

August 6, 2006
Pentecost 9

"Jesus Compassion for the Lost"

MARK 6:30-34

Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. ³¹ And He said to them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. ³² So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves. ³³ But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him. ³⁴ And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.

Several months ago, people traveling east of Santa Maria on Highway 166 noticed something strange. Three sheep were stranded on a cliff along the highway. They were not able to get down, nor were they able to climb up. Several days past and the sheep did not move. The local news showed pictures of the stranded animals. A fire truck shot a stream of water high in the air to encourage them to get off the cliff. Finally, a man offered his large crane to lift some rescue workers up to the edge of the cliff, where they were able to grab the sheep and bring them back to safety. Without being rescued, they would have perished from lack of food and water.

The people of Jesus' time lived with sheep and goats. They often heard stories of sheep getting lost, stranded, or eaten by wild animals, especially if they wandered away from the protection of the shepherd. The Bible uses the picture of sheep getting lost and a shepherd caring for them to show us how lost we are without Jesus, and how much he loves us and cares for us. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Christians read these words and say them to each other especially in time of trouble and difficulty.

When Jesus looked at a large crowd of people coming to him he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He rescued them by teaching them many things, especially the truth that he was their Shepherd, Lord and God from all eternity, who had come to this earth to rescue them.

This coming week we are having another Star Bible Camp. There will be crafts, and games, and snacks, and singing. Also the children will have an opportunity to see how much Jesus loves them and cares for them. Jesus wants to take up the children in his arms and bless them through his Word. This morning we want to speak to you about "Jesus Compassion for the Lost."

Jesus uses people to reach the lost

We are told in our text for this morning that the apostles gathered around Jesus and "reported to him all that they had done and taught." It was an exciting time for them. Jesus has sent them out two by two into the towns and villages. They were given power to

heal and cast out evil spirits. The greatest power was found in the words they shared with people, words that changed their lives and created faith and interest in who Jesus was and the blessings he had for them in his kingdom. The disciples were like caring shepherds going after the lost sheep and bringing them to Jesus.

A few weeks ago, there was a picture of young girl in our Santa Maria Times who had a large tumor removed that was on her kidney. They quoted her as saying she was not afraid because she trusted in Lord. The girl's name was Kelsey and she attended our Bible camps when she was younger. It was a privilege to teach her God's Word and bring her to Jesus. It is exciting to talk about the blessings God's Word brings in the lives of people.

Jesus wanted to have some time alone with the disciples to listen to their stories and hear what they said to people. The problem was the large crowds of people that wanted to see Jesus. They were curious. They wanted to see more miracles. Everyone was trying to get close to Jesus, the way a crowd might surround a movie star or sports hero. Finally Jesus says to his disciples, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

A quiet place. A place to rest. A place to get away from it all. We know how important it is to get some sleep at night or sit down and relax after a hard day. The other day my wife and I were talking about the trip we took last summer to the Canadian Rockies. What a blessing it is to enjoy the beauty of God's world or just relax! Even more important than rest for our physical bodies is the rest we need in God's Word. That's what Jesus wanted for his disciples. Not just a quiet place to relax, but a quiet place to talk with them and teach them. It was through the teaching of God's Word that these disciples would be able to talk to other people and draw them to Jesus their only true Shepherd.

The other day I was walking into Costco. Outside the building one of the employees was taking his break. He was not smoking a cigarette, or eating a sandwich, or drinking a soft drink. He was sitting there reading his Bible with the Bible in one and a pen in another. The thought went through my mind, "I wonder if he has opportunities to share what he had read in the Bible with other people at work." The quiet time you have in the Word not only strengthens you, but it also equips you with verses of the Bible and thoughts from Scripture that you can offer other people. When we teach Bible lessons to the children this week, we fill ourselves up with the truths of the lesson and then offer them to the children.

