

# SURRENDER AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS

MARK 6:1-56

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The ministry of Jesus was a continuous ministry with constant interaction and interruptions as his popularity increased. Not only that, the intensity of his mission begins to increase once the forerunner of his mission, John the Baptist, is imprisoned and executed. And so, here in chapter six, we find Jesus getting away to pray and maybe to mourn the death of his friend – John the Baptist.

Throughout Mark's account, there are only two passages that are not focused primarily on Jesus. And both of these two passages are about John the Baptist. These two passages on John the Baptist have a unique way of foreshadowing the initial coming of Christ (v. 1:1-8) as well as the cross of Christ (v. 6:14-29).

When we observe their life and ministry, we see noticeable similarities between John and Jesus. Both of them went around proclaiming a message of repentance and both are innocently executed at the hands of political leaders who respected them but feared the social pressures surrounding them even more.

We know the reason behind the crucifixion of Jesus, but tragically, the man Jesus considered the greatest man that ever lived was killed because of a party wager gone wrong. This reality is sobering: death is a doorway into eternity, and therefore we must not get too caught up in its architecture. John's death forces us to carefully consider the great consequences and costs of discipleship.

So Jesus and his disciples have retreated to a place of silence and solitude, but they soon find themselves once again interrupted by the curiosity of the crowds. For many of us, we look at life's interruptions as annoying and inconvenient. But while we have a tendency to complain about these things, Jesus has the awareness to embrace interruptions and the gentleness to show compassion in the midst of them.

Do we find ourselves so scheduled and straightforward that we leave no room for interruptions in life? Even in examining our daily practices of spiritual disciplines are we sure that our time is not more self-motivated rather than serve-motivated? Divine appointments are rarely scheduled appointments.

When Jesus is interrupted by the large crowd that had gathered near the shore where he and his disciples had just arrived, Jesus sacrificially serves the crowd by 'teaching them many things' about the kingdom of God. However, his time of teaching this crowd begins to create a dilemma – these people need to get back to town in time to grab some dinner.

The disciples recognize this dilemma and offer a very logical solution. "We are gathered out here in a remote location where there is nothing to eat, and soon it will be dark. The surrounding villages will be shutting down soon so let's let these people go and grab something to eat while there's still some time left." The disciples weren't dumb. This was a logical solution to the problem. But Jesus just tells them, "You give them something to eat." God doesn't always act in the most logical way.

The disciples assumed it must be time to move on, but actually they were in the exact place that they needed to be. The places of great need are most often the places of opportunity to experience the power and presence of God. Jesus says, "You give them something to eat. Why send people away for the resource when the Source is right here?"

This is a call to faith and trust. Jesus is saying, "You are my disciples. You've experienced my provision and power firsthand. Do you not believe that I can do something to provide here and now for these people? Act like you believe Me."

How often do we forget God's faithfulness in the presence of great need? How often do we first consider our resources before first consulting the Source?

We must remember Who it is that we serve.

Now, it's easy to empathize with the disciples and defend their ignorance in overlooking how Jesus might first want to handle the problem of feeding the people. But this call to faith for the disciples comes immediately after a commission of faith that they had just carried out. Jesus had just sent out the disciples in a manner that required a great deal of trust in God's provision.

We read in Mark 6:7-9:

"And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two... He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff – no bread, no bag, no money in their belts – but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics."

Followers of Jesus are meant to live expecting and depending on God's provision. True service to God requires trusting him. Sufficient supplies and plans of provision for every possible circumstance are smart but can also lead us to rely on ourselves more so than on God. Walking into the unknown and unexpected has a way of increasing our focus and increasing our faith. "A genuine call to ministry always calls us to that which we are not adequately prepared."<sup>1</sup>

When Jesus commands his disciples to feed the crowd, the disciples once again must trust him with complete dependence on whatever Jesus tells them to do. Jesus tells them to go and see what they have. So often we focus on what we don't have that we pay no attention to the things we do have.

They round up five pieces of bread and two small fish. The deficit is massive, but they give the bread and fish to Jesus anyway in obedience to see what he might want to do with them. God doesn't necessarily use what you have, but he will use what you give him. The power is experienced through our surrender to him. The power to part the Red Sea was not in Moses' staff but in his surrender to just do what God said (Exodus 14:15-22). We must resist the temptation to despair in what we lack and trust God with what we have.

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<sup>1</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 183

Jesus takes the bread and fish in the midst of such a massive crowd and 'gives thanks' for what they have. Prayer precedes the miracle. He then divides the pieces of bread and the two fish into twelve baskets for each of the disciples and instructs them to start passing them out to the crowd. Remarkably there is no record of doubt or rejection from the disciples. They simply take a step of faith and obey. They choose to surrender and see what happens.

Are we willing to obey without knowing exactly what God is going to do? The disciples probably never had more in their baskets than just the amount that they needed for the next man. But as they walked in obedience, their baskets miraculously remained plentiful. Their focus was now rightly on the Provider rather than simply what needed to be provided.

Everyone was given enough to eat and ended up leaving satisfied.

Jesus, the Son of God, is the only One with the power to satisfy our hearts and our hunger. This is more than a miracle; it is a message about Jesus' identity. Just as God provided manna for his people in the desert (Deuteronomy 8:3), Jesus has just provided miraculous food for the people in this deserted place.

Are we starving emotionally, spiritually and mentally because we are failing to trust God in our desperate situation?

Deficits can actually be opportunities. And so we need to focus on the Provider rather than only dwelling on what needs to be provided. We need to come to the Giver instead of just consuming ourselves with the gifts.

Our lives as followers of Jesus ought to be spectacular stories of God's faithfulness and constant provision. There is infinite power in the Who no matter the what, and so let's learn to surrender and see what happens.