Our Compassionate Savior

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Mark 6. Let me just remind you, because of the holidays, I know it may have been a couple of weeks since you've thought about Mark 6.

In chapter 6, at the beginning of it, Jesus goes to Nazareth. He is rejected there in His own hometown. And then He sends out His own apostles. He sends them out for essentially this short-term mission trip.
They're going to be going out to different villages, and they're going to minister. They're going to be teaching. And He tells them that they ought to expect rejection.
And their example of that is what has just happened in Nazareth. So, in verses 1 to 6, they see that even when Christ Himself is ministering, that there are many who will reject Him.
The disciples are then the apostles sent out in verses 7 to 13, and they again are told to expect rejection. And then Mark gives us this interlude in verses 14 to 29 as a reminder of what happened with John the Baptist.
[1:16] Just so all who would follow Christ understand, persecution is not simply something that is theoretical. It's real, and in John the Baptist's case, costs Him even His life.

We looked at that right before Christmastime. We jump back now into verses 30 to 44 here at the feeding of the 5,000. Just a little bit of reminder of where we are in the life and the ministry of Jesus when we come to this time.
There are still large crowds that are following Jesus. He is still ministering publicly, preaching publicly. Now, shortly after this event in Mark 6, there's going to be a bit of a change, a bit of a pivot in His ministry.
It's going to be a bit less large and public and more private in Him training the 12. But at this point in His ministry, there are still very large crowds that come.
As we've already seen, some who hear Him reject Him. Some who hear Him despise Him. Some who hear Him are very curious about Him.
[2:28] And others are just there because a crowd attracts a crowd. But what we see in the life of Jesus is that the more clear His message becomes, the hotter the hatred grows of those who don't believe.

Now, that exact same reality exists in our world today. If you talk about religion or spirituality or even God, most people will be okay with that.
Most will go along with you. But it's when you become clear and precise that the opposition grows.
When you say that you believe not just in a God, but the God as revealed to us in the Bible.
When you say that you believe not just in heaven, but that there is one way to heaven, and Jesus Christ is the only way truth in life, then the opposition grows.
That's true in our day. That was true in the Lord's day. The more clear His message was, the more people understood the precision with which He offered the gospel, the hotter the hatred grew of those who would oppose Him.
[3:44] Now, right after the events of defeating the 5,000 men, His popularity will be at an all-time high. In fact, John tells us in his gospel that right after this event, the people are going to come and they're going to try to take Him by force and make Him their king.

His popularity has never been higher. He will, of course, not allow that because He didn't come to be a political king. He came to be a redeemer and a savior of souls.
As we get here to this event in the life of Jesus, the disciples are tired. They're seeking a place of rest. They traveled, getting away from the crowd, if even for just a moment, to be able to get a bit of rest.

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The Bible tells us as the authors recount this story for us that that rest will not last long. Look at verse 30. 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. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.
[5:10] But 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.

And He began to teach them many things. As we work our way through this story, let me give you three headings to consider. First, ministry can be exhausting.
Ministry can be exhausting. Now, it's true for the apostles. That's true for you. If you use your spiritual gifts, if you're involved in the life of the church, striving to help us do great commission work, you can love it.
You can be rejoicing in what the Lord is doing. You can be using your gifts in a way that brings you pleasure, in a way that is for the glory of Christ, in a way that blesses other people.
But it still is true that spiritual ministry can be exhausting. That was certainly true for the apostles. Verse 30, it says they returned.
[6:21] Just to help you connect the dots. When it says the apostles returned, we're talking about verses 7 to 13. Jesus sent them out on this short-term mission trip, and now they've returned.

