

## Introduction

A few years ago, we had a young engineer come through our class and the lights went on for him. He understood the concepts and principles that we were teaching. He wrote me an email after he returned to the rig where he was the night supervisor. He was frustrated because he tried to implement some of the technology that he had learned. In particular, he wanted to pump a proper slug in preparation for a trip. The day supervisor nixed the idea and told him to pump a 50-bbl slug, just like they always had done. The day supervisor was an older man who had learned to do things a certain way without really understanding why they were doing it that way. If the older supervisor understood the principle, he would not have been doing what he had always done. Each well requires a different weight and volume of slug to be pumped, and you cannot do it effectively by using the same slug weight and volume in all situations.

It reminds me of a story that Tom Swenson recently told me. A family had always cut their turkey in half before baking it. Their children learned to do that and continued to cut their turkeys in half before baking them. One day someone asked why they did that, and they responded by saying that this is how they have always done it. Nobody understood the reason why they did it that way. The reason that their grandmother had cut the turkeys in half before baking them was that she did not have a pot large enough to hold a turkey so she had to cut them in half. Many times, people do things without understanding why they are doing things.

As I read and studied the passage for this week, God gave me some understanding about why He fed the five thousand. I had read and studied the passage before and have even taught on some of the concepts, but I had never understood why Jesus fed the five thousand until this week. I feel that the message has tremendous implications for pastors and leaders. I also believe that there are lessons for all of us to learn from the passage. As I prepared for this week, the Holy Spirit spoke something to me that I will probably never forget. God said to me, "Sheep do not exist for the sake of the pastor; the pastor exists for the sake of the sheep."

In our passage today, a crowd gathered from various cities to hear Jesus. They had heard of the miracles that had been taking place and they wanted to see for themselves. When Jesus saw them, He had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus began to teach them many things, and as it began to get late, the disciples wanted to send the crowds away so that they could buy something to eat. Jesus told the disciples to feed the crowds. They looked at what they had and they did not see how this was possible. Jesus then divided up the crowd into groups and fed them. I have titled the passage, Why Jesus Fed The Multitude. The two reasons that Jesus fed them are: 1) He felt compassion for them, 2) He wanted to teach his disciples about shepherding. Let's read our passage.

## Why Jesus Fed the Multitude

1. Jesus felt compassion for the crowd
2. Jesus wanted to teach His disciples about shepherding

(Mark 6:33-44) "*The people* saw them going, and many recognized *them* and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them. {34} When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things. {35} When it was already quite late, His disciples came to Him and said, "This place is desolate and it is already quite late; {36} send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something

to eat." {37} But He answered them, "You give them *something* to eat!" And they said to Him, "Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them *something* to eat?" {38} And He said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go look!" And when they found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." {39} And He commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass. {40} They sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. {41} And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed *the food* and broke the loaves and He kept giving *them* to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all. {42} They all ate and were satisfied, {43} and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish. {44} There were five thousand men who ate the loaves."

## 1. Jesus Felt Compassion for the Crowd

Our text begins with the people seeing Jesus and His disciples going. Two things had just happened. Jesus had just heard that John the Baptist had been beheaded by Herod. In Matthew's account, he records that when Jesus heard about John, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself; and when the people heard of this, they followed Him on foot from the cities." Jesus was impacted by the death of John. He withdrew to a solitary place to grieve over the greatest prophet and the forerunner of His own ministry. Grieving over the death of our loved ones is a normal and natural thing. When Lazarus died, Jesus wept. Jesus had emotions and feelings like we do. He was fully God and fully man, and He had feelings like we do.

(Mark 6:33) "*The people* saw them going, and many recognized *them* and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them."

(Matt 14:13) "Now when Jesus heard *about John*, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself; and when the people heard *of this*, they followed Him on foot from the cities."

The second thing that had just happened was the disciples had come back from their ministry trips and reported to Him all that they had done. He knew that they were tired and worn out from their ministry. So, Jesus had told them in verse thirty-one to come away by themselves to a secluded place and rest. Jesus needed some time to Himself and the disciples needed some rest, so He was taking them to a secluded place for some rest. The people had seen them going and they ran ahead and got there ahead of Jesus and the disciples.

