

St. Mark 6:30-34

Dear Friends in Christ,

Again, our text for this morning is found in the sixth chapter of St. Mark's Gospel. If we back up to the fifth chapter we're greeted with this: "And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit (that is, a demon possessed man." (vs. 2) Following that we're told He healed a sick woman and then raised a little girl from the dead. Moving into the sixth chapter, which contains our text, our Lord is rejected by His home town crowd, and after sending out the twelve we ultimately come to our text which is part of the feeding of the five thousand (caring for lost and hurting people).

All this is quite intense, isn't it? But that's the way it was for Jesus. After all, He entered a world of human sin. He entered His rebellious creation. And - get this - He was not invited. In fact, in spite of everything He did for humanity, He was not only uninvited - He was unwanted. Still is.

You know what? (as we ask when ready to reveal something). You know what? We can say it, in spite of this world's rejection:

YES, JESUS LOVES ME

I. Lets Us Be With Him.

The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. 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. (vss. 30-31)

"Rest a while." "No leisure even to eat." Tired and hungry. And Jesus told them, "come away by yourselves". Time for a break. It gets that way, doesn't it? Life gets tiresome. The same routines. I've always found it interesting how many people, after returning from their vacations, will say, "It's good to be home." Really? Back to the same routines!? Life is quite a journey, isn't it?

But I'll tell you the first thing that went through my mind. Hunger for God's love and security. Weary from the struggle with sin and this God forsaking world of murder, lying and perversion. The want to get far away from the vulgarity and violence and Christ hating mind-set.

And there it stands; the call of Jesus: "'Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me..." (Matt. 11:28, 29a) Rest! From what? From being physically tired and hungry? No. From the reason for being physically tired and hungry, mentally and emotionally worn: ***sin***. The weight of the fact that we're still fiddling with the sin and guilt we fiddled with last month, last year, last decade....whenever. The struggle with decay and the fear of death. And Jesus says, "...for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11:29b,30)

And with that stands the promise of Jesus:

"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst... And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." (Jn. 6:35,39-40)

Yes, Jesus loved us and loves us so much and once again underscores the reality: “everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life.” And that’s real food, friends. As He said, “I am the bread of life...”. And He is rest for the weary soul.

II. Full Of Compassion.

And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. (vss. 32-34a)

I ask you to recall that incident where some Sadducees questioned Jesus about who belongs to who in the resurrection. Specifically, the question regarded a woman who had multiple husbands in this life. What was fascinating about their question was the fact that the Sadducees - leaders of the Jews - didn’t even believe in the resurrection.

Jesus’ answer to those devious “theologians” was this: “You are wrong, because you neither know the Scriptures nor the power of God.” (Matt. 22:29) There’s more to His answer, but this is the part so appropriate for us this morning. You see, these were supposed to be the spiritual leaders of these people. The very Word - the Scriptures - were the source of guidance and comfort. Instead, as Jesus said of all the spiritual leaders: “They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.” (Matt. 23:4) They offer neither comfort nor hope!

What we want to note and take with us is this, the word from our text, “he (Jesus) had compassion on them...”. This is how God serves us through Word and Sacrament. He’s the one who comes to us and announces the mercy of God, His forgiveness of all our sin, His understanding of the messes we make and assures us, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (Jn. 3:17)

Christ doesn’t lay new burdens on us. He lifts the old ones away. He doesn’t teach - as many teach - “If you do this and that, then God will do something for you.” On the contrary, He teaches that God does everything for us, in spite of ourselves. Specifically this: “Whoever believes in him is not condemned...”. (Jn. 3:18a)

Yes, Jesus always loves us, in spite of our on-going struggle with sin; in spite of the “goof-ups”; in spite of the messes and their aftermath.

III. Teaches Us Many Things.

And one last thought. Our text closes with these words: “And he began to teach them many things.” (vs. 34b) We connect that with Jesus’ words from The Great Commission: “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matt. 28:20) And we connect that with those so familiar and wonderful words of the Psalmist: “Your word (that which teaches us) is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Ps. 119:105)

Everybody is looking for something to give them answers and guidance for the steps they take in this world. The hope that somewhere, in some way, there’s somebody who can make sense out of the gross and monstrous senselessness which covers this world. And there it is - but mostly ignored: “Your word is a lamp to my feet.” Guides my footsteps through this world. I ask you: Do you know the Word well enough to find that to be true?

Everybody considers, debates, believes or rejects something after death - speculates, wonders. Most live with fear. Many laugh at it in denial - at least until the moment of departure arrives, assuming they get the chance to think about it. And there it is - but mostly ignored: "Your word is ...a light to my path." My path. The one that keeps me focused on Jesus and the path to eternal life.

Our Lutheran confessions state:

....the apostle (Paul) testifies that "Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4) But it is certain that any interpretation of the Scriptures which weakens or even removes this comfort and hope is contrary to the Holy Spirit's will and intent. (Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, p. 632.92)

Indeed, Jesus teaches us many things. And the many things include all things He has commanded; everything necessary for life and salvation. The "many things", the "all things", are the lamp for our feet and the light our paths.

Its just as we're going to sing it: "Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so... Yes, Jesus loves me!"

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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St. Mark 6:30-34: ***“Yes, Jesus Loves Me”***

I. Lets Us Be With Him.

II. Full of Compassion.

III. Teaches Us Many Things.

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