in heaven with Jesus yet.

All the sins and problems and ills of this world have not left us yet. And so we're here battling personal sin, battling against the sin that others do to us, battling against an unjust world, a world of war and bloodshed and hatred.

We're still here, aren't we? We're still in the fight. What I want to say to you this morning is that being human is not the main issue defining who you are.

It's important. It's vital for us to understand and accept that we're weak. But there is a greater reality about us than being human. We share humanity with unbelievers across the planet, but are we not set apart from unbelievers in a very, very special way?

[11 : 06] We have the grace of God working in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit living in us. Folks, can you think of a greater miracle of difference than that?

God lives in you. Weak as you are, He lives in you. And He cannot disown Himself.

We need to remember that. We need to remember that. Well, let's look into this text and see what's going on with these people because this is a story that is recognizable by many people, even unbelievers have heard of this particular instance in Jesus' life.

We refer to it as Jesus feeding the 5,000. There is also an account in Scripture where Jesus feeds the 4,000 or a lesser number of people. This is the account of the 5,000.

In verse 33, we pick it up, the people saw the disciples and Jesus going, and many recognized them and ran there together on foot from all the cities and got there ahead of them.

[12 : 16] So they know, these people know where Jesus and the disciples are rowing to. And not to be outdone, they just traverse around the lake and they just go to the place where they know they're going to have to, you know, spot X.

And so as they're rowing up to get away from everybody, they look up and they see the hillside covered with thousands of people. Come on, hurry up, get here. That's Jesus' life.

And so Jesus threw a fit in the boat and said, oh, how are we going to get away from these people? No. No. No. The disciples may have said something.

There might have been some grumbling in the boat from the disciples, but Jesus didn't have that attitude. Go on with me. Look what happens. Well, they get to the shore in verse 34.

When Jesus went ashore, he saw a large crowd. Yeah, large. We're going to find out how large in a moment. And he felt compassion for them. Oh, my goodness.

[13 : 17] How far away from a hard heart or a grumbling attitude or a feeling of imposition. Because why did he feel such compassion?

Because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And Jesus began to teach them many things. A beautiful Savior, beautiful Jesus. When it was already quite late, his disciples came to him and said, this place is desolate and it's already quite late.

Send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat. But Jesus answered them, you give them something to eat. And they said to him, okay, well, shall we go and spend 200 denarii on bread and give them something to eat?

And Jesus said to them, how many loaves do you have? Go look. And when they found out, they said, five and two fish. And Jesus commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass and so they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.

And Jesus took the five loaves and two fish and looking up toward heaven, he blessed the food and he 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.

[14 : 35] They all ate and were satisfied. That's one verse in the Bible. And they picked up 12 full baskets of the broken pieces and also of the fish.

There were 5,000 men who ate the loaves. Quite a story. Mark has repeatedly shown his readers how the, what we would call heavenly authority of Jesus influenced the lives of those around him.

This is heaven's authority in action. This is the Lord of creation. This is the God who made everything, including the food these people are about to partake of.

And we get to see this God, Jesus Christ, God, in terms of exercising his authority over what he's made. And so we have this miracle where this bread, these few loaves and these few fish are multiplied in the hands of almighty God, who is Jesus Christ, the Lord.

And as he gives them to the disciples and fills the baskets and hands them to them and reaches back more appear, he creates it as he gives it, he creates it.

[15 : 57] That's what's happening and they can see it. They can see it happening right before their very eyes. Isn't that incredible? Would you not love to be there?

I would have loved to have snuck up real close and looked around the disciples and said, did you, did you, come here, come here. Did you see that? Watch, watch, watch.

You saw it too, right? He just reached out and there was. And he emptied his hands and he came back and he reached out and there was again. We fly by this too fast.

We need to sit and think and contemplate, meditate on the fact that that's the God who lives in you. But he doesn't care about your suffering.

He doesn't care about your weakness. He doesn't care about what you're struggling with. He doesn't care about how you're tempted. Not this God. Really? But we sure are tempted to think like that when we're in the throes of a dark place, a hard place, a challenging place.

[17 : 08] And beloved, my task this morning is to remind you of who it is that lives in you and the compassion that he has for your heart.

So Jesus is exercising his heavenly authority. Now we need to ask some questions about this authority, given the fact that again, and I can't help but say this to you all over the news for months now.

