

## Sermon for Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2021 Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

This morning I would like to begin with how our society is obsessed with reality tv shows, for example Love Island, keeping up with the Kardashians and loose women and there are many other numerous examples that you would know. Why are so many of these shows watched, I believe the answer is acted drama. Society is fascinated to see what a day is like in the life of another person, it gives us a talking point when the contestant we like is voted out of the show that we were following, and we can feel the drama when they have to leave the show.

In my opinion I think reality tv shows are mindless drama just a bit of fun to relax and unwind, but there are other reality tv shows that are truthful and tell of personal stories that hit us hard and help shape our attitude and response to the story being told. For example, BBC Spotlight or perhaps Long-lost Families.

We do not have to switch on our television sets to watch reality shows, as we can see the reality on our doorsteps of the people in our community, we can see the reality of unemployment with shops closing, people who are hungry and can't afford to feed their families and those in need in our local community's that is why the reality of our church mission is important to be a Christ like presence and to show compassion to the people in our communities who need our help.

Over the centuries human needs have not changed and St Mark has left us with his Gospel that records for us the reality of Jesus' public ministry. Before we get to today's scripture reading. I would like to begin by giving some background to the events in the sixth chapter of Mark's Gospel.

Mark begins by telling us of the cold reception Jesus received in his hometown. He tells us that Jesus came to Nazareth on the Sabbath day to teach in the Synagogue and many who heard him were amazed by his teaching, wisdom, and miracles and yet the village people were offended by his messianic claims they said, "isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary". Jesus was amazed by their lack of faith and could not do mighty works there except for laying his hands on a few sick people and healing them. Jesus then went about teaching from village to village, (Mark 6:1-6). He then called the twelve disciples together and sent them out two by two to preach repentance which is turning away from sin and trusting in God (Mark 6:7-13).

In the same way as the disciples were given power we to as followers of Jesus have the same power to make a difference to reach out to help build up the Kingdom by spreading the news of the Gospel through our church outreach programs in the community.

This brings us back to our reading this morning verse 30-34 where Mark records the Apostle's return. The Apostle's gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. This was an important time for them as this would be their reality to the mission that they would be sent out to do after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. It is interesting as we open these verses that the disciples are now being addressed as Apostle's which means messenger or sent ones. In these few verses Mark strongly brings out the compassion, the human understanding of Jesus for humanity. Jesus first planned to give his Apostles a well-deserved rest. They had most certainly worked hard while out on their mission and a few days rest would restore their lost energy. Jesus himself, too, must have been hard pressed, preaching and dealing with the crowds. In the absence of the Apostles, Jesus had no one to help him—he also needed a rest. Because so many people were coming

and going that they did not even get a chance to eat. And Jesus said to the Apostle's Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest (Matthew 6:31). He, therefore, planned that they should go to a quiet corner of the Sea of Galilee where there was no village and where, therefore, they would not be disturbed. So, they went away by themselves by boat to a solitary place.

Here is what this passage speaks to me: just as Jesus loves and cares for us, he showed a caring compassion for his Apostle's needs. Jesus knew they needed rest. The same for us sometimes we need to switch off the TV, mobile phone etc... and go of alone and spend time with Jesus through the living word. In life if we push ourselves to hard and do not take time out to recharge our batteries it can lead to burn-out, exhaustion. Jesus knows our limits, in life we need a balance of work, family time and solitude with God. That is why Jesus invited the Apostle's to rest, they had put in long days preaching and teaching the word of God.

Although the crowds needed to see Jesus and to hear him speak, many of the people saw Jesus leaving and recognised him they ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. They crowds were waiting when the boat pulled to shore. Jesus could have sent them away, knowing how exhausted he and the Apostles were, but he did not. Jesus never once said to the crowds don't follow us to this secluded place or go away, we need some private time together. Jesus knew and was deeply concerned to help the people following him he could see the concerns and suffering on each individual face. Mark tells us in verse 34 when Jesus saw the large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

Reflecting on the image of the sheep and the shepherd made me dig deeper to understand this biblical metaphor. Sheep without a shepherd are helpless and lost, they just follow each other around wondering where to go next. Sheep without a shepherd are in great need. This is what Jesus meant when he saw the people, they needed a shepherd to give them direction and guide them. Just like all of us who need the great shepherd to give us direction. And today if we respond to his word, he will be our shepherd leader giving us all a purpose in life. The shepherd metaphor reminds me of the famous Psalm 23 which begins The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul he guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

The Psalm reminds me of what is happening in Mark 6 where Jesus feeds the 5000 which is not on our lectionary reading this morning. It shows the compassion of Jesus to other people, he sits them on the green grass, he teaches them, and provides for their needs, (Mark 6:30-34). This image of the shepherd also reminds us of the pastoral responsibility we have to care for people who need our help through daily life, for example our church compassion ministries, Munch on Mondays which reaches out into our community with love and care.

The word compassion in original Greek *splanchnizesthai* (*splanchnizesthai*) meaning a longing which comes from deep inside of you. A modern English translation could mean in the content of the Gospel that Jesus' stomach turned when he saw the crowds like a gut-wrenching experience at the sight of suffering people. Jesus' compassion is for those who come to him were there is no difference in anyone all are equal in Christ. The Apostle Paul confirms this in Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

**Application to take away to Reflect on.**

As I said at the beginning of this mornings talk reality is not found in a TV show it is found in the community all around us where everyone needs compassion everyone needs forgiveness, and everyone needs to hear the message of the cross. This morning I would like us to take away this message from Mark's Gospel whatever is going on in our lives just remember Jesus loves us and looks at each of us with gut-wrenching compassion, and he teaches us a better way to look at life and other people. Perhaps in life we need to stop and remember that we need our shepherd Jesus to guide us and teach us and that is our mission as followers of Christ to reach out in compassion to the lost so they can be found.

**Let us Pray**

Jesus Christ shepherd of our souls in our weakness and sickness we seek your healing touch. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for stopping to help us and heal us. Give us a heart of compassion that we may reach out with your mercy and grace in your precious name. Amen.