Verses 14 to 29 was a bit of a parenthesis, some background in the history for us, but chronologically we're going from verse 13 to verse 30. Jesus sent them out.
Verse 30, now the apostles returned. And they told him all they had done and taught. This is a very important thing to catch. He sends the apostles out, and he says, now come back, and they come back, and they're going to report back to him.
They're going to report back to him about the things they've done. What have they encountered? Who have they talked to? How did those conversations go? What kind of things took place? What kind of opposition did you find?
What kind of belief did you find? And it says they also reported all that they had done and taught. It's important. Jesus wants to make sure that his apostles not only are doing the works of the ministry, but that what they are teaching is correct.
[7:34] This is part of what we must always be on guard of, is the doctrine that we teach. Jesus doesn't simply say, just go out and do your own thing.

Just go out and teach whatever you want. Just go out and whatever comes to mind. He wants to make sure that what they are teaching are the things that they have read in the Old Testament and the things that he has been teaching them.
And so he's paying careful attention to make sure that their ministry and their doctrine are both correct. That's a helpful word for us. And he said to them, come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.
There were many who were coming and going. They had no leisure even to eat. Another gospel writer tells us this is shortly before Passover. Passover. So, just to give you an idea, it's around March or April that this event takes place.
Mark tells us that there were so many people coming and so many people going and so many people wanting their time and wanting their attention and so many people wanting to be right around them and right with them that he says they didn't even have leisure time to eat.
[8:45] And I read that, I think about, I think about our moms that have preschoolers at home. Moms that would give anything for just two consecutive uninterrupted minutes just to eat their own food without having to help somebody else maybe.

That's the picture. They don't have time to sit down and just eat. They don't have two minutes to themselves that are uninterrupted. So many people needing something from them, wanting something from them, talking to them, bringing the sick to them, asking them questions, wanting to be around them.
Everybody's coming and going and crowding around and they can't even take a minute just to in peace and quiet eat. So verse 32, they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.
This is probably a boat owned by one of the apostles that were involved in fishing, Peter and Andrew or maybe James and John. And before the miracle takes place, we are confronting with this

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reality that ministry can be exhausting.
When everybody wants a piece of your time, when everybody wants your help, when there's so many people around you, so many needs around you, it can be exhausting.
[10:06] When you're raising kids at home, it can be exhausting. Always something else to do, always something else to teach, always something else to correct, always something else to clean up, can be exhausting.

If you teach a Sunday school class, there's always more study to do, always some other book you can read, always someone in your class that's struggling to pray for, always somebody who's missing to go check on, always somebody who is new to make sure they're connecting and doing okay.
There's never a shortage of needs. And we just need to be honest and say that it can be exhausting.
Living a life of service to people, being a part of a church that cares about people, that strives to meet needs, it can be exhausting. And sometimes you just need to get away for a moment and just retreat and rest.
And even here in the life of Jesus and the apostles, they find themselves in that situation. I mean, everywhere they go, there's people. And maybe it's people who are sympathetic to what they're saying, but they're still people with needs.
[11:22] And because there are people being healed who are sick, everybody in town that's sick wants to make their way to them. And everybody wants to get to the front of the line. And everybody wants their loved one, their family member to be seen.

And those who oppose him want to make sure that people know that they oppose him and why they oppose him. And so regardless of how people respond, it is just a non-stop barrage of people and questions and needs.
Ministry can be exhausting. And those of you that your primary ministry are raising children at home, be faithful in that ministry.
ministry. It's exhausting. Be faithful. Those of you who are teaching Sunday school and discipleship classes and those kinds of things, it can be exhausting.
Take care of yourself. Take care of your walk with the Lord. Take time to retreat and be alone with the Lord in prayer and study. Be faithful. You're not the first person to find ministry exhausting.
[12:31] That's just the reality of what we do. That leads to a second thing that is hard sometimes.

The second thing I want you to see is that interruptions can be opportunities. Interruptions can be opportunities. Verse 33, many saw them and recognized them and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.
So, remember the scene, Jesus and the apostles get on the boat. They're going to go across through the water and people see them and people begin to guess where they're going, watching the direction of the boat, where they're going to go and so people begin to take off on foot.
They're getting on the boat to retreat, getting on the boat to take some moments for themselves to rest. People see them doing that and so the crowd just begins to rush ahead.
Sometimes interruptions come, but those interruptions can be opportunities.
[13:37] How many people are chasing after them? Well, the Bible tells us there were 5,000 men and you've got men, you've got wives, or you have men and wives, you've got children.