We have been watching as the political system in our country has been exposed day after day for the abuse of authority.

And how many millions of people in our country have been negatively impacted by that abuse? It's absolutely egregious when we look at the reality of what it is.

When you look at the news and think about the authority that's being abused across this planet and how many men and women and babies and children have been murdered and slaughtered in the name of one man's authority and ego and desire for power, Putin.

[18 : 16] Wherever you are on the spectrum of these wars, in Syria or wherever else they're happening, thousands upon thousands of people have been slaughtered in the name of authority.

I hope some of it righteous, much of it not so. We live in a place where the authority that we wield is constantly abused and used for our own gain or the gain of others.

So I want to ask some questions about the authority of our Lord as we begin this morning. Is Jesus' authority cold? Is it cruel? Is it callous?

Is it critical? Do you see that in the life of our Lord as He wields His authority? Is He using it to dress people down and cut them down?

Is He cold about it? That's a fair question to ask. Does Jesus abuse His authority in harsh and demanding, selfish and prideful ways?

[19 : 20] Because that's certainly what we see in the religious leaders around Jesus and in many other people around Christ who have positions of authority.

We see those very things. How about this one? Is Jesus' authority irrelevant and unconnected to the human need that is all around Him? Or is it especially related to that need?

Is Jesus just disconnected from people? Does He just not understand the heart and the voice and the need of His people so that He's constantly out of step and out of tune with how He applies His authority to these people's lives?

Another fair question to ask. And then, how does the Son of God use His power and authority when faced with the needs and oppositions of sinful humanity?

When people come to Him in need, but also when people come to Him in opposition, when they're angry, when they disagree with Him. How does Jesus wield His authority in those situations?

[20 : 31] Well, the Lord Jesus looked on the crowds not as an imposition to His plans. They weren't an intrusion on His life. These people were lost in wandering sheep in need of a shepherd.

That's how Jesus saw them. He was that shepherd. Amen? He was that shepherd. He came to call the lost sheep of Israel back to God.

Don't dismiss Israel. They're still God's people. We're going to see that God's going to continue to use Israel. And one day, Israel is going to be central to His plan of the gospel.

What an amazing thing. Jesus came to call the lost sheep of Israel back to Himself. And as their shepherd who loved them and had compassion on them, Jesus was fully aware.

He was fully aware of their every need. He knew their physical, spiritual, emotional, mental, and social needs. Jesus Christ knew what these people needed.

[21 : 37] He wasn't out of tune. Now, folks, look. To be human means that in each day of your life, at some level or another, you and I are confronted with our limitations and our failures.

Every day. Is that not true? Every day, at some level or another, because we're human beings, we're confronted with our limitations. We're confronted with our failures and our weaknesses in our walk with the Lord.

We will either look inward in those times of failure and suffering and see more of the same, or we can look to Jesus Christ and see His heart, His love, and His grace for us.

Have you ever been tempted in that way? Where you're suffering from some issue, you're dealing with sin in your life in some way, you feel beaten down by it, and you spend time looking in and just seeing more of the dark, more of the sin, more of the faith.

It's like you can't get away from the failure that you feel. It just won't leave you. That's the time when you need to strip away by faith that look into all that nonsense, and you need to exalt a heart that looks into the love of Jesus Christ for sinners.

[23 : 01] sinners. That's what you need. You need to have your heart warmed by the grace of the gospel. It's not that Jesus doesn't care about your sin.

It's that Jesus cares more about you living by faith in His grace, the goodness of His heart for you. Because He has made, what?

Propitiation for your sin. He has made sacrifice for your sin. So that there's therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. That's where we live.

Not being pounded by God for the wrong we do, but being wooed by Jesus Christ to look to the Father in the cross. It used to be right there.

In the cross. And see in that cross the love of Almighty God for His people. This is what is being brought out in the passage today.

[24 : 01] Jesus brings His disciples into and He brings them, now listen, by design, Jesus brings them into and He brings them through a situation where their meager resources which they bring to Jesus are then multiplied in His power and then meted out by His mercy and all of that to magnify His name.

I will take the weakness and I will take the limitation of what you bring to me because it is not sufficient. Will these loaves and fishes feed these thousands?

And the disciples said, no, they won't. Why are we even doing this? And Jesus takes the limit of that and the insufficiency of that and what does He do?

