

July 21, 2024

Text: Psalm 103; Mark 6: 30-34, 53-56

Title: "A Vacation to Remember"

This being the vacation season for some, I have a story about a brother and sister that traveled in the back seat of their parent's old Rambler station wagon. It was so big that it was almost like his parents were in another room. Often during long drives, the kids would secretly get into trouble. This was before they had electronic devices and the like. They discovered that they could take an apple or a hard-boiled egg from their picnic basket and make it look like a porcupine by sticking wooden matches into it. And it became a bomb when they threw it out the tailgate window of the station wagon. They would flash and pop with a large blue flame, causing the cars following behind to swerve around them. The parents, way up in the front seat, never knew what was going on. They couldn't understand why cars kept zooming up alongside swearing at the driver.

I suppose you've all had interesting vacations. Even Jesus and his disciples took vacations. Or at least they tried.

The disciples had just returned from their first solo mission, which was successful and they had a lot to tell him and they were tired so he said, "Let's get away for a while." So they sailed in a boat but this was one vacation that just wasn't going to be because people followed them. But, you know what? Jesus wasn't upset. In fact he

stayed with the crowd and taught them. First I want to focus on the crowd and their hunger for Jesus.

There was something about him that made people want to be near him. I would call it a spiritual hunger. An inner neediness. They sensed that Jesus held the key to what they needed.

The people "...were like sheep without a shepherd," (v 34b) as Mark says. In the gospel of John, Jesus is described as the "bread of life" our spiritual food if you will.

**Jesus was filled with Compassion and therefore responded to their needs.**

When he saw the crowd, he felt their hurt and their longing. They weren't a nuisance to him. The crowd was his mission. His compassion for them led him to reach out to people and touch them.

Psychologist Elisha Goldstein, in "The Now Effect," writes about how we so often live on "autopilot." (drive somewhere and not remember it?) We're thinking about what we have to do. We're under the spell of our fears, worries, anger, perhaps and not paying attention to the people in our lives. We could use a wake up to notice those around us, those we encounter each day, and see them with a compassionate heart.

A little compassion can accomplish so much in the world. Jesus had compassion for the crowd.

Finally, **Jesus has the power to satisfy our hungry hearts.** Jesus and the disciples were still hoping to have their short vacation. That night they took a boat and went to the other side of the lake. But again, as soon as they got out of the boat, it was the same deal again. People came from all over to see Jesus. Sick people were set out in the streets so that Jesus would heal them. He ministered to their deepest needs. That's the way He was and that's the way He is!

I close with a story about a woman named Jan. Her husband lost the job he'd held for eighteen years and without income she and her husband soon lost their home. Jan was furious to think God would allow this. Even in the depths of despair, however, Jan still had faith that somehow God would help her family turn their lives around, and that God would help them find another home. But she was impatient and she wanted to see evidence of God's concern immediately.

It was a long time coming and many difficulties and hurdles to be gotten over but Jan and her husband along with their 19-year-old daughter, finally did move into a new home several years later. And one day Jan was lining the kitchen shelves with paper she became frustrated because she couldn't get the paper to lay flat. She started again, folding and smoothing it down one small section at a time. Finally it worked. Then in the kitchen of her new home she was struck by a powerful insight. "Suddenly it was clear to me," she said, "that this was very much how God had

brought us through the last three years, one small step at a time, teaching and leading us day by day.”

There in the kitchen Jan began to cry. She thanked God for bringing them through some difficult times. Through that time of struggle she grew closer to both her husband and daughter. “Most important,” Jan says, “I could see that no matter what happens in my life, what is added on or taken away, God will be there with me.” That’s my point this morning. We can’t wear Jesus down with our problems. He sees our hunger. He has compassion and he will walk the walk with you for the long haul.

The disciples had hoped for a time to be alone with Jesus, but instead they saw another dimension of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. There will always be people with that spiritual hunger. And these days, a lot them are unsure if the church is a safe place for them. We need to show compassion to the world around us which communicate to them that the compassionate Christ is for real. He has the power to feed our hungry hearts. Amen.