

30 The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and taught. 31 He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.” For there were so many people coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat. 32 They went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. 33 But many people saw them leave and knew where they were going. They ran there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. 34 When Jesus stepped out of the boat, he saw a large crowd. His heart went out to them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He began to teach them many things.

Dear Fellow Disciples of Jesus,



There are thousands of depictions of Jesus. We don't know what he actually looked like, so artists give their own vision of what they think he should look like.



One of the most beloved drawings and paintings is of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. We have our own rendition in stained glass above the altar. This is a beloved scene not because of the artists idea of what Jesus might look like. Rather it is Jesus watching over the sheep and holding the lamb to his breast that captures our mind. We focus on what Jesus is doing for one simple reason. We see a Jesus that cares.

This idea of Jesus' caring is very Scriptural. Throughout the Bible God is pictured as a Shepherd who cares for his sheep. In this case the sheep are people. It is you and me.

Today we have a Scripture text that reveals this. In Mark 6 **Jesus Shows Us a Shepherd's Heart.** As you hear about Jesus' compassion realize that what I am talking about touches your life.

1. He has a compassionate heart for those who are working at Gospel ministry.

In the fall we usually host the Pastor's Bible study, our circuit meeting, at

Shepherd of the Valley. We get some bagels and yogurt, fresh fruit and maybe granola bars. We like to eat something during the two hour meeting. I mentioned to someone that I was only buying a box of a dozen donuts. When I was a young pastor I would buy two. We could go through a box and half. Nowadays pastors realize they have to take care of themselves. I don't think we consume a half a dozen donuts at a meeting with 10 or more people.

Whether it is the pastors themselves or the congregation being concerned about the fitness of their called worker, I believe that this caring is instilled by Jesus. In Mark 6 he shows he has a compassionate heart for those who are working at Gospel ministry.

A. How does Jesus show he cares? He listened to their ministry reports.

1. He sent out the twelve to heal and preach. They called people to repentance and forgiveness in the Lord. From what we can tell they were very busy and it was fruitful.

2. Jesus knows these things. He pays attention. He might have asked questions or made comments. This would be like a supervising mission counselor or circuit pastor in the WELS today. The point is that Jesus cared.

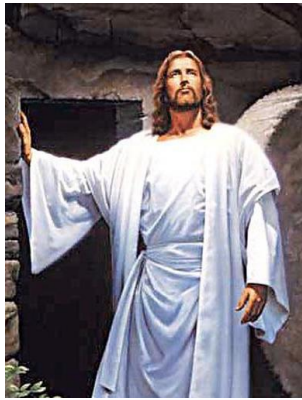
B. The words of Jesus that follow show us that he knew they needed more than his attention and counsel. They needed rest. He had a shepherd's heart for tired under-shepherds.

1. He did not ignore the need. He had told them that the harvest was waiting. However he doesn't say, "*Suck it up.*" "*You can rest in heaven.*" We find a number of times Jesus takes his disciples away to a solitary place for a break.

2. This doesn't mean they didn't do anything. They may well have spent time in the word and prayer. Jesus would have assured them of forgiveness for their failures in ministry. He would have led them in praising God for their successes.

Example: Pastors' Conference. Almost always an opening service with Communion. Chapel at the beginning and end of the day. Chapel sometimes after lunch or at least an opening prayer. This is not just for show. It is a part of spiritual resting while away from the regular duties of the ministry.

C. Jesus cares about us and our service for him. He will help us.



He gives us breaks or down time. Part of our rest time should be used to remember his caring. The most restful thing we can know is that Jesus taken away our sins and pardoned our guilt. At these times we think of the suffering Jesus and the risen Jesus. He won the victory so spiritual rest is always ours. This will do more to revive us than anything else.



2. He has a compassionate heart for those who need Gospel ministry.

On this occasion there wasn't much of a break, at least for Jesus. The crowds saw Jesus leaving with his disciples in the boat. People from the communities ran along the shore. As a result the people arrived before Jesus' boat landed.

What drove the crowd? They needed Jesus. As we continue we see that Jesus has a compassionate heart for those who need Gospel ministry.

A. The people had all kinds of needs. Jesus saw the most important need of the people.

1. They were spiritually thirsty. Ex: a) Part of it we struggle to understand. They were occupied. They were heavily taxed by the Roman foreigners who were ruthless. They likely questioned the Lord. *"We are your people. This is your city and Temple. Why Lord?"* b) Part of it we would understand. Sin and not focusing their lives on God had led to this situation. They were still sinning by worrying and despairing over everyday life. How often do we complain, instead of praying? They had these same issues.

They needed Gospel ministry more than anything else.

2. Jesus had compassion on them. He noted that they were like **"sheep without a shepherd."** He doesn't push them away. He is the Good Shepherd and he is going to help them physically and spiritually.

Jesus looks at each one of us with compassion. He knows our every need, our every ache and pain. He doesn't push us away. He comes to help. He will fix some of our aches and pains if it fits his plans. Most of all he wants to make us strong so we trust his shepherding us in life and in death.

B. He addressed their spiritual thirst.

1. He taught them why they were spiritually thirsty. It is said that when you get thirsty in the Arizona heat, you are already dehydrated. When the Lord points out our sins, I begin to realize my conscience has been bothering me and I didn't know it. I was just grouchy and unhappy. The Lord reveals our thirst because he cares.

2. He also satisfies people's thirst. The people knew the Messiah was coming. They often thought he was a physical liberator and they didn't understand the spiritual freedom. This is why John, the Baptist, Jesus and later the disciples would focus on a ministry of the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus would have talked about the Messiah forgiving sins without revealing specific details for which they were not ready. They learned later and we know now that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. Peace with God through Jesus sets people's hearts at rest.

C. Many of our churches are finding ways to connect with their communities. They start some kind of compassion ministry. They give out food and water, they fill backpacks with school supplies, they help families in crises. I think it would be good to study some ways we can connect with our community. Then we can show compassion for people as Jesus did.

The goal of such compassion ministry is twofold. One to help and befriend people. Secondly, to find doorways for sharing the good news of Jesus. We want to bring people spiritual rest.

Conclusion: The debate of how Jesus looked will go on. The artist Bas Uterwijk created this photorealistic depiction of Jesus.

The Bible doesn't say how Jesus looked. It could be that our Lord doesn't want to spend too much time on his physical features. We will get to see him some day in heaven. He wants us to focus on his work for us. He is taking care of us. He has worked out our salvation. One of the better ways, it's not the only way but a good way, is to think of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. We have a Shepherd who is watching over us with a compassionate heart. That is worth remembering. Amen.