He makes it more than sufficient by His power and grace and love and mercy. That's Jesus. That's the God we serve. That's why we're not defined by human weakness.

We're defined by the power of Almighty God working through the Spirit in our lives. That's what defines us and that's where we should look. That's where we should camp out.

[25 : 19] Jesus Christ is God. He meets us in our weakness and in our need with His compassion on us as His children.

So if we'll humble ourselves, if we'll trust Christ, if we'll seek to obey the Lord, which is just exactly how God talked to Cain.

Cain, why are you downcast? Why has your countenance fallen? Will your countenance not be lifted up if you do right? If we obey the Lord and seek to be faithful to God, what will we find in God time and time again?

Even when we're unfaithful? Faithfulness. That's what we find in Him. That's what we find in the Lord. We will always find Jesus faithful to provide for us in the peace and hope that we need for life.

Now notice, in the text that we'll look at today, notice where Jesus begins in His ministry to this crowd. This is very important and interesting. At least it is to me interesting.

[26 : 30] He begins in a place that most people skip over and don't realize the importance of. Alright? So I want to put this up here so we can kind of highlight it. How does Jesus define the need?

Mark gives us the answer in two ways. Where does Jesus start? First, first, He tells us what induced Jesus' compassion for these people.

Where does Jesus begin as He sets forward to minister to these people by what He sees and what He knows is in their hearts.

How's Jesus going to frame this? Where's He going to put the priority in ministry in this moment? The first thing He does is Mark tells us what induced Jesus' compassion for them.

And then, secondly, Mark tells us how Jesus acted compassionately. It's one thing for Jesus to perceive the need and accurately understand what's going on.

[27 : 36] It's another thing for Jesus to then take action to meet that need. And He doesn't fail in either category. So the first thing that we'll look at in our text is the compassion of Jesus perceiving the need.

Jesus perceiving the need. Now I want you to notice it's one verse. And then we'll do all the other verses in point two. One verse. When Jesus went ashore, verse 34, He saw a large crowd and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

And He began to teach them many things. Now this verse sets the tone of the entire scene and situation.

It establishes the direction. It establishes the emphasis of the passage. So if you're looking to try and understand the key to interpreting this passage, verse 34 has it for you.

The word compassion is a very powerful descriptor for the deep, deep empathy of Jesus. It describes Jesus being deeply moved within.

[28 : 50] So this is a sense of strong, deep, connecting empathy with these people. It's as if Jesus has crawled into their skin to feel what they're feeling, to experience what they're experiencing.

That's the power of this word. Don't skip over it. That's the compassion of your Lord. To feel what you feel. To be in your skin. It's one of the reasons the Bible makes such an important element out of Jesus' humanity.

When it says He has felt your struggles. He has suffered in ways that you suffer. He has known the trials. He understands.

Because He's human. And yet He's God. And so He was able to conquer the things that have conquered us. So our own struggles, our own weaknesses and suffering deeply, deeply move our Savior.

Please don't let yourself be tempted to the place where you think, where is God? Where is God? Does God not know what's going on with me? Does He not know the loneliness I feel? Does He not know how empty I feel right now?

[30 : 04] Does He not know what I'm thinking and feeling? Yes, He does. He does. The Lord always relates to you. He always relates to me out of the deep compassion of His heart for our good and our growth.

Always. Every time. All the time. Now this compassion is the basis for what Jesus does. because this is who your Lord and Savior is in His relationship with you.

He is the lover of your soul. Jesus Christ is the gentle shepherd of your soul. He is a gentle shepherd. This is what we're seeing here.

But look at this. This is also the basis of Jesus' methodology in ministry. Now that becomes very important to Greg and I as under shepherds.

You see, I remember going into seminary and all the debates that took place the first time I was in seminary because I was in a liberal seminary and I didn't know I was. I was too young in the faith to know all that at the time.

[31 : 11] And there was this great debate about how to do church. You know, when you get out and so they taught us all of this stuff about programming and all of this stuff about how to divide Sunday school classes and oh my goodness I about died.

It was so boring. And I had no idea. I thought this is going to be the stuff I got to do. You know, I'm not that kind of guy but I got to do this. This will be part of it. You know, whatever. But then I start getting into where I'm reading the scripture and I read places like this and I realize no, wait a minute.