Do you know what the word "pastor" means? It means shepherd. It is related to the word, "pasture." The purpose of the pastor is to lead God's people into the green pastures and cool quiet waters of the Word. What if the words of Psalm 23 could come true every day in your life, not just on Sunday morning? He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his names' sake. His rod and staff comfort me and protect me, even if I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. That does happen for us when we find that quiet time Jesus talked about, quiet time to be with him, alone in the Word, even if it is only for a little bit of time each day. Then we will also be more equipped and prepared to give the reason for the hope that is within us especially for those who are still lost or others who may be wandering.

Jesus shows compassion for the crowd

The disciples, who longed to be with Jesus in a quiet place, are about to receive a lesson in compassion for the lost they will never forget. We are told, "So they went away by themselves in a boat to solitary place." It was not hard to get away from the crowd. Take a boat onto the Sea of Galilee. Find a remote and quiet area alone near the shore. It did not work out that way. The people saw where Jesus was going. It says they ran ahead on foot. As they ran, more people came along. The crowd was waiting for them when they came ashore.

What we want to focus on now is the look on Jesus' face when the large crowd was waiting for him. The disciples see the crowd. Then they look to the face of Jesus. What did they see on Jesus' face? Was it anger? Was it disappointment? Was it weariness? No they saw something they would carry with them for the rest of their lives, an expression they had seen many times. "Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd."

The Greek word for compassion literally means to be deeply moved in the inner part of the stomach. When you are deeply moved emotionally where does it hit you hard? In the heart? No, we say it hits us in the pit of the stomach. Remember when your favorite pet was dying. You felt sorry for it and did not want to see it suffer. Where did you feel the pain? Not here, in the heart, but deep inside, the pit of the stomach. That is how Jesus felt about people. He had compassion on them. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd, sheep that were destined to perish.

Last year there was an interesting story about sheep getting lost and perishing in Turkey. Let me read the story as it was reported in the news from Istanbul. "First one sheep jumped to its death. Then stunned Turkish shepherds, who had left the herd to graze while they had breakfast, watched as nearly 1,500 others followed, each leaping off the same cliff, Turkish media reported. In the end, 450 dead animals lay on top of one another in a billowy white pile, the *Aksam* newspaper said. Those who jumped later were saved as the pile got higher and the fall more cushioned, *Aksam* reported. "There's nothing we can do. They're all wasted," Nevzat Bayhan, a member of one of 26 families whose sheep were grazing together in the herd, was quoted as saying by *Aksam*. The estimated loss to families in the town of Gevas, located in Van province in eastern Turkey, tops \$100,000, a significant amount of money in a country where average GDP per head is around \$2,700.

There is a verse in the Bible that tells us people, all people are like sheep that go astray, or we might even say, "jump off a cliff." "We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way." Sheep who don't have the protection of the Shepherd follow other sheep. There is no problem jumping off the cliff if the cliff is only a few feet high. The problem is huge if the cliff is high enough to destroy the sheep. The problem with sin is that once we take the plunge into sin we fall into a pit so deep that leads us to eternal death and destruction. About a month ago a little boy in India fell into a well. The well was so narrow that they could not pull him out. What they did was dig another well alongside the well in which he was trapped. In that way they were able to rescue him before he died.

Jesus had compassion on the crowd. Later he would feed them with five barley loaves and two small fish. Before he feeds them food for their stomach he feeds them with the Word of God. "So he began teaching them many things." Jesus taught them many things. He talked to them about the kingdom of God. He told stories about sheep getting lost,

or a son leaving home and then coming back to his Father, or seed being planted in the ground. The loving Shepherd reaches out to these people and tells them who he is and the blessings of his kingdom.

Psalm 103 says of the Lord, "He heals all my diseases and redeems me from the pit." Way back into eternity, before we were born, Jesus saw the pit that you and I would fall into, and how lost we were, and hopeless. He saw us as sheep that go astray and he had compassion on us. The compassion resulted in the greatest act of love the world has ever known. "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities." "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." That is the compassion that we see on the face of Jesus as he looked at the crowds that came to him and then taught them. That is the compassion we also have for people. May the Lord use you and me to lead other people into the arms of the shepherd who loves them. Amen.