

Having paused to tell the awful story of the senseless death of John the Baptist, Mark returns to Jesus' disciples' mission. They return and tell Him what they had done and what they had taught. They all needed a rest. But so many were seeking healing they couldn't even take time out to eat. So Jesus leads them to a deserted place, by ship, for a little R & R. Frisbees? Soft Ball? Naps? We learn here that vacations and restful diversions are not necessarily satisfaction of fleshly lusts.. God rested on the seventh day. Rest is set before us as a promise when our labors are done. When rest and innocent pleasures become objects of our hearts we are in danger of loving the world for its gratification of our lusts, 1John 2:15-17. We have been left here for a reason but not as an invading army, spies or even settlers or tourists. We are pilgrims and aliens passing through a hostile land, lights with a mission as ambassadors to rescue the perishing and recruit emigrants for heaven. But we need to rest once in awhile. Rest our bodies, refresh our spirits and our souls.

But for them it was not to be. The people relentlessly pursue Jesus on land, outrunning the ship. He is moved with compassion, sacrificing His rest for their blessing. He is indeed the Shepherd of our souls. What a good season they had under the sound of His voice teaching them. Wouldn't we like to have been there. Now we do have His words of truth, encouragement and comfort in the scriptures. So we can resort to Him whenever we want.

The crowd was so entranced they ignored the time and their hunger. The disciples, compassionately looking out for the people's well being, suggest Jesus wind it up and send them away to get supper in surrounding villages while it was still light. Jesus had something else in mind. Thinking Outside the Box so to speak. How often we limit Him and His power and grace. He feeds 5000 men plus women and children. He uses what was available, a young boy's lunch which he generously offered for the Lord's use. Jesus organizes it so it was an orderly, restful picnic on the green grass, Psalm 23:2. They were satisfied and there was far more left over than He started with. Note He is not carelessly wasteful of leftovers even though He created the food. This gives us a healthy insight on the order and efficiency of His whole creation, both physical and spiritual, and our care for what we have been given in it. (Note: This miracle was not, as some in unbelief have suggested, the result of hundreds there sharing their lunches after the example of the lad who was willing to share his.)

The Creator was indeed among them. He healed, raised the dead, calmed storms and created supper for thousands. But He was still dependent upon His Father and needed time apart to pray. He sent the disciples ahead in the ship while He dismissed the crowd well fed spiritually and physically. Then He resorted to the mountainside to pray. Much later, after 3 a. m., He came to them walking on the sea. He almost passed them by. Startled and frightened they cried out (literally screamed). Superstition was still alive in their

minds. They thought it was a spirit. But He, reassuring them, entered the ship and the wind calmed immediately. They were amazed to say the least, especially after they had been rowing against the wind about nine hours. Mark comments that their amazement was because of the hardness of their hearts, even after having just witnessed His creative power multiplying the loaves and fishes. The Spirit does not move Mark to tell of them worshiping Him in the ship.. Nor does he tell of Peter's adventure walking on the water, and his rescue as does Matthew. Nor does he mention the details of the confusion among the crowds the next morning and their subsequent following him back across the sea. Nor their bewilderment finding Him there. Nor His exposure of the crowd's real motives for pursuing Him, as does John (ch 6). Mark seems to simply focus on His power as Lord of His creation and His disciple's unbelief and hardness of heart.

When He arrived at Capernaum in Genessaret, on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee, He was immediately mobbed by crowds. They brought the needy from near and far and to be healed. He heals them, sometimes indirectly through them simply touching the hem of His garment.

Nowadays the prayer of faith, not touching, is the key. After He rose from the dead, the women who first saw Him ran to Him and held His feet. Later in the morning when He encounters Mary Magdalene He says:

*John 20:17 Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.*

Why not touch Him? The disciples had seen Him, walked with Him, lived with Him for over three years.

*1John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; 2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) 3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

Three had even seen Him transfigured on the mount. But that was about to change. When He left the earth they no longer would see, touch, and talk with Him. Instead the Holy Spirit would come and abide in them forever. They were put on the stable footing of faith rather than sight. Thereby they (we) would come to know Him even better than they had while He was here on earth. Then when we shall finally see Him as He is, we shall be like Him.

By Ron Canner, January 24, 2007