The Bible has a methodology for ministry. We just need to do it the way the Bible says. We just need to be God's people and we just need to do church the way he says church needs to be done.

And we just need to focus on the priorities of what he says. It really isn't that difficult in terms of seeing it in the scripture. And that began to revolutionize the way that I thought about shepherding or shepherdology.

How do you shepherd God's people? How do you fulfill that role faithfully before the Lord? And that's what we're seeing here. The methodology of Jesus grows out of who he is and why he was sent.

[32 : 25] The purpose that he has in fulfilling God's will. It's just not rocket science here. So the methodology in ministry relates to human suffering and weakness.

His disciples are learning to be like their master as they too face their own weaknesses and the sins and the failures of others that they're encountering.

In fact, here's what we can say. The ministry of the disciples on behalf of Jesus was so successful that the crowds wouldn't let the disciples out of their sight.

Once they went out and started ministering, so many wonderful things were happening in the name of Christ and in the power of Christ extended through these men by grace that these people were just magnetized by it.

It's like they could not leave these men. They couldn't believe what they were seeing and they couldn't believe what they were receiving. The people ran from all the surrounding cities and they were standing all along the countryside as Jesus and the disciples made their way to the shore.

[33 : 33] And what a sight that must have been to see thousands of people standing there. Listen, this is what the text tells us. The crowd was enormous. The Gospels the Gospels tell us that there were 5,000 men in the group.

That's a consistent number across the Gospel. 5,000 men. They counted the men only. That wasn't including all the women and children. So, scholars have come up with the idea and it sounds feasible to me.

There could have been 15,000 to 20,000 plus people. 15,000 to 20,000 people in that place at that time. No public restrooms.

No carts or what do you call those food wagon things, you know? Food trucks. Thank you. We look for the ones that say tacos.

Yeah, they're good. Anyway, don't get me on that. There's none of that. 15,000 people. Listen, they have all kinds of needs. They have hunger.

[34 : 38] They have sickness. They have diseases. They have blindness. They have lameness. And there they are, just waiting. But listen to this now. I'm emphasizing this for you because that's how the text is bringing it out.

They see, they physically see this tremendous crowd of people. I just can't even imagine what they felt like seeing that. Oh my goodness. How are we going to manage that?

I mean, we're just 12 guys in Jesus. How are we going to do this? But look, their physical needs were not where Jesus put the priority in assessing nor addressing their needs.

No, they were sheep without a shepherd. Amen? Right? That's where our Lord goes. Now, boy, we need to really key in on that. That's how Jesus perceived and defined the problem.

He was not overwhelmed by what he saw. The only emotion that really moved Jesus in his methodology was deep empathy and compassion.

[35 : 46] He wasn't intimidated or overwhelmed. Jesus didn't dismiss the reality of their physical need for food. He didn't. He didn't overlook that. But he knew better that this was not their greatest need.

We need to take a lesson from that. Here's what he said. And here's what he saw. They were spiritually lost, adrift, aimless.

They were sheep without a shepherd. And that's how the Bible defines the need of every single human being. Every one of us. And here's where we see that. All of us, like sheep, have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way.

All. All. Every single one of us. That's the reality. And so God sees our lostness through his compassion.

Let me read that a different way now with the emphases there. God sees our lostness through his compassion. God sees your need and your weakness through his compassion.

[36 : 51] God is not defined by your limits. God is not boxed in by your limits, your weaknesses, your temptations, your inability, abilities. That doesn't define God's work in your life.

And it shouldn't define you. Here's something else Jesus saw. They were blind and helpless. And he knew that. Spiritually blind and helpless to help themselves.

Even on a physical level in this case. We see this in Scripture about ourselves as well. We share this with these people. The God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see what?

The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. We have an adversary constantly doing that work against those who are unbelieving.

It's why I've asked you to pray for this gentleman that I told you about earlier that I hope to be able to meet with. That God will open the eyes of his heart and remove this reality to help him see the goodness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[37 : 57] That Jesus died on the cross to save him from his sins. We need to pray it. We need to believe it. And we need to speak it. God is compassionate and ready to forgive.

Isn't that wonderful? In this reality, folks, do you see what we're doing here? In this reality, this is not greater than this. The grace of God and his compassion is greater than the reality of our unbelief or we'd have no hope.

