

## introduction

The feeding of the five thousand in Mark 6:30–44 reveals Jesus as the "Great Shepherd" of his people. Mark's inclusion of specific details — the "green grass" (v. 39), the miraculous provision of food, and his protective care — strongly suggests that Jesus is the living fulfillment of Psalm 23. He is the Shepherd-King who recognizes and meets the comprehensive needs of his flock, offering both spiritual nourishment through his teaching (v. 34) and practical sustenance through the bread and fish (v. 41). Critically, verse 34 identifies the emotion behind this care: *compassion*. In the New Testament, compassion is not a fleeting sentiment but, literally in Greek, a visceral, "gut-level" response that compels sacrificial energy and action on behalf of the beloved. Jesus is the true Shepherd and the Great King his people have always needed; his reign is uniquely "good news" because it is rooted in a deep, transformative love for his people's every need.



**What is one of the kindest things that someone did for you, or gave you? How did you feel about it at the time?**

### read **Mark 6:30-44 (NIV)**

<sup>30</sup> The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup> Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

<sup>32</sup> So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. <sup>33</sup> But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. <sup>34</sup> When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

<sup>35</sup> 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. <sup>36</sup> Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

<sup>37</sup> 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?"

<sup>38</sup> “How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.”

When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.”

<sup>39</sup> Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. <sup>40</sup> So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. <sup>41</sup> 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. <sup>42</sup> They all ate and were satisfied, <sup>43</sup> and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. <sup>44</sup> The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

**Take a few moments to reflect on the Scripture. Share some insights, questions, or points that strike you. Then read what follows.**

## context

The disciples have been tirelessly engaged in ministry (vv. 6-13) and have also received heartbreaking news (vv. 14-29). Jesus is compassionate towards his disciples and so invites them to a quiet place to rest. But by this point, Jesus' fame was so great that crowds followed him and his disciples. There was no rest to be had. Even though we don't get a glimpse of the disciples resting with Jesus, it's noteworthy that Jesus identified their exhaustion and invited them to rest. Jesus didn't expect them to perpetually burn the candle at both ends; he knew that those engaged in his work needed rest in their labors. They needed time to feed and nourish their own souls in his presence.

## lost sheep

Jesus remarks in v. 34 that the crowds were “like sheep without a shepherd.” According to biblical scholars, that phrase means people are without a leader (see [Numbers 27:17](#), [1 Kings 22:17](#), [Ezekiel 34:5](#)). Leaderless people are vulnerable to many things, such as being misled, wandering, and danger.

## discuss

- 1. Why is Jesus popular at this point in his ministry? How has his name spread?**

2. What are the people in this passage missing? What do they need?
3. How are we all like sheep without a shepherd? What are the missing elements in our lives that all of us need, even in a highly self-sufficient city? And what risk do we face when we are leaderless?

## compassion of Jesus

Dane Ortland, in his book *Gentle and Lowly*, says this about the compassion of Jesus, which we see in v. 34 and acted out in this passage: “This is what Jesus felt. Perfect, unfiltered compassion. What must have that been like, rising up within him? What would perfect pity look like, mediated not through a prophetic oracle as in the Old Testament but through an actual, real human? And what if that human were still a human, though now in heaven, and looked at each of us spiritual lepers with unfiltered compassion, an outflowing affection not limited by the sinful self-absorption that restricts our own compassion?”

*“Self-sacrificing love is the essence of the Christian life.”*

—B. B. Warfield

## discuss

4. Contemplate the compassion of Jesus. How does that show up here, in other places in the Gospels, and in your life?
5. How does Jesus fulfill the role of “the Lord is my shepherd” ([Psalm 23](#))? What signs in this passage link to Psalm 23 and to the Last Supper?
6. The meal is overabundant, with extra fish and bread. When have you seen the overabundant mercy of God in your life? How does he provide?

## group application

Spend time praying for compassion on specific people you know, and compelling action to meet their need.

## upcoming

- Sunday, February 15 | **Spiritual Practices: Fasting, 1:15 - 2:45 pm**  
*Join for lunch and this month's discussion on the spiritual practice of fasting.*  
[redeemerws.com/spiritualpractices](https://redeemerws.com/spiritualpractices)
- Wednesday, February 18 | **Ash Wednesday Service, 7-8 pm**  
*Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Lenten season. Consider attending this special service together as a CG. (Childcare will not be available; kids are welcome in service.)*  
[redeemerws.com/lent](https://redeemerws.com/lent)
- Saturday, February 21 | **City Wide Worship NYC w/ HFNY, 5 - 7 pm**  
*Join Christians from churches all over the city for this quarterly inter-denominational, collaborative night of prayer and worship featuring songs written by local musicians. This is a fun opportunity for CGs to do together and for meeting other Christians in the city.*  
[redeemerws.com/citywideworship](https://redeemerws.com/citywideworship)