(Mark 6:30-31) "The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. {31} And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." (For there were many *people* coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.)"

When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them. He was looking for a secluded place and what He found was a crowd of people waiting for Him. It looked like this crowd of people had ruined His plans for Himself and for the disciples. But that was not Jesus' attitude. He was not thinking of Himself. Mark records that Jesus felt compassion for them. The word compassion in the Greek is *splanchnizomai* (Strong's G4697), which means to have the bowels yearn, feel sympathy, to pity, to be moved with compassion. This is used 24 times in the NT. It is something from deep within, from your bowels. Sometimes it is translated as "felt compassion." (Mark 6:34, 8:2, Luke 7:13, 10:33)

(Mark 6:34) “When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.”

(Mark 8:2) “I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat.”

(Luke 7:13) “When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’”

(Luke 10:33) “But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion,”

Sometimes it is translated as “moved with compassion.” (Matt 20:34, Mark 1:41) In both cases it is a deep feeling of love, pity, sympathy, and compassion that moves you. Jesus was full of compassion.

(Matt 20:34) “Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.”

(Mark 1:41) “Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’”

The word compassion is used 98 times in the Bible. In the OT, the primary word is racham (Strong’s H7355), which means to love, to have mercy, to have compassion, and it is used 47 times. Throughout the Bible we see God pictured as a God who is full of mercy and compassion. Jesus was the perfect representation of the Father, and He was full of compassion. This crowd of people was not an interruption or disruption of His plans, He was moved with compassion to minister to them.

Sometimes Jesus was moved with compassion to heal. Sometimes He was moved to compassion because people were hungry (Mark 8:2). In our text today Jesus was moved with compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He saw that these sheep needed someone to care about them. He saw they needed someone to lead them. He saw that they needed someone to protect them. He saw that they had a need for someone to provide for them. This multitude of people needed a shepherd, and Jesus was moved with compassion because of their need for a shepherd.

## **2. Jesus wanted to teach His disciples about shepherding**

After recording that Jesus was moved with compassion, Jesus did two things. First, He began to teach them many things. We do not know what He taught them, only that He taught them many things. Jesus fed the multitude of sheep with spiritual food. The second thing He did was to feed the crowd with physical food. One of the primary duties of a shepherd is to feed the flock, which is exactly what Jesus did.

If we were to write a job description for pastors, at the top of the list would be preaching. Churches should try to find a pastor who can preach God’s word. But, there are many other duties and responsibilities. Let’s take a quick look at some of these.

In Numbers 27:15-17, Moses was about to be gathered to his people (die), and he records his conversation with the Lord. Moses spoke to the Lord, saying, ‘Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.’” When Jesus saw the multitude and had compassion on them, He said that they were like sheep without a shepherd. It is the same concept as here in Numbers. A shepherd must lead the sheep. God expects pastors to lead the congregation.

(Num 27:15-17) “Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, {16} “Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation {17} who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.”

One of the primary jobs of shepherds is to feed the flock. There are lots of responsibilities for shepherds, but one of the most important ones is to feed the flock. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for shepherd is *raah* (Strong’s H7462a). It is used 173 times and translated as feed in 75 verses and shepherd in 63 verses. This same concept of feeding the flock is carried over into the New Testament. For example, in Jesus’ restoration of Peter in John 21, He asks Jesus three times if he loves Him. Notice Jesus’ response each time. In the first instance, Jesus tells Peter to tend His lambs. The Greek word is *bosko* (Strong’s G1006), which means to feed. The second time Jesus tells Peter to *poimano* (Strong’s G4165) My sheep. *Poimano* means to shepherd. The third time Jesus tells Peter to *bosko* My sheep. The King James translates both words as feed. The English Standard Version translates it as feed, tend, and feed, and I think their translation is very accurate. One of the primary duties of a pastor is to feed the sheep.

(John 21:15-17) “So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." {16} He said to him again a second time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" He \*said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." {17} He said to him the third time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep.