And so we preach this and teach this reality. God is compassionate and ready to forgive. Verse 34 defines and sets the tone for interpreting and understanding this incident in the life of Christ and all of these thousands and thousands of people in this moment.

Then, in point two, compassion providing for the need. That takes us as Jesus deals with their physical need using that to prove the reality of their spiritual need.

In other words, it's as if Jesus is saying, my ability to do this miracle on a physical level is evidence of the miracle that I can do in you on a spiritual level.

[39 : 21] what I can do physically for you, I can do even greater spiritually inside of you. That's what the miracles always point to, isn't it?

That He's God operating on the earth. So He gets to do what He wants to do with what He made. Now, notice how this contrasts with the lack of compassion in the leaders of Israel.

Herod and the Pharisees used and abused the people. And God takes this abuse very, very seriously.

Can I show you? If you would turn backwards to the book of Ezekiel, it's a big book in the Old Testament, you'd be able to find it. Ezekiel 34, I want to just take a brief break here and show you how serious God is about people who are given authority over God's people and abuse that authority against God's people.

Take advantage of them. Oh, woe be to that person, male or female, that we would ever hoodwink or use or abuse the people of the Lord and the authority God gives us to teach and preach and minister the truth.

[40 : 39] So Ezekiel 34, 1-10, I think I have that here. Let me put it up there for you. Yep, Ezekiel 34, 1-10. Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel.

Prophesy and say to those shepherds, thus says the Lord God, woe, that word means warning, curse, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves, should not the shepherds feed the flock?

You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool. You slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock. You see what's going on there in verse 3? They're using the people for their own ends.

Those who are sickly, you've not strengthened. The diseased, you've not healed. The broken, you've not bound up. The scattered, you've not brought back. Nor have you sought for the lost.

See, that's the work of the shepherd, folks. But with force and with severity, you have dominated them. They were scattered then for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered.

[41 : 57] See, there's no protection. There's no seeking. There's no giving. There's no sacrifice. My flock then wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill.

My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth and there was no one to search or seek for them. That's tragic. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord.

As I live, declares the Lord God, surely because my flock has become a prey, my flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd.

And my shepherds did not search for my flock, but rather the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed my flock. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord.

Thus says the Lord God, behold, I am against the shepherds and I will demand my sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep.

[42 : 57] So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver my flock from their mouth so that they will not be food for them. Oh boy, that's terrifying stuff right there.

I wouldn't want to be one of those guys hearing that message. That's how serious God is about his people. Herod saw the people of Israel as a commodity.

They were sheep to be sheared and devoured for his own purpose and use, his own pleasure. We see this, don't we? Do we not see the abuse of authority all around us where people exploit and manipulate and steal and lie and control so that they can increase their power base or just give themselves a more pleasurable easy going life.

It's everywhere. You see it, I see it. You've been on the receiving end, I've been on the receiving end. Some of us may have even been guilty of it ourselves in different ways at different levels.

Taking advantage and exploiting other people for our own power and good at the expense of other people. It's terrible.

[44 : 09] People were useful to these men only as they served their own greedy ends. So the masses were a poor investment of his resources.

Instead, no, Herod invested in the rich and influential of society. He courted their common lusts for power. In other words, he brought people around him that were like him and they were willing to compromise their integrity in order to exploit other people to their own ends.

In verse 21 of chapter 34, because you push with side and with shoulder and thrust at all the weak with your horns until you have scattered them abroad, therefore I will deliver my flock and they will no longer be a prey and I will judge between one sheep and the other.

Do you know, from the top down, you understand the trickle effect. People are affected by leadership. What does the Bible say? You sit under certain leaders long enough, you become like your teacher.

You can't help it. It's part of human nature. It matters who you listen to and who you allow to influence you. You sit under that long enough, you'll start thinking like them and you'll start acting like them.

[45 : 28] You'll start adopting their values or lack of them. And that's what happened here. These men knew how to seek out and surround themselves with other people who would push and shoulder and shove and control and manipulate and hook people for their own ends.

And God says, I detest that. And you're going to answer to me because I care about my people. Boy, I tell you, I don't want any part of that.

The Pharisees loaded the people down with burdens of rules and regulations that they could not bear. I'm not going to read it to you, but that's in Mark chapter 7.