Most scholars think you've got a minimum of probably 15,000 people and maybe as high as 20 or 25,000 all together. They are running on ahead trying to catch up with them so that whenever they land and get out of the boat, the crowd's going to be right there waiting for them.
Verse 34, when he went ashore, he saw a great crowd and he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. These were desperate people, hurting people.
These were people that had spiritual shepherds set up to take care of them, but by this point in the nation's history, most of the spiritual shepherds were completely unfaithful.
they've taken God's law, which was for their good, and replaced it with their own tradition, their own man-made law so they could have power and prestige.
[14:57] And so those who were supposed to be shepherds for God's people have largely abandoned their responsibility. And when Jesus looks at this crowd of people, maybe 15,000, maybe 20,000, the text says he feels compassion.

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It's a word that refers to your insides. It means to have your stomach wrenched. You may see something that hurts you and you may say something like, oh, my heart just dropped.
Or my stomach's in knots. That's a bit of the idea behind this word.
It's the wrenching of the bowels. It's the inside of your stomach. This is something you feel deeply.
And Jesus looks at the crowd of people and he has compassion.
He feels for them. This is extremely instructive for us. We want to be theologically precise. We want to be doctrinally sound.
[16:15] But we must always be loving and caring people. Our calling as a church absolutely, 2 Timothy, is to study and show ourselves approved.

So we want to study the Bible and we want to read and we want to train and we want to be sound in our theology. But not simply because we want to win arguments or debates.
We study theology so we can know God so we can then go and serve people. We can never lose sight of that. That people who don't believe and people who don't understand and people who cause, even would cause us difficulty, they're not our enemies.
They're not our opponents. They are people that need a shepherd, people that need Christ, people that we should see and feel compassion for them.
If you study theology and do not have compassion for people, you will have no effectiveness. It says he had compassion on them.
[17:26] They were like sheep without a shepherd. sheep rely on a shepherd to feed them and to love them and to protect them and to lead them.

This is a reminder that what Jesus did was out of compassion. Jesus performed many miracles. In fact, that's why so many of them are here. That's why they showed up.
That's why they were running on foot along the side to get to where he's going because they want to see his miracles. But what Jesus did not do was command this building to move from here to there.
Why? Because that would display his power but there's no compassion in that. There's no mercy in that. He wasn't there just to simply amaze and astonish.
He was there to show that he's the Messiah. He was there to show that he was the Redeemer. How can you trust he's the Redeemer because he would do what only God could do.
[18:31] And why has he come? To lay down his life as a payment for sinners because he has compassion on people. So Jesus doesn't perform strange, weird, bizarre miracles just simply because he can.

He does them because he is moved by compassion by those who have need to demonstrate that he is the very Son of God who has come to meet our greatest need namely our sin and so he's come to be our substitute for the payment of our sin.
Don't miss the compassion that Christ had for people. You cannot understand who Christ is if you don't see his compassion and you cannot do his ministry today if you do not feel his compassion.
Jesus is primarily moved by the spiritual condition of people. Now, he cares about their physical needs. This miracle is about meeting physical needs.
He cared about their physical needs, but more than that, he cared about people's spiritual condition. I mean, just think about how this works.
[19:52] He would, in the gospel of John, heal the man of the pool of Bethesda, but that man would one day die. He will speak to Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue.

