

Talk Notes

Title: Mark 6:30-56 – seeing beyond

Meeting: Freshwaters

Date: 4/12/16

Introduction

The passages that we are going to look at this morning are very familiar, the feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus walking on the water. Both of them focus around the disciples, although many more people were involved. Jesus was teaching the disciples to see beyond their natural solutions and limitations to the endless possibilities of the Kingdom of God.

Mark 6:30-44

Jesus has compassion

The first thing that strikes me about this passage is Jesus compassion, first for the disciples then for the crowd.

Jesus was not one of those people who we all meet from time to time who are so heavenly minded they are no earthly good. Jesus enjoyed hearing the disciple's testimonies of how God worked through them, Jesus loved serving the crowd – **but He noticed that the disciples were tired and needed something to eat.**

Sometimes we can be so caught up in serving the Lord that we forget to take care of one another and of ourselves. We are all human, we need to rest and to eat. One of the biggest challenges to wellbeing in the western world today is our frenetic pace of life and our disregard for the principle of the Sabbath. Now I don't personally equate that to Sunday's, although I respect those who do – but I believe the principle of the Sabbath is to have a regular weekly pattern that includes rest. For some that rest is on a Sunday but for others it is other times during the week. It is also important that we eat regularly.

So Jesus and the disciples got into a boat and travelled along the coast. In the boat itself they had a time apart from the crowds to unwind and relax – perhaps they also had a packed lunch they ate as they travelled, because we are told that when they hit the shore again the crowds had followed them round and Jesus seeing the crowds had compassion.

Jesus saw that the crowd were **'like sheep without a Shepherd'** and He began to teach them many things. At this point Jesus compassion led Him to teach the people, the compassion that was stirred in Jesus was not because of their physical need but their spiritual need. The people were hungry not for food but for the word of God – as Jesus

Himself quoted in His tussle with satan (**Matt 4:4 and Luke 4:4**) '**people do not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God**'.

In the same way that Jesus spotted the disciples need for food and rest and would later respond to the peoples need for food and for healing – here Jesus spotted their need to be taught and Jesus gave them what they needed.

In the same way as it would be wrong to ignore our physical need for rest and food, it is wrong to ignore peoples need to be taught about the things of God. There is a well-known quote often attributed to Francis of Assisi "**Preach the gospel; use words if necessary**" – there are only two things wrong with this quote – firstly Francis never said it and secondly it is not biblical.

Now we all know the point that is being made, that our lives and actions need to point to Jesus and we would all agree that this is true. However the implication of the quote is that in most circumstances words are not necessary, lifestyle and actions are enough – and that is dangerous ground because it flies in the face of the bible.

Why did Jesus, Old and New Testament prophets and the disciples spend so much time preaching and teaching if all they needed to do was to demonstrate their faith through their lifestyle and actions? **No, their lifestyle and actions reinforced what they clearly proclaimed and taught.**

Let's read what Paul has to say in **Romans 10:8b-17** '**So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ**' – but if no one tells them how can they believe? If we all live by this spurious if well intentioned quote (wrongly attributed to St Francis) then we will deny many the chance of salvation.

Let's read **1 Peter 3:8-16**

The truth is we need both words and actions – our lifestyle and actions should reinforce and even open the opportunities for us to explain the hope we have, but in a gentle and respectful way.

Seeing beyond the natural.

As the afternoon continued, perhaps having learned from Jesus concern for their wellbeing the disciples were concerned that the people needed to eat. As they approached Jesus with a very sensible natural solution to the problem, they were stunned that Jesus solution was radically different – in fact impossible, 'feed them'.

Jesus saw a solution beyond the natural – bring the natural you have and as you offer it to God the supernatural solution can be released.

How often do we come across a problem and immediately our minds are feverishly at work to devise a natural solution. When a natural solution is not possible we too often despair, give up or grumble.

Jesus answer is bring what you do have and lay it before Him and then watch Him transform it into a means of overcoming the problem supernaturally.

So the disciples brought the natural resources they could muster, 5 measly loaves and two fish – these weren't loaves as we would think – this was the packed lunch of a young boy – we are more likely to think of them as rolls. It seemed so pathetic – such meagre resources to meet such great need – but when submitted to Jesus it was enough.

What need has God impressed on your heart? What is the little you can bring to lay at His feet? – Bring it to Him and see Him transform it into miraculous provision.

Mark 6:45-56

Isn't it just like Jesus to send His disciples off and to personally take time to say goodbye to people and send them home.