If you go to Mark 7 and you look particularly at verses 8 and 9, you'll see Jesus indicting them and saying, you're putting a load on my people that they can't bear and you're going to answer for it.

You're going to answer for it. Well, how did the disciples provide for the people? What's the contrast? Well, the disciples, look at this now, look at the text, the disciples would send the people away because the disciples were mean, they were uncaring men.

[46 : 43] Is that it? Is that how we could read this? What do they say to them? Well, they walk up to Jesus when it was already quite late, his disciples came and said, you know, hey, look, Lord, we're looking at this thing, we've kind of talked among ourselves, this is a desolate place, it's already quite late.

Who do you think was the spokesman here? It doesn't say. Who do you think? Peter? I think Peter, probably, maybe John, but probably Peter. It's a desolate place, it's already quite late, let's send all these people away so that they can get into the surrounding countryside before it gets too dark, go into the villages and stuff.

Let them get something to eat, Lord. And you know, that sounds like something Jeff would say, you know, trying to think it through. Right? That sounds very logical and it sounds caring.

Right? So they're not being mean. I don't think they're just trying to push this off. I think they're looking at it and they're saying, yeah, what can we do? And I'm like, who's with you?

Do you not know who stands beside you ready to do whatever it takes for these people to be ministered? All you got to do is look at Jesus and say, boss, what do you think?

[48 : 01] Give us the word. I know you're going to do something. You're going to do something, aren't you? You're going to do something. I know you are. That's what I wish Jeff would do because I know you.

I know you, Lord, Lord. But I probably would have been standing there with him going, that's a good plan, Jesus. I hope you go with that. That's a good plan.

Nope. What does he say to them? Look at this is so verse 37. But Jesus answered them. Now, guys, look, I know your heart's in the right place and bless your heart.

No, no. What does he? You give them something to eat. Boom. Boop. We're done. You give them something to eat. What? Well, they replied, okay, we can do that.

It's going to cost a lot of money. I don't think we have this much money. And then Jesus responds in 38. How many loaves do you have? Well, they didn't know. So what does he say?

[49 : 05] Well, go look, go find out. And when they found out, they came back and they said, we have five loaves and two fish. And he commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass.

And they sat down in groups of hundreds. And now here's where it gets really good. Wouldn't you have loved to have been one of the disciples saying he's getting ready to do something. He's having them all sit down. He's not sending them away.

He's doing the opposite. He's putting them down. Something's about to happen. And sure enough, he took the loaves, he took the two fish, and looking up to heaven.

That is what we need to do. We need to look up to heaven. And Jesus blessed the food and broke the loaves, and he kept giving them to the disciples to set before the people.

And they were all satisfied, and then they picked up all these baskets full of the broken pieces, and of all the fish. Wow.

[50 : 11] What was wrong with the disciples? Well, they wanted to send these people away because they didn't perceive the issue from God's perspective. That's it.

Their answer neglected to look to Jesus in faith. Knowing that Jesus would certainly care for them, Jesus had a solution. Jesus could and would meet their need.

And so that's why he told them, you give them something to eat. Now keep in mind, folks, remember, what's the context? What just happened before all this, where they got in the boat and they went away?

The disciples had just gone out preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ as the Lord of glory, healing the sick, doing miracles, raising people up who were lame from birth, giving people sight, doing the things Jesus, that's what the text tells us they were doing, casting out demons, and now they get to this and they say, yeah, yeah, we got five loaves and two fish, dude, we're sunk, I don't know what we're going to do.

You see us, that's us, isn't that us? One minute mountaintop, next minute in the valley, we just don't know what we're going to do. God lives in you, he knows.

[51 : 26] God's full of compassion for you, he knows. He knows. This was impossible from the perspective of the disciples. God can't help me, he can't help my problem, it's too big, it's too complicated, it's gone on for so long, I don't think the Lord can bother with me.

Or, I've heard this, yeah, I've tried that, so we'll read another passage, yeah, I tried that too, it doesn't work. I've actually had people say to me, the Bible doesn't work. It doesn't work.

I understand that. Why? Because I've been that guy. I've been that person. beloved, you need to read and think on verse 34 very carefully, you need to see that with Jesus there's always great hope.

Verse 34 says that Jesus saw a great multitude and he felt compassion, compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

He was the man for the moment. He did for them what no one else could or would do. He fed them physically and he fed them spiritually.