He had a daughter who had died. He will grab her by the hand and say, Talitha cum, little lamb, I say to you, arise. But one day she'll die. He will heal those who have no sight.
He will open ears who have never heard. He will perform all kinds of miracles to alleviate pain and suffering, but even those who receive the miracles physically will one day die.
All that he does, it's out of compassion for people that he meets physical needs so that people can know he really is who he says he is so that their greatest need of salvation will be met in him.
If all he did was just meet physical needs alone, most of the crowd would have been completely satisfied with that. But they would have no hope for eternal life.
[21:12] Christ had compassion and he met physical needs, but it was his care about the spiritual condition that gives us hope.

This is interesting in verse 34. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd and he had compassion on them because they were sheep without a shepherd and he began to teach them

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many things.
interruptions can be great opportunities. They're tired, they're spent, the apostles are exhausted, they've been out on their mission trip, Jesus has been hearing them report, he's been teaching and correcting his own apostles, he's just dealt with the rejection he's received at Nazareth, he's doing his own ministry, his own teaching and yet here comes the crowd and what does Jesus do?
He begins to teach them. Sometimes our interruptions are our greatest opportunities for ministry. Sometimes mom and dad, when you're the most tired, the most exhausted, that's when your teenager comes into the bedroom at night and says, can we talk?
And you're thinking to yourself, I need to get to work in the morning, I've got to get some sleep or I've got this project to work on or whatever it may be, I was just about to fall asleep. But if your child needs you, you're there for them.
[22:52] You don't ever have a teenager coming to you and say, mom and dad, I really need you right now and you say, I'll tell you what, how about tomorrow night at 745 I'll work you in. No. You stop everything.

that's your child. And you may be exhausted and you may have bills to pay and you may have a yard to mow and you may have laundry to do, but that interruption is your opportunity to shepherd them.
that's true in our homes. That's true for the church. We have to recognize that there are times where there are these divine interruptions that come into our life, but these are opportunities to minister to people and to shepherd them.
And so the crowd is there, so what does Jesus do? He began to teach them many things. Luke 9 adds some clarity to it and says that he would begin to teach them about the kingdom of God.
He's teach them about salvation. Verse 35, and when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, this is a desolate place and the hour is now late. Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.
[24:19] So the Jews had two periods of evening, 3 to 6 p.m. and 6 to 9 p.m. Essentially, evening one, evening two.

This is the first evening. It's just prior to sunset. It's near the end of the day. The people have made a long trip.
They've been running, sprinting, trying to catch up to where they saw the boat going. And when Jesus got there, a lot of people greeted him and meted him there and he begins to teach.
He meets them there and he teaches them there. And so more and more people come. And now the crowd just gets larger and larger and larger. And these people who have traveled a long way are hungry and they're hungrier than normal because they've just traveled a long distance and a short amount of time to get there.
And there's a lot of people. And when you're tired and you're hungry and it's crowded, that can be a frustrating place.
[25:36] Think Disney World. Hot, crowded, kids climbing on you, hold me, carry me, reaching for your wallet.

There's just people. There's people. You can't get a moment to yourself. And everybody starts to say, what are we going to eat? What are we going to eat? What are we going to eat? The crowds are there and they are tired and they are hungry and they're wanting to eat.
market. Mark tells it's a desolate place. The idea here is that there's no options.
There's no restaurants. There's no stores. There's nowhere to go. It's a desolate place. It's remote. It's unpopulated. It's populated only by the temporary crowd that's there who now are hungry wanting something to eat. There's nowhere to go. Let me read you from John 6.
[26:45] It adds a little bit of color to this. Lifting up his eyes then and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?

He said this to test him for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, 200 denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them even to get a little.
Let's stop for just a minute. A denarii is a day's wage. So, Jesus turns to Philip and says, where are we going to get food?
John says, he said this to test him. What's the test? Well, Philip is from this area. he knows this place better than anybody else does.

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And what Philip knows is there's nowhere to get food. There's no store. There's no restaurant.
[27:55] It's desolate. There's not a bunch of houses to go and knock on doors and say, hey, what do you have for us? Philip's response is, how are we going to do this?

