



THE PURSUIT OF JESUS

Does Jesus Care About My Pain?
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The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

This week Pastor Lee is taking us on a study he calls Heart Check. What is the condition of our hearts when we encounter people who are suffering? We are continuing in Mark Moore's Quest 52 series and he is looking at two signs Jesus performed as He demonstrated His power as told in Mark's Gospel, chapter 6.

SCRIPTURE

Mark 6:35-38 By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." But he answered, "**You give them something to eat.**" They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish." Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand."

Mark 6:47-52 Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; **their hearts were hardened.**"

Ezekiel 36:26 "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."

OBSERVATION

We begin when the Twelve have just returned from being sent out on their own and they had experienced amazing things as they preached and healed. They had put into practice what Jesus had been telling them, but how great it was to return and rest. Changing lives can wear us out! But suddenly there was a crowd of people there wanting to hear from Jesus. As the day went on, the people became hungry, but all the disciples had to feed them were 5 loaves that would have been more like 3-4 inch flat bread and 2 fish like a pickled spread – perfect for feeding a young boy, but not 5000 men – not to mention women and children! Then Jesus took the meager offering of fish and bread and did just that! There were even leftovers. An amazing sign of His power.

QUESTION: With what signs has God blessed you in your life?

Then Jesus sent everyone away – the Twelve were rowing out into the middle of the Sea of Galilee when the wind and rain came up. When Jesus saw them out there He walked toward them on the water – they thought they were seeing a ghost. He climbed into the boat and calmed the wind, rain and their fears, and they were amazed because they hadn't understood the sign of the feeding of the 5000 - **their hearts were hardened.**

QUESTION: What is the condition of your heart? How soft and open to others' pain is it?

The hearts we're talking about are mysterious, wonderful and confusing, yet they enable us to love, laugh, fear, wonder and have passion - but life can be hard on them. Over time we all experience things that slowly erode our hearts' sensitivity – pain, stress, anxiety – and when this happens we may build walls around them. The pain and disappointment of life have caused many of our hearts to become brittle and calloused and we are blinded to the fact that Jesus is all powerful.

APPLICATION

Maybe we are dealing with a vision problem that quickly can become a heart problem. Life's challenges, pain, suffering and circumstances can make our eyesight blurry. **Unplanned Situations:** Divorce, sickness, people; **Unmet Expectations:** Life was going one way and it took a hard turn; **Unexplained Scenarios:** Confusing life situations that don't make sense; **Uninspired Efforts:** Working hard, serving, caring, developing calluses - sometimes we work so hard **for** God that we become calloused **toward** God.

QUESTION: What are you working hard at that is desensitizing you to God's call?

Signs of a hard heart: **Indifference toward God and People:** We've stopped caring about God and stopped caring about his people; **The ultimate insult in a relationship is not hatred, it's indifference:** What's supposed to be meaningful has become mechanical - just a job, just my neighbors, just my church; and passion is hard to come by. We assume the worst, not the best, in other people. We fill in gaps in relationships with suspicion not trust and cynicism becomes our modus operandi.

QUESTION: Is this you? How long has this been going on? What does it feel like to realize you have allowed circumstances to separate you from God?

Centuries ago, Ezekiel spoke about transplanted hearts. He's like a Barnabas who encourages us to exchange a "heart of stone for a heart of flesh" with whole new sensory responses, cravings and habits. The disciples in our scriptures this week stood on the grassy hillside and saw 5000 fed and their hearts were not transplanted yet. They collected leftovers from a miraculous meal and their hearts were not transplanted yet. They rowed desperately against the wind and rain, saw Jesus walk on the water and calm the wind, and their hearts were not transplanted yet. They were so focused on the task at hand they almost missed the signs right in front of them.

QUESTION: When did you start giving God a passing glance instead of truly hallowing His name?

Our eyes are portals to our hearts – what we see impacts them and how we see things. We have to guard against the ghosts that appear on the water of our hearts as we strain against the winds of life. We often see from a slanted perspective, a frustrated perspective, a selfish perspective, or we just simply stop seeing at all.

QUESTION: What caused you to settle for a God who fits into the constraints of your logical left brain instead of a God who can do immeasurably more than all you can imagine with your right brain?

QUESTION: Why did you set such parameters on God, such expectations on your relationship with Him, such limits to how God will intervene in your life, and barriers to how you will respond so that your heart has grown hard?

QUESTION: What circumstance has broken the heart of God and your own recently?

It's obvious in the Gospels that Jesus cared for people. The question is, "Do we?" A church can also experience the hard heart syndrome. The Crossing should be known as people with clear eyes and soft hearts. So, be reminded why we are here. Be clearer on the mission in front of us - on the love of Christ we have to bring to those around us - how we exist so that our friends, neighbors and co-workers have a place where they can

personally discover Jesus and be transformed. The good news is it is not too late. It is never too late to trust again, believe again, hope again and see again. When we see with clearer eyes and we live with softer hearts, people can be fed, storms can be calmed, the impossible can be possible and lives can be changed; if we are willing to open our eyes we will see life again through the filter of God's grace.

QUESTION: When have you recently extended your hands of compassion to someone who is suffering?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help us to have spiritual eyes leading to compassionate hearts so we can see the pain and suffering around us and be Your hands stretched out in comfort and healing. In Jesus' name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

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