

GOING BEYOND THE NATURAL

Mark 6:30-44 (Mt 14:13-21, Lk 9:10-17, Jn 6:1-13)

"Yeshua" §§74-75

02/09/20

It will not be a shock to anyone to read that we live in a physical world and as result of that we have physical needs. We need food, water, rest, shelter etc. These needs govern and guide a vast majority of our daily activities. This is just the way life is. This world however is not just physical, but is spiritual as well, and all people have corresponding spiritual needs. We need relationships, love, truth, purpose. As we have seen time and time again, Jesus is aware and concerned with both the physical and the spiritual needs of all around him. He is also able to meet both sets of needs in supernatural ways. This also is not surprising to us, seeing as Jesus is God made flesh. However, we have the immeasurable blessing of seeing the whole life of Jesus through the full gospel accounts plus the rest of the New Testament which reveal and explain so much of Jesus' life and ministry to us.

Jesus' disciples did not have that blessing. They joined Jesus' ministry with some messianic expectations, but they did not expect to encounter and experience the things that Jesus said and did. We saw that particularly clear in last weeks section regarding John the Baptizer. Our section today will be no exception. Jesus wants the disciples to understand that while he is with them, there are possibilities beyond the natural ones they can think of, he wants them to "think outside the box" and integrate the reality of his supernatural ability into their world view.

JESUS RESPONDS TO THE APOSTLES PHYSICAL NEEDS (MARK 6:30-32)

Jesus is continuing to train his disciples, knowing that he won't be with them for much longer, and knowing that these men will be the ones to continue the ministry when he is gone. The apostles have just returned from their preaching tour and they were telling Jesus about all they had done. You can imagine they are filled with excitement, but also they are hungry and tired from ministry. In these few verses we see Jesus recognize that his disciples need some food and rest and a break from ministering to people. So they climb into the boat to cross the sea of Galilee, to a place where they could be by themselves to rest, and recover in peace. Sounds like just what they need, but sadly it will be very short lived. The crowds of people see that Jesus and the disciples have set sail, and they take off to meet them where the boat will put to shore. As the crowd makes their way over, word spreads about what is going on, and a massive gathering, estimated at 10,000 plus, make their way to where Jesus and his disciples are seeking to rest and recover.

JESUS RESPONDS TO THE CROWDS PHYSICAL & SPIRITUAL NEEDS (MARK 6:33-34)

When Jesus sees the crowds coming toward them, he doesn't respond with frustration or disappointment, but rather with compassion. These people have traveled out to this desolate place to be healed by Jesus and to hear more of his teaching, and although he was hoping to get some rest and refreshment with his disciples, he responds to both their natural and spiritual needs, by healing their sick and taking the time to teach them.

Jesus sees the coming crowds as "sheep without a shepherd". This metaphor is pointing to the fact that these people lack spiritual care and leadership. The people responsible for their care and spiritual leadership have proved to be poor shepherds indeed, ultimately rejecting Jesus as the messiah. This metaphor is built on a number of Old Testament images and has a deep and rich meaning (See Psalm 23, Numbers 27:17, Ezekiel 34:5-6, Matthew 9:36). For our study today the metaphor highlights the compassion of Jesus and his shouldering the burden of tending to these uncared for sheep. We must

Part 1.	The Coming of the King
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Part 3.	The Controversy over the King
Part 4.	The Training of the Twelve by the King
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Part 6.	The Preparation of the Disciples by the King
Part 7.	The Official Presentation of the King
Part 8.	The Preparation for the Death of the King
Part 9.	The Trial of the King
Part 10.	The Death of the King
Part 11.	The Resurrection and the Ascension of the King

also remember that this comes at the point in Jesus' ministry where he is training his disciples, and so they are to be learning this shepherd's heart for the people. It is a far cry from their solitude retreat. But Jesus is showing that the spiritual and physical help these people need, outweighs the disciples' need to rest.

PHYSICAL & SPIRITUAL NEEDS, MET SUPERNATURALLY (MARK 6:35-44)

Here we encounter one of the most well known miracles in Jesus' ministry. This is due to the incredible nature of the miracle, as well as the fact that there is another miracle just like it later on. The feeding of the 5000. Yet, when we look at it in context, I think we will discover some fresh insights as to what Jesus not only accomplished with the miracle, but also what he was seeking to accomplish with his training of the disciples.

This day of ministry has gotten late and this crowd of 5000 men (not counting the women and children) have no way to buy food, so the disciples gently remind Jesus of his responsibility to send them away so they can get food. To this seemingly reasonable request, Jesus replies with a rather unwelcome statement. "You give them something to eat". He places the responsibility of feeding these people squarely back on his disciples. They naturally reply that even a half a year's wages wouldn't be enough to give everyone even a little bit.

Here is where the training of the disciples is taking place. I don't believe Jesus intends for the disciples to perform a miracle. There would be no reason to believe they had that ability, nor that Jesus had that expectation. What he does expect, is for them to recognize, that since he is with them, there are options beyond the natural ones they can think of. They have experienced his divine power and recognized that he has power over the natural world. Their closing statement when he calms the wind and seas is "who is this then, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:41) But here there is no thought to an option beyond the natural. In their minds, there is simply nothing to be done. They don't even ask Jesus what he means, or what he could do. We will read later that their hearts are not yet soft to this lesson.

The disciples are having a difficult time realizing that when Jesus is with them, that the limits of the natural world do not apply. Jesus is training them to integrate his presence and divine power into their ministries. He completes the miracle functioning as the head of the family at a meal, taking the loaves and fish, looking to heaven, blessing it, breaking it, and giving it to the disciples. The disciples are the ones who experience the supernatural multiplication, and are commissioned to go and feed the people. Will this miracle be enough for the disciples to realize that Jesus is able to go beyond the natural solutions and integrate that fact into their lives and ministry? It is obviously far outside anything they have ever experienced before Jesus, but Jesus' desire is that they recognize just who he is and what he is able to do.