[52 : 37] If you look back in the book of Isaiah, you're going to see, go back to Isaiah with me, it's going to be Isaiah 42, I got that up here too, Isaiah 42, 6 and 7.

Now immediately you'll know who this is talking about. Isaiah 42, 6 and 7, I am the Lord.

I have called you in righteousness. I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison.

Who's that prophesying about? Christ. That's Messianic. That's Jesus. I will bless you and I will make you a covenant of salvation.

That's the New Testament. That's the new covenant. Jesus, you will be appointed as a covenant to the people. You will be the light.

[53 : 55] You will open blind eyes. You will set prisoners free. You will take those who dwell in darkness and deliver them into the light. That's the work of salvation, is it not? This is what Jesus does.

This is a spiritual answer to a spiritual problem and this is what God's more concerned with about these people. Meeting their need for physical food showed Jesus' ability to meet their need for spiritual food.

It was no harder for Jesus to do one than the other. it's just as straightforward for me to feed you in terms of thousands of people from five loaves and two fishes as it is for me to save the souls of all these thousands.

No one of those things is more difficult than the other for me. Man, I love that. Please take careful notice of Jesus' first response to the needs of this great crowd of people.

Look at this. Jesus' first response what does it say in the text? And he began to do what? Teach. He began to teach them many things.

[55 : 10] Did he feed them? Well, yes. He fed them. He cared about that. But how did he begin to show his love and compassion for all these needy people who were like sheep in need of a shepherd?

He began to teach. Teach. I remember when I got into the right seminary and they began to teach me scripture and biblical shepherdology.

The answer came back for all of us preacher boys. There were about 300 of us in chapel at that time. And the answer came back. When in doubt, preach in ministry.

When in doubt, teach the scripture. Preach. Teach. When stuff hits you, when stuff hits the church, get in the pulpit and preach the gospel. Because that's what people need to hear and be reminded of.

They need to be brought back to the center of the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And they need to ground themselves in the truth. And that's what we do here. We preach and teach because that's the emphasis Jesus has in ministry.

[56 : 17] I understand teaching them wouldn't fill their bellies. It wouldn't quench their physical thirst. I understand that. But teaching them the truth would give them direction and hope for life.

They could go to a restaurant if they needed to or a place to get food or whatever. But they were sitting under the Lord of light and life and they needed him to feed them in their spirit in that moment because they couldn't get that anywhere else.

They needed spiritual sight to correct the spiritual blindness. They were living under a lie and so they needed the truth.

And Jesus was the man to bring that truth. These were just some of the wonderful gifts offered to them by their good shepherd. Their compassionate shepherd. Now notice also how Jesus involved his disciples in this important ministry.

Notice this. Jesus challenged the disciples to meet the needs of the people through their faith and obedience in him. Jesus knew as soon as he said to them you feed them. He knew as soon as he said that there is no way you guys can do this apart from faith in me.

[57 : 30] It's not going to happen. But if you look to me you can pull this off. Look to me. Will you notice one other thing with me?

It's something that we demand that God often do when we're in trouble. they didn't step back and say Jesus come here come here now look before you go off and you do all this stuff could you just kind of fill us in and tell me how you're going to do this what's your end game right because you know this is tough and I don't want to go out here and start to do something and I look bad and it doesn't work out so give us a clue you see this is what we do help me know what's a little bit beyond tell me a little more give me a little more detail what's this going to mean what's it going to cost they didn't do any of that they did exactly what Jesus said and they stayed right where Jesus had them and they didn't try to push out of it or expand it you feed them and they look to Christ like okay he's got a plan everybody sit down so the disciples were like alright we're going around everybody sit down they're dispersing everybody listen to him they come back and Jesus starts using them like we do the deacons and all the elements and it all starts distributing that was enough boy that's a good message for me as a pastor because boy lots and lots and lots of times

I have enough light to know how to stand up here and bring the gospel and that's about it and then I'm trusting that God would make the rest of it clear because I know he loves you I don't have to have you figured out and I don't have to have all this figured out right who knew who knew I didn't this is all up to the Lord I know what does Jeremy say to me he's a good brother in this he's the guy God sent into my life to say Jeff stay in your lane and he does that for me my lane is right here with you teaching the truth because that's the emphasis Jesus makes on the truth well all of this was a taste of what Jesus would do through these guys they were going to remain think about it on earth as Jesus under shepherds caring for Jesus sheep in Jesus compassionate and servant hearted way guys when I'm gone you're going to be this is your job this is what you're going to be doing the issue was never and is never about the limits of what we bring to

