

JESUS, OUR GOOD SHEPHERD

Mark 6:30-44 (Key Verse 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”

In today's passage we are going to witness Jesus' Shepherd heart. Jesus revealed his shepherd heart by having compassion for his disciples and for the crowd. Furthermore, we are also going to learn why Jesus had compassion for the disciples and the crowd, and the nature of his compassion. Lastly, we are going to learn from Jesus who will help his disciples to have a shepherd for his lost sheep. I pray that God may have mercy on us, to experience Jesus Shepherd heart, learn from Jesus and be raised as genuine shepherds for our generation.

The passage today begins with a rather happy and victorious scenery, it was after the apostles' return from the mission trip that Jesus had sent them to. They gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done, how they healed the sick, drove out demons, and preached the word of God with power and authority. The apostles left with nothing but a staff, they were very young spiritually, but the work they had done in the villages was so spectacular. Now as they were reporting to Jesus what they had done, many people kept on coming and going that they could not even have a chance to eat. When Jesus saw this busyness and interruption he said to the disciples: *“Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”*

Jesus had compassion unto the disciples, he did not ignore their hard work from the mission trip. But recognized that they need some rest, something to eat and spiritual recharging, and so he called them to come with him to a quiet place to get some rest. Working hard as gospel workers is very important especially because the work is plentiful, however Jesus our good Shepherd also wants us to have some rest, some quiet time with him to be spiritually recharged. And this got the disciples excited that they finally can get some rest, eat and explain to Jesus more of what they had done in peace and quiet. After Jesus had instructed the disciples to come with him to a quiet place, they got into a boat and headed to a solitary place. However, as they headed out some interruption to their quiet time arose. Let us look at **verse 33**: *“But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.”* The interruption of the crowd followed them, the people ran on foot and got to their destination before them. And this became an issue for the disciples, and to some extent it made them feel burdened and deep down they wanted to chase the people away.

But Jesus on the other hand responded differently. Let us look at the key **verse 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.”* Jesus did not feel burdened at all. Rather, Jesus had compassion on them. Jesus welcomed them gladly. Why did Jesus have compassion on them when they were clearly interrupting his quiet time with his disciples who were very exhausted and needed to eat something and rest? Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Sheep are very vulnerable and helpless animals. They need their shepherd for guidance, protection, and care, otherwise they wander away and get lost. During the time of Jesus God had raised the Pharisees and the teachers of the law to take care of the people and bring them to God, but instead they oppressed the people and drove them away from God. The people remained like sheep without a Shepherd.

And now when Jesus came healing them, driving out demons from them and teaching them with power and authority, they were drawn to him and so they just kept following him. They were so desperate that they ran on foot around the lake to meet Jesus and the disciples. Jesus' heart was moved when he saw this, he had compassion unto them, he took their burdens as his own. Now Jesus' compassion was not just filled with emotions and pity for the people, but rather he had compassion which was primarily of spiritual concern for their soul. Jesus wanted to restore their love relationship with God. To Jesus, this was most urgent, so urgent that he cancelled his plan to have a quiet time with his disciples and began teaching the people many things. He taught them the words of God.

Jesus began teaching the people the words of God because he wanted them to know that God loved them and sought them. In **John 3:16** it says, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* Jesus wanted them to repent of their sins and restore their love relationship with God. Jesus wanted to give them the victory that comes from faith in God's love. Jesus wanted to give them living hope in

the kingdom of God. Jesus wanted to wipe away all their despair, sorrow, and fear and to restore them as children of God. This is the compassion of Jesus, our good Shepherd, divine compassion that is filled with life and hope.

As Jesus continued to teach the people, some challenge arose. Let us look us look at **verse 35-36**: *“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. / Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.””* Jesus kept teaching the people more and more of the words of God, and the people enjoyed more and more as Jesus taught them and the day just went by. When the disciples realized that it was getting dark, and as their hunger and tiredness kicked in they lost their patience and they went to Jesus and requested him to send the people away so they can get something to eat in the surrounding countryside and villages as it is already late. Despite their need to rest, the disciples request was very practical and seemed reasonable, for the people were also getting hungry and the disciples and Jesus did not have capacity feed them for we are told in **verse 44** that they were 5000 men plus women and children.

However, when the disciples went to Jesus with this request, Jesus gave them a response they never expected. Let us look at **verse 38a**: *“But he answered, “You give them something to eat.””* How could Jesus’ answer in this way? He answered in this way firstly because of his Shepherd heart for the people, described by always putting the people first. The people were yearning to hear Jesus and were desperate for his love and compassion and so Jesus did not ignore them, but prioritized helping them. Jesus’ attitude here is to help the people anytime and anywhere. Jesus is our good Shepherd and is willing to hear from us anytime and help us. We can come to Jesus anytime and he will hear us and help us, he is Emmanuel (God is with us) always.

