

Making Space for God

Lessons From Mark #12—Feeding 5000

Opening Prayer

Try me, O God, and search the ground of my heart, prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any wickedness in me, any root of bitterness yet undiscovered; and lead me in the way everlasting. Show me the true state of my soul, bring me out of every false refuge, strip off every deceitful covering that is not of thy Spirit. Forbid, that the anchor of my hope should be cast, or the house of my dependence built on any but Christ, the rock of ages; forbid that I should rest short of that repentance which is thy gift, and is connected with life eternal; and forbid, O forbid, that I should sit down without aspiring to that conformity unto thee in righteousness and true holiness; abstracted from which, repentance is false and faith is dead.



Augustus Toplady England/ 1740-1778 Book of Common Prayer

Arrival

Take some times to settle yourself. Invite the Lord to guide and direct your thoughts for the day. Think back over where you have been in the last four weeks. What burdens, emotions, and concerns do you carry? What are you thankful for? When have you experienced the Lord's presence? Journal your thoughts and offer these to the Lord.

Scripture—Mark 6:30-44—Read Slowly Three Times

³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹ 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." ³² So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. ³³ But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

³⁷ But he answered, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages!^[a] Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

³⁸ "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish."

³⁹ Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹ 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. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴ The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.¹

Reflection—Sheep Without A Shepherd

"Where are we going Larry?"

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"I don't know, Phil. I just keep following the woolly rear end of Frank in front of me?"

"Then we're lost, Larry, because I just talked to Frank and he has no idea where he's going? He's just wandering aimlessly, looking for green grass, still waters, and hoping to not be eaten by the wolf."

"Don't say wolf, Phil. I break out in a cold sweat just hearing the word. Big teeth, sharp claws, buggy eyes. We're lamb chops on his dinner menu if he catches us. We can't out run him like the gazelle or fight him like the lion or spray him like the skunk. We're toast Phil."

"I know what you mean, Larry. I was up half the night listening to every rustle of the grass, every snap of a twig expecting the toothy monster to pounce any second. This is no way to live, man. How did this happen?"

"I don't know, Phil. We're domesticated herd animals. We're not equipped to fend for ourselves. We will either walk off a cliff while following Frank or be eaten by a wild animal in the night. We need somebody to guide and protect us. Without a shepherd, we will die."

"You're right, Larry, but it's got to be a good shepherd. Remember that last guy we had watching the flock? He was more scared than we were when the wolf came. And he was less than useless at finding green grass. We need a good shepherd."

"I agree, Phil, but where are we going to find him or her? We're harassed and helpless sheep. Finding just about anything, let alone a good shepherd is beyond our capacity. We're stuck."

"I know what you mean, Larry. But what if the shepherd were to find us? And what if he knew what it was like to live in our skin? What if he was as gentle as a lamb and had the heart of a lion?"

That's a lot of "what ifs" Phil. I think for now I would settle for a good night's sleep and the chance to follow someone other than Frank around the pasture."

Reading for Reflection

The people who hanged Christ never, to do them justice, accused him of being a bore – on the contrary; they thought him too dynamic to be safe...He was tender to the unfortunate, patient with honest inquirers, and humble before Heaven; but He insulted respectable clergymen by calling them hypocrites; He referred to King Herod as 'that fox'; He went to parties in disreputable company and was looked upon as a 'gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners'; He assaulted indignant tradesmen and threw them and their belongings out of the Temple; He drove a coach-and-horses through a number of sacrosanct and hoary regulations; He cured diseases by any means that came handy, with a shocking casualness in the matter of other people's pigs and property; He showed no proper deference for wealth and social position; when confronted with neat dialectical traps, He displayed a paradoxical humor that affronted serious-minded people, and He retorted by asking disagreeably searching questions that could not be answered by rule of thumb.

Dorothy Sayers

Benediction

Lord, thank you for the story of all those spiritually hungry people who ran around the lake just to see you and hear your words to them. Like them I am hungry. Like them I don't know where I am going. Like them I need you to guide and protect me or I will die. Come Lord Jesus. Amen