Last year I was at a store owned by a man who is an elder at a church here in Albuquerque. He told me that they had a new pastor who wanted to change things in the church. He told me that the pastor should not do anything but preach a sermon. He said a pastor should not lead the church, try to change the way things are done, or manage the church finances. In essence, this businessman wanted to have full control of the church and he did not want the pastor to have any authority to lead and manage. A shepherd must lead the flock, and he must also manage the affairs of the church. The man did not have a good understanding of church government. A pastor is an elder and the board of elders or pastors are charged with leading the flock and managing the affairs of the church. Notice what one of the qualifications of a pastor is in 1 Timothy 3:5. He must be able to manage and take care of the church of God.

(1 Tim 3:4-5) “*He must be* one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity {5} (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),”

For those that do not think that a pastor should have anything to do with the money, in Acts 4:34-35, the congregation would bring offerings and lay them at the apostles' feet. I do not think there were elevated thrones with boxes at the feet of these apostolic thrones. I believe that under the feet means under the control and authority of the apostles. This is consistent with the use of under the feet throughout Scripture. The apostles were the leaders of the church, and they were distributing the money to those who had need. The apostles were also called elders and they were managing the affairs of the church.

(Acts 4:34-35) "For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales {35} and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need."

A shepherd must feed the flock, lead the flock, and manage the affairs of the church. In Acts 20:28-30, we find that a shepherd must also guard or protect the flock. Paul is meeting with the Ephesian elders, who are also called overseers. He tells them to "be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Then, Paul tells them that after his departure savage wolves will come in, not sparing the flock. Paul is telling these shepherds to be on guard and protect the sheep. Shepherds do more than feed and lead and manage; they must also protect the flock. Keeping watch is also used to denote prayer. Shepherds need to pray over their flock.

(Acts 20:28-30) "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. {29} "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; {30} and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them."

Another thing that shepherds must do is care for the flock. Notice what Jesus taught in John 10:10. He said that He was a good shepherd and a good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. A hired hand, who is not a shepherd, sees a wolf and leaves the sheep and flees, because he is not concerned about the sheep. Shepherds have to be concerned about the sheep. They have to care about the sheep. They have to care so much that they are willing to lay their lives down for the sheep. They have to be willing to be inconvenienced to care for the sheep.

(John 10:11-13) "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. {12} He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters *them*. {13} *He flees* because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep."

I think that care and compassion go hand-in-hand. Shepherds must care about the flock, and they must have compassion on the flock. Compassion is one of the key components of being a shepherd. In Matthew 12:7, Jesus told the Pharisees that if they had understood that God desired compassion, they would not have condemned the innocent. His disciples were with Him when He said that to the Pharisees. I believe that Jesus had been trying to teach and role model compassion to His disciples ever since He began to disciple them. Jesus wanted His disciples to have compassion, and He also desires for us to have compassion.

(Matt 12:7) "But if you had known what this means, 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,' you would not have condemned the innocent."

In Colossians 3:12, Paul exhorted the church to put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. God wants the church to have compassion. Jesus had a heart of compassion. He fed the five thousand because He had compassion on them. He also was teaching us and giving us an example to follow.

(Col 3:12) “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;”

I believe the second reason for Jesus feeding the five thousand was about instructing His disciples about shepherding the sheep. The reference to the sheep being without a shepherd is a significant clue about the meaning of the entire passage. Jesus saw this crowd of people as sheep without a shepherd. They did not have someone to lead them. They did not have someone to teach them God’s word. They did not have someone to care for them and have compassion. There was no one to show compassion and care to the sheep. When Jesus commented that they were like sheep without a shepherd, all these various roles of a shepherd were missing, and Jesus saw their need.

If Jesus were going to look at the churches today and the multitudes, what would He say? Are the shepherds feeding the flocks? Are the shepherds watching over and praying over their flock? Are the shepherds showing care and concern for the flock? Are the shepherds doing a good job leading the flock and managing the affairs of the flock? What would Jesus say today?