200 denarii, 200 days worth of wages. In other words, eight months worth of wages won't be enough to do this.
This is not a matter of some simple solution. This is a matter of there's no chance. test. The test is simply for Philip to say, Jesus, you are our only hope for this.
There are no earthly resources. There is no physical explanation. If this work is going to be done, the only hope we have is you.
That's what Jesus wants the apostles to see. He wants them to know that he can do what no other person can do.
[29:31] Verse 37 though, Jesus answered them and said, you give them something to eat. He wants them to say, only you can do this.

We don't have the ability to do this. We don't have the power, we don't have the resources, we don't have the money. If this is going to be done, Jesus, it's going to have to be because you did it.
Interruptions can be opportunities. Sometimes in your life, maybe you're facing things where you think to yourself, I can't do this.
do this. That may be the precise place the Lord wants you to be. Where you no longer are relying upon your strength or your creativity or your ingenuity and you just cry out to the Lord in prayer and say, I can't do this.
I can't fix this. I can't make this happen. The only way, Lord, this is going to happen is if you do it.
[30:56] That is a desperate reliance upon Christ. And it's a great place to be.

Leads us to a third truth and that is that moments can be life changing. Ministry can be exhausting. Interruptions can be opportunities, but moments can be life changing.
The Bible tells us back in John 6, one of the disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Jesus, there is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what is that for so many people?
At some point, amidst all the commotion and all the talk and all the noise, some little boy says, I have a lunch.
My mom packed me a lunch. I didn't eat it yet. Offers it to the Lord, five loaves and two fish.
[32:05] fish. This is just a kid meal. Don't think like big, giant loaves of bread. This is the sonic kids meal version.

Just little bitty things. And the apostle says what you and I would have said, what am I going to do with this? this is going to a football stadium and seeing 20,000, 25,000 people there, no food, starving, tired, loud, noisy, demanding, and one little boy says, I've got a happy meal.
And you say, what? Do you see the crap? What am I going to do with your happy meal? You got four nuggets. There's 25,000 people here. the lunch wasn't much at all until it was given to Jesus.
The boy took what little he had and he offered it to the Lord. The world would have laughed at him.
The apostles themselves said, what is this little for so much? Well, your little is much when you give it in faith to the Lord.
[33:40] Verse 39, I love this verse, often overlooked. Then he commanded them to all sit down in groups on the green grass and they sat down in groups by hundreds and by fifties.

I don't think that's incidental. It's interesting to me that this is the only miracle Jesus did recorded by all four gospel writers and this detail is actually provided by all four gospel writers.
That one of the things Jesus does at the height of the chaos and the height of the commotion and the height of all the demands is he organizes the people.
He tells the apostles, let's get them in groups of 50 and groups of hundreds. Let's take the massive chaos and let's create some organization.
It makes sense because now he can tell this apostle, you're in charge of these groups and this apostle, you're in charge of these groups and this apostle, you go to that back group.
[34:55] One of the ways to minister to hurting people is for someone to provide leadership, to provide some organization, to be able to take the clutter and the chaos and to say we're going to settle people down so that we have a way to be able to minister to all of them.

Matthew 14 adds here that Jesus said, bring it to me, bring me the food, bring me what we have.
Verse 41, taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and he said a blessing

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and he broke the loaves and he gave them to the disciples to set before the people and he divided the two fish among them all.
Jesus organizes the chaos, takes the offering and he blessed it.
Because there is one boy who had a small lunch and how is one boy's lunch going to be anything for all this crowd. Here's the only thing that boy knew, Jesus can do more with my little than I can if I hold on to it.
That's the only thing he knew. I can't help but wonder what would happen in churches all over the world if people had that kind of faith.
[36:38] What good is praying for one person? What good is teaching this one class? What good is writing this one card? What good is offering up my home for the one night a week?