Jesus it's always about our faith in Christ and about his faithfulness to us always we bring the limits we bring the weakness we bring the sin we bring the failure to Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit in the miracle of the work of the Spirit he makes that worthy of God the meager provision of the disciples five loaves and two fish was not an obstacle to Jesus in any way their lack did not define Jesus' love or lordship and it doesn't for you either the lack and weakness in your life does not define Jesus' love for you the limit of your love for Jesus does not define any limit of his love for you we often think that he loves us at the same limit we love him that's not true or we would not have a cross now think about that so we need to get beyond physical sight and trust in faith that we have this savior who lives in us and loves us far beyond anything that we are capable of in our humanity in and of ourselves but by his grace we receive this love and then we offer it and whose love is it working through us his love and this is a beautiful thing the text tells us that as they were faithful to follow Jesus in verse 42 what happened they all ate look at that and were satisfied so he didn't ignore or gloss over their humanity he just acted so that no one was left out no one was left wanting he satisfied their physical hunger and beyond now folks look

God has not commissioned you to feed and clothe and save the world that's not our mandate he requires you to be faithful with what you have and with who you are where you are to the degree that God opens doors of opportunity and blessing for us as a small church to bless others and do for others whether it's through my ministry Greg's ministry as he continues to shepherd here or through something that you have going on in your connection with others we just need to be faithful Jesus knew their greatest need he knew it better than the people themselves he knew it better than the disciples and it was the spiritual need to follow him as their shepherd I want to end with John 6 if you'll go to the gospel of John let's see if I can put this up here the question is who is Jesus Christ and we'll go to

[63 : 19] John's gospel in 6 26 and I want to just read this to you and then let you see the answer Jesus answered them and said truly truly I say to you you seek me not because you saw signs but because you ate of the loaves and were filled who's he talking to he's talking to these people so this is later the next day and these people are following him and he's saying because he knows their hearts you're not following me because of your heart for me you're following me because you want more handout what does he say in 27 where does he put the emphasis now he's teaching them listen to the emphasis do not work for the food which perishes but for the food which endures to eternal life see the emphasis which the son of man will give to you for on him the father God has set his seal see you can only get this food from me therefore they said to him what shall we do so that we may work the works of

God and Jesus answered and said to them this is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent you see what Jesus is doing here in the gospel so they said to him what then do you do for a sign so that we may see and believe you you want to go really you need more signs what work do you perform our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness as it's written he gave them bread out of heaven to eat you see there now look at how clever they're quoting from scripture to try to manipulate Jesus into giving them more food do some more miracles dude give us some more food we need to see more I mean it's written in the scriptures this even happened to our fathers Jesus then said to them truly truly I say to you it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven but it is my father who gives you the true bread out of heaven for the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world then they said to him

Lord always give us this bread and Jesus said to them I am the bread of life he who comes to me will not hunger and he who believes in me will never thirst but I said to you that you have seen me and yet you don't believe all that the father gives me will come to me and the one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out for I have come down from heaven not to do my will but the will of him who sent me this is the will of him who sent me that of all that he has given me I lose nothing but raise it up on the last day for this is the will of my father that everyone who beholds the son and believes in him will have eternal life and I myself will raise him up on the last day glory to God and so we see who is this Jesus according to John's gospel he is your compassionate bread of life he is the one who feeds you the spiritual food that saves your soul and secures an eternity in heaven that's amazing that's your

God even when you're suffering and you don't understand and things are hard Jesus is your compassionate bread of life so look to him for the food that you need for your soul let's pray together father we glory in your goodness and we thank you for the word of God opened and the text read and explained and I pray father that you will use even this week offering that I've made to your glory so that the limits of my ability and giftedness are not standing in the way at all of the blessing that you want this to be in the souls of your people let them be fed as your sheep on the good food and green pasture of the truth let them be watered in the pure sparkling clean water of your truth and let us all marvel at Jesus and take into our hearts his person and his work and his goodness to us thank you for our salvation in him and thank you for the cross that he willingly went to for us we thank you in

Jesus name amen