What did Jesus teach the multitudes? Mark does not record the messages that He was teaching. He just said that He taught them many things. I believe that Jesus constantly taught about the kingdom of God. He may have been teaching them about seeking first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you. Jesus was all about proclaiming and demonstrating the kingdom of God, so teaching about God’s provision would make perfect sense to me because the second thing that Jesus did was to feed the crowd. This was a large crowd, and Mark records that there were five thousand men. The actual crowd could have been somewhere between five thousand and thirty thousand. It really depends on how many women and children were there in addition to the five thousand men.

When Jesus said they were like sheep without a shepherd, I believe He is referring to Ezekiel 34, which is a prophetic rebuke to the shepherds of Israel. In this prophecy, God rebuked the shepherds for six things. Let’s read the passage.

(Ez 34:2-6) “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? {3} Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. {4} The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. {5} And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. {6} My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.”

1. The shepherds had fed themselves and not the flock.
2. The shepherds had not strengthened the sick or diseased, or bound up the broken.
3. The shepherds had not protected them from wild beasts (they became meat).
4. The shepherds had not brought back those that were driven away and searched out the lost.
5. The shepherds had led the flock (they wandered).
6. The shepherds had ruled with force and cruelty.

As we pick up the account in verse thirty-five, it is getting late and the disciples said the place was desolate and asked Jesus to send away the multitudes so that they could go to the surrounding villages and buy something to eat. The disciples were going to send them away and let them fend for themselves. Jesus wanted them to learn to take responsibility for the sheep. If the apostles were going to be the shepherds of His flock, they had to know what He expected them to do, and to start doing it. Jesus wanted His disciples to feed the flock, lead the flock, care for the flock, and to have compassion on the flock. Sending them away hungry was not an option. That was exactly the point of Ezekiel's prophetic rebuke to the leaders of Israel. They would have sent the multitude away to fend for themselves. Jesus wanted His under-shepherds to be concerned about feeding the flock, not just themselves. So, Jesus told His disciples, "YOU give them something to eat!" I can see the words under His breath, "What do I need to do to teach My disciples to think about the sheep and not just themselves.

(Mark 6:35-37) "When it was already quite late, His disciples came to Him and said, "This place is desolate and it is already quite late; {36} send them away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." {37} But He answered them, "You give them *something* to eat!" And they said to Him, "Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them *something* to eat?"

After commanding the disciples to feed the multitude, He commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass. Mark could have just said that Jesus commanded them to sit down in groups, but he chose to describe where they sat down, which is on the green grass. This passage is about teaching the disciples to shepherd. Where do we find green pastures? We find green pastures in Psalm 23, which is about the Lord being our Shepherd. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures." Jesus, the Shepherd, was not going to send the multitude away with want or need. He was going to feed them. He was going to have them sit down on the green grass or green pasture because He is the Chief Shepherd. Jesus was teaching His disciples about shepherding.

(Mark 6:38-40) "And He said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go look!" And when they found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." {39} And He commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass. {40} They sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties."

(Ps 23:1-2) "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. {2} He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters."

As I was praying about this passage this week, I heard a phrase, "The sheep do not exist for the sake of the shepherd; the shepherd exists for the sake of the sheep." Shepherds have to change their mindset. The focus of the shepherd must be on the sheep. He must be willing to lay His life down for the sheep.

In the past I have focused on how Jesus fed the five thousand men. I have looked at how He divided them up into groups of fifties and hundreds. Jesus showed tremendous organizational and leadership skills. I believe we can learn a lot from this example of His administration. Shepherds need to have strong administrative gifts. When Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy, he said that the elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. Paul is speaking about paying pastors well, particularly those who do it well. Notice the two things that Paul mentions, ruling well and preaching/teaching. Those are two very important aspects of a shepherd's job. To rule well, leaders have to be strong administratively. Without a good administration, things will be chaotic, and out of order. Jesus gave a great example of how to handle a large multitude of people. You must break them down into smaller, more manageable groups. The same principle applies in bigger churches today.

(1 Tim 5:17) "The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching."