Furthermore, Jesus said to the disciples: *“You give them something to eat.”* To help them to have a Shepherd heart for the people, by first challenging the disciples to have a sense of responsibility for the people. The people of those times were lost, because they did not have Shepherds who took responsibility for their lives, they just had the Pharisees and teachers of the law who did not care for them. They had King Herod who was only concerned about power and being respected by prominent figures and living an immoral and lustful life. Jesus’ disciples did well to identify the need of the people. However, Jesus wanted them to do more. Jesus wanted the disciples to be different, and hence he challenged them to take responsibility for the people who were lost, like sheep without a Shepherd.

Today many young people are tormented and lost like the people in Jesus’ time, and Jesus wants to raise me and you as their shepherd to take responsibility for them. When I first came to the UBF ministry, I was very moved by how the missionaries took care of us. Shepherdess Rebekah spent many hours learning to cook South African food for us, when she served us, she would be filled with so much love. When I looked her and Shepherd Jacob’s eyes, I could saw deep concern and great sense of responsibility for my life and other sheep. Through them I could experience Jesus’ love and compassion. I could experience Jesus’ love and compassion because Sh. Jacob and Rebekah took the challenge from Jesus to take responsibility for God’s lost sheep like me on Wits campus.

Furthermore, Jesus said to the disciples: *“You give them something to eat.”* To teach them to have faith in the Almighty God, to teach them how much they are well equipped when they have faith in the Almighty God. When Jesus said you give them something to eat, they responded in **verse 37b** saying: *““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?””* The disciples had just experienced the great power of God in their mission trip, they healed the sick, drove out demons and preached the word of God with power and authority. However, now when Jesus challenged them to give the people something to eat, they fell into a mindset of calculation. What they experienced in their mission trip could not be explained by calculation. However, here we see them falling into the calculation mindset.

When we have a calculation mindset, we cannot be used as Shepherds for God’s sheep. To serve God’s sheep as a Shepherd, we need to have faith in the Almighty God, we need to overcome the humanistic mindset and know that God’s power is not bounded or limited by logic and calculation but goes beyond. Jesus wanted to help the disciples to have a shepherd heart for the people, to be like him and follow him. And so, Jesus helped them to overcome the calculation mindset. Let us look at **verse 38**: *““How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.” When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.””* Before the disciples were concerned about logic, they focused on what they did not have, but to help them Jesus challenged them to focus on what they had. He said How many loaves do you have, Go and see. This

question changed the mindset of the disciples, Jesus asked them how much bread they had, but in their response, they started to think about what else they had. They responded to Jesus saying, we have Five loaves and two fish. They now were willing to help the people rather than send them away, they brought what they had to Jesus. To serve God's sheep as Shepherds, we need to have a change of mindset. Instead of calculation, we need to go and see what we have and bring it to Jesus.

When the disciples changed their mindset and attitude, they could experience God's miracle. They could truly experience the Almighty God who has power and authority over all things. They could learn how much they are equipped to help God's lost sheep as Shepherds when they have faith in Jesus and bring what they have to him. In **verse 41-42** it says: *"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"* When the disciples changed their attitude and mindset, by bringing what they had, they could experience a great miracle of God. They could be used in God's marvellous work, feeding the 5000 with five loaves and two fish, and they were all satisfied. Jesus could transform the little they had into a great impact for God's lost sheep. When Sh. Jacob and Rebekah came to South Africa, they were very young and did not understand English very well. There were many reasons why they would fail as servants of God at Wits campus, mainly because of language and culture, they could have said Lord at least send us to one of the Asian countries. But instead, they had a Shepherd-like mindset, they had a positive mindset and brought what they had, which is their life, they dedicated it to following Jesus. And Jesus multiplied their small offering and raised many native Shepherds who are now serving Wits campus ministry independently.

Conclusion

In today's passage we have learnt that Jesus' is our good Shepherd for he has compassion unto us. Jesus compassion for us is different from the compassion of this world, it is not just compassion described by emotions and pity, but rather a broken heart to restore our relationship with God and establish us as children of God. That is why Jesus' first response to his compassion, was to teach the words of God, demonstrating that our deepest need is the words of God. Without the words of God, we are like lost sheep without a Shepherd.

Furthermore, we have learnt that Jesus's desire for us is that we may be raised as Shepherds for his lost sheep, to be like him and have divine compassion to his lost sheep. We have learnt that to be genuine shepherds for Jesus lost sheep we first need to have a sense of responsibility and compassion for Jesus lost sheep, secondly, we need change from a calculating and bounded mindset into faith in Jesus the Almighty God. We have learnt that a practical way to have faith in Jesus is to go and look at what we have and bring it to Jesus. Jesus has power and authority to multiply the little we have into much greater impact for God's people. I pray that we may hold on to faith in Jesus and know that he has compassion unto us, learn from him and be used as shepherds for God's lost sheep in our generation.