

Mark 6:30-4: *...and he had compassion on them...*

Context

- 6:1-6 Jesus rejected by own people
- 7-13 Disciples sent out
- 14-29 Jesus becomes known (flashback about John Baptist)
- 30-4 (current section)
- 35-44 Feeding of five thousand
- 45-52 Walking on water

Issues:

- Should 6:30-4 be interpreted as connected to feeding story, or to stand alone?
- Note how it functions to bring back disciples into narrative, and to remove Jesus to lonely place.
- Note how story of disciples' power and missionary role is immediately followed by two stories where they fail to understand.
- Compare 3:7-9.

Translation Questions

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 30 | RSV: the apostles returned... | |
| | NSRV: gathered | sunagontai |
| | NJB: rejoined | |
| 31 | RSV: to a lonely place | |
| | NSRV: to a deserted place | eis erhmon topon |
| | KJV: desert place | |
| 34 | RSV: compassion on them | |
| | NSRV: compassion for them | ep autous |

Structure

- Return
- Turmoil
- Attempted escape
- Confrontation
- Compassion

Details of interpretation

- 31 cf. 2:2, 3:20
Physical nature of cure

"The watchful care of health and strength is a primary religious duty. When we fail to take that care, we sin against God." Interpreter's Bible
Self care vs. asceticism

32 "make an appointment with your self" Interpreter's Bible

33 Jesus the rock star.

34 parallel with Matthew 9:36

- Image of "sheep without a shepherd" used at Numb 27:15-7, I Kings 22:17. Note especially Ezekiel 34:1-6, and Zec 10:2
- Moved to compassion vs. filled with contempt or anger.
- Frames for this: a pastor and congregation, but also each Christian and others

Interpretation, generally

How is this story heard & what is the good news for
the dependent, weak person - who people are always hitting up for favors
the aggressive person - who has no trouble refusing people

What refreshes and renews?

Escape
Compassion

It's common to talk about this story as if it supported vacation and days off. But does it? Jesus did not turn the crowd away.

**Mark 6:30-4: "had compassion on them"
for 9th Pentecost, July 24, 1994**

Three years ago in this very text study I had to prepare notes for this very text. What goes around, goes around. Assuming you all remember exactly what we talked about three years ago, I thought we might just move forward from there (!?)

Let's do cut to the chase:

This text and others like it are often used to justify the pastor's day off, the Sabbath rest, and so on. And I have no doubt that such things are indeed in God's plan.

But I think this text, as do most texts, calls us to even deeper reflection. Notice what actually happens. Jesus goes away to rest and for his disciples to rest. They are not able to really get away. And then what happens, does Jesus blow up at the crowds, or demand his day off? No, he has compassion on them, for they are so lost, and in their lostness are behaving in a way destructive to him and to themselves.

Many of us charge around all week, accumulating stress, and use our day off to give up the stress. We accumulate stress all year, and use our vacation to give up the stress. And then we start back up again and start accumulating stress again. We all know people who become sick immediately upon going on vacation because that is the first time they have let their body do anything natural for weeks. And when they give themselves permission to relax, the troubles they have stored inside immediately come out as illness.

I think Jesus did not go away because he was stressed out (his disciples may have been stressed, but not Jesus). Jesus was already calm and centered, but he still needed to go away for deeper prayer and solitude with God. That is why he could still react with compassion to one more interruption.

I think we were not intended to live in a yo-yo way: accumulate stress and drop it. I think we were intended to live calmly all the time: to be able to remain calm even when attacked and hassled by events. The day off is not for recovery, it is for deepening our ability to stay centered all the time.

But if you are in your study and pursuing some rich but somewhat elusive line of thinking, and the phone rings, or someone comes to see you with a very simple problem -- it may be someone whose story you have heard before and know what is coming -- can you leave your work and in a sweet spirit deal with your caller? What is more, can you go back after the caller has gone and pick up the threads of your thought as though nothing had happened?
-- John C. Theissen, *Pastoring the Smaller Church*