Another important lesson for Shepherds to learn is about trusting God for provision. When Jesus told the disciples to feed them, they asked if they should go spend two hundred denarii to give them something to eat. They were looking at the resources it would take rather than looking at God to supernaturally provide. Then, Jesus asked the disciples how much they had, they said five loaves and two fish. Then, Jesus took what they had, blessed it and began giving it to them to distribute. God miraculously multiplied what they had and everyone ate and was satisfied.

(Mark 6:41-44) "And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed *the food* and broke the loaves and He kept giving *them* to the disciples to set before them; and He divided up the two fish among them all. {42} They all ate and were satisfied, {43} and they picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces, and also of the fish. {44} There were five thousand men who ate the loaves."

When Moses stood at the Red Sea and the Egyptian army was pursuing close behind, he had to trust God to part the waters. Either God would part the waters or they were going to be taken captive by the Egyptian army. They had to trust God for the miracle.

When Peter and John were going to the temple to pray, there was a man who was lame from his mother's womb, and he was begging alms. Peter and John said, "Look at us! We do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have, I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!" People look at Peter, as if he had made the lame man walk. Peter replied that it was the name of Jesus that the man had been made well. When we minister to others, we can take what God has given us, which may be just faith, and we can act on that faith and let God do the healing or whatever else needs to be done. Leaders have to trust in God's provision, not their own resources. This was another aspect of the lesson that Jesus was teaching His disciples.

(Acts 3:6-16) "But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!... {12} But when Peter saw *this*, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?...{16} And on the basis of faith in His name, *it is* the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all."

## Conclusion and Applications

This morning we saw how Jesus was grieving on the inside and wanting to get some time to Himself. The disciples were weary and needed rest. But the crowds came and Jesus had compassion on the multitudes. He depended on the strength and grace that the Father gave Him and He ministered to the multitudes. He fed them spiritually, and then He fed them physical food. I believe that the main point of our passage today is not how Jesus fed the five thousand but why He fed the five thousand. Jesus wanted to teach the Shepherds about being shepherds.

Shepherds have to lead people. Shepherds have to be care for the sheep, and that includes making sure that they are well fed. Shepherds have to feed the sheep, and that is one of the most important jobs that a shepherd does. Pastors must shepherd God's flock showing with care, concern, and compassion. Pastors must use wisdom in how they rule and administrate. Finally, pastors need to always look for God's provision in every situation. It is God that provides materially for us. It is God who provides miraculously for healings and other things. For from Him and through Him are all things. Shepherds must always look to God and be full of faith.

What about you this morning? This passage may have been about leaders, but there are applications for all of us.

- Do you have compassion on people?
- When you see people in need, do you send them off to fend for themselves, or do you take the responsibility to meet their need?
- The shepherds that Ezekiel prophesied were selfish, being only concerned about themselves. Are you selfish? Do you look out merely for yourself or do you consider others more important?
- When you have needs or see needs in others, do you trust God to meet those needs?
- When it comes to administration and order, how well do you rule? Do you rule well? Are things done in an orderly manner in your life and ministry?

God was teaching the disciples about leading and caring for His flock. He is still teaching us today about leading and caring for His flock. God is preparing us to be those who care for the needs and shepherd those around us. I believe that God is still looking at the multitudes today and saying they are like sheep without a shepherd. God wants us to be those shepherds who are not hirelings, but good shepherds who are there to take care of His people. Let's pray.

**Introduction** (Mark 6:33-44)

- 1. Jesus Felt Compassion For The Crowd** (Mark 6:30-34, Matt 14:13, Mark 8:2, Luke 7:13, 10:33, Matt 20:34, Mark 1:41)
- 2. Jesus wanted to teach His disciples about shepherding** (Mark 6:35-44, Num 27:15-17, John 21:15-17, 1 Tim 3:4-5, Acts 4:34-35, 20:28-30, John 10:11-13, Matt 12:7, Col 3:12, Ez 34:2-6, 1 Tim 5:17, Acts 3:6-16)

**Conclusion and Applications**