Time out

Jesus then went up into the hills to pray. As you read through the gospels you see a number of these instances of Jesus taking time alone to pray. From that private place of prayer **Jesus was able to enjoy fellowship with His Father**, He was **able to hear and see what the Father was doing so that He could move in agreement with Him**. He was also **able to receive the wisdom and strength** He needed for each days challenges and opportunities.

Where and when is our quite time alone with the Lord? What priority do you give to enjoying God's presence, to hearing His voice and to receiving from Him strength and wisdom? Is it a duty or a joy? Do you feel it is only productive if you 'hear' something?

We understand from human relationships that we like to spend time with the one's we love. We don't always need to get something from them, a profound statement or a gift, we just enjoy being with them. So with God – give Him time and attention without an agenda and watch your relationship grow and flourish. If He wants to speak to you great, if He wants to give to you some gift fantastic – but if He just wants you to sit, or to walk a while with Him that's also great and fantastic because we get to hang out with the King of King's and Lord of Lords.

Seeing 'beyond'

It says in **verse 48** that Jesus **'saw that they were in serious trouble , rowing hard and struggling against the wind and waves'**. Now Jesus could not have 'seen' the disciples in the natural – it was dark and stormy, the disciples were too far away – however, as already demonstrated in the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus was able to see beyond the natural.

There are many testimonies of people alone in prayer who 'see' someone in need and give themselves to prayer for that person or situation. Later it is confirmed that at just that time

they needed and received help. Be open to the Holy Spirit's voice as you are alone in prayer and if you feel a person or situation come to your mind pray into it – God could be showing you something beyond the natural.

As Jesus walked to the disciples He not only walked on water but overcame the elements – somehow He was 'above' the wind and the waves – He walked in a short time a distance the disciples had taken hours to row – and He was about to overtake them.

The Disciples were more willing to believe it was a ghost than to consider it could be Jesus. It is sad that too many people, Christians included, can witness the supernatural power of God and are more willing to acknowledge it as luck, chance or 'the stars' or a dead relative 'watching over them' than to acknowledge this is the hand of God.

Jesus speaks courage to the disciples – a courage which is associated with Jesus presence. It is so easy for us to become fearful when we take our eyes off of Jesus. We know from the telling of the same incident in **Matt 14** that Peter came out of the boat to walk towards Jesus but when he took his eyes off Jesus and focussed on the wind and the waves then he began to sink.

When we are in a place of fear then we need to re-focus our attention on Jesus – we need to recognise His presence and receive His peace – we need to hear His voice '**Don't be afraid, take courage, I am here**'. Are you afraid of something this morning – hear Jesus words, 'Don't be afraid' take courage, I am here'. The reason for our courage is not the change in the situation, but the recognition that Jesus is with us and He will lead us through.

The reference in **verse 52** to the disciples amazement '**for they still didn't understand the significance of the loaves and the fish**' reinforces to me the lesson we all need to 'see beyond' the natural. Perhaps the disciples 'natural' solution to the problem with the wind and the waves, even having seen Jesus walk to them on water was '**well grab an oar**' – but Jesus solution was to calm the storm.

When we are so limited to seeing things in the natural – even if we do recognise God's presence with us, we can only muster a prayer or expectation that God will help us by adding His strength to our oar – but God may well have a supernatural solution, let's have our eyes open to see beyond the natural.

The supernatural let loose again

Finally in the last few verses, Jesus now gives attention to the people's physical needs for healing. In each case seeing beyond the natural to let loose the power of God to heal the sick.

Conclusion

So now, how good are you at seeing beyond? When we face a challenge do we strive to find a natural solution or can we 'see beyond' to the supernatural answer.

Are we spending time in God's presence where our spiritual 'eyesight' can be developed?

When we are in trouble is the height of our expectation and prayer that God will help us with our ore? Or can we see beyond to receive a supernatural solution?

When you are faced with testimonies of God at work do you assign them to luck or chance, or dead uncle Harrold – or do you recognise and declare God is at work.?

As I am preparing this talk shortly after my return from Sabbatical, I have heard of 2 testimonies of God at work – one from the Healing Rooms' where a ladies arms and shoulders were healed. The other about Christine – saved from a nasty fall. I believe that if we will see, God is at work – I believe that these sort of testimonies are a taste of things to come here in Harlow. Let's be expectant, let's have eyes to see what only God can do – let us be those who see beyond.