What good is leading this discipleship group with just a small group of ladies? What good is it to just give this offering? I don't make much money. The amount I give is so small. But what good is it? Well, here's the truth of it.
When we serve and give and offer to the Lord in faith, He can make much out of what seems small for us. And do you notice in verse 42, they all ate and were satisfied.
They were satisfied. This is a pretty interesting word. This is a word that could be used to describe animals. Animals that had come up to a feeding trough that were starving and they would eat and eat and eat and eat and then they would push back because they don't want anything else.
This is think Thanksgiving night. You ate all day. You watched football. You took a nap. You ate.
[37:54] You watched football and you took a nap and you ate. And then it was dinner time so you ate. And then it was nine o'clock and you ate. And finally you said, get that food.

Away. And you push back from the table. You're done. That's the word. Eating until you want no more.
This wasn't just tidying them over. This wasn't passing out a small little thing of trail mix or fruit chews or snacks that you get at the soccer game to tide you over.
This is feeding them until they want to know more. This is beyond abundantly meeting their needs. Incidentally, it's the same word used in Matthew 5, 6.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied. You won't need anything other than Christ when what you really seek is Christ.
[39:05] Verse 43, and they took up 12 baskets full of broken pieces of the fish and those who ate the loaves were 5,000 men. They counted the men and from there you have an idea this is 15, 20, 25,000 people in total.

As we close, let me just bring two quick lessons to your mind. One, a lesson about God. God is concerned with our entire lives.
The spiritual is primary but the physical is not unimportant. Jesus was first concerned about the spiritual condition of people but he was also concerned with their physical condition in this miracle. He is meeting their physical needs for a purpose. It's because he wants them to trust him for the spiritual point but he's not unconcerned with their physical needs.
God is concerned about your entire life. Yes, your soul is the most important. Yes, your spiritual part of you is the most important part of you but God is also concerned about your health and he's concerned with you.
[40:22] He cares for you about your job. He cares about your prayer requests for your children and your finances and your education and your son or daughter when they go to a new school and they don't know anybody and your teenager when their heart's broken and the medical test that came back that concerned you.

God cares about all of you and we should care that way for people. Of course, our spiritual condition is the most important thing about us but we are living as God taught us to live when we care about the needs of people.
So, there's a lesson about God, that's first. Secondarily, there's also a lesson here about giving, about being generous, about offering to the Lord, trusting Him to do far more than we could ever do if we held on to things ourselves.
Trust God to take and bless what you give to Him in faith. Be generous because you trust God. Be generous because you believe that God will take and use it and bless it.
Be generous with your time, with your life, with your resources, with your finances, not out of guilt, not because somebody manipulated you, not because you're trying to earn favor with God, but

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because you really believe and are truly convinced that God can do much with what I have and far more blessings come from giving to the Lord than holding on for myself.
[42:20] Become generous. Become faithful in giving away. If this boy does not give his lunch away, he would have forever missed the blessing of seeing God take his little and use it for greater good than he could ever imagine.

And I might just say one more thing in closing here. I don't know who the boy is. is. And that's fitting. Because people being what they are would have made him the hero. He was faithful. He received a blessing. But the hero was Jesus.
Jesus did the miracle. If this story would have happened in 2023, people would have wanted to interview him and have him write a book and then make a devotional calendar and then a bookmark and then a video documentary and they would have bled that thing dry and they very likely would have missed that Jesus is God.
Don't miss that today. Jesus is God. God, if you find yourself today aware that you're a sinner, I've got good news for you.
[44:01] Jesus is God and he forgives sin. And if you would cry out to him and call upon the name of the Lord, you too will be saved because Jesus forgives those who cry out to him in faith.

if you have needs, Christ is the answer. And if we can help you to find him or help you to understand that truth, we would love to do that.
Lord, we thank you today for your word and pray that you would use it to bring encouragement and hope. We pray, Lord, for those who were hurting today, that they would be encouraged to be reminded that you are a God that still meets needs.
You are the God that can still do amazing things. You are the God that can still do amazing things.

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