

The Big Surprise
Mark 6:30-44

It is sad but true that when we hear gossip about someone who has had a run-in with some sort of authority figure we think or even say, “No surprise there.”

There are some sad situations in our text. There is some gossip. But are there any surprises?

It is sad that Jesus and His disciples are unable to eat. Jesus had sent them out in six teams of two to preach a message of repentance and to heal the sick. In our text, we see them return from their journeys and begin to tell Jesus about all they and *done and taught*. Because there are so many people coming and going He suggests that they get away *to a desolate place by themselves*. He wants to hear their stories, and make sure they get something to eat and have some quiet time.

It is sad that the great crowd that *ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them* is so spiritually lost, hungry, and thirsty. They can't leave Jesus alone. The only quiet time He and His disciples get is the four mile boat ride. We get the idea that Jesus wanted more than that for the disciples and Himself, but when He sees the great crowd *he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd*. Jesus would put the needs of the people over His own. *He began to teach them many things*.

Is it sad that the disciples want to send the people away as it gets late in the day? At first, it doesn't appear to be. They seem to be thinking of the people. Jesus has been feeding

their spirits; the disciples want them get some food in their tummies.

The sad part centers on the source of the food. We learn from John that as Jesus sees the crowd begin to gather He brings up the food question with the disciples. He wants them to figure out a way to feed them. When it gets late, their best answer is: *Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat*. It is sad that after all they have seen Jesus do, they don't look to Him for the better answer.

That's what Jesus wanted. He wanted them to look to Him. They failed the test. But that doesn't keep Jesus from supplying the answer. In a miraculous way He takes care of the people's tummies as well as their souls.

I learned something interesting about the word gossip this week. The earliest meaning of the word was a combination of god and sib, meaning godparent. It wasn't until the 1500s that usage began to evolve into the word we know today. And I have to admit that this morning I am playing with the definition a bit myself. The disciples are talking to Jesus about all they had done and taught, but I suppose that's not really gossip.

What about all the chatter about Jesus? Some saw Jesus and the disciples getting into the boat, and could tell from the direction they headed what their destination would be. They must have told quite a few people about Jesus. And those people must have shared the news with others for there to have been a crowd of five thousand+ people. Is it gossip to

tell others about Jesus? If so, it's some gossip we should share more.

The idle chatter of the disciples about sending the people away to get food for themselves wasn't helpful, but we probably wouldn't call it gossip. But Jesus was disappointed in what they said. I mentioned before that He wanted them to put their trust in Him for the answer.

What about the surprises? Are the disciples workaholics? We see it happening today. Men and women devote so much time and energy into their careers that family, food, and other important things are neglected. In this case, though, we get the idea that it is not their choice. It is all the people who coming and going to hear Jesus and have Him take care of their needs who are depriving the disciples of rest and relaxation.

Is it a surprise that Jesus wants them to take some time off? Not really. This is not a normal boss/employee relationship. Few bosses want their people to work fewer hours. Most want more. But Jesus is not their boss. It is a different relationship. He is their Lord and Savior. He truly cares about them and their needs.

Is it a surprise that people would run for miles to be with Jesus? It was a 4 mile boat ride. It was 10 miles by land for those who saw Jesus get into the boat. It was less for those who joined the throng along the way. But still? All that excitement and enthusiasm to be where Jesus was to hear Him and receive what He had to give? You felt that in your household this morning, right? Obviously a lot of other

people didn't. There is plenty of room in our pews for more people to hear Jesus and receive what He has to give.

Is it a surprise that Jesus would have would have compassion on the crowd, even though they seem to have ruined His plan for some rest and relaxation? Not really. It's Jesus. It's what we expect. It's what we count on.

For haven't we ruined His plan? He has said, "You shall not!" but we have done it anyway. He has told us to love our neighbors as ourselves. And how has that gone? Probably not according to plan.

It's not really a surprise. Because not only are we prone to do sinful things, we are sinful ourselves. It's not just what we do or leave undone. It's who we are: by nature sinful and unclean.

We need Jesus to have compassion on us. And He does. He takes our sin on Himself and takes it to His cross. There He suffers and dies for it.

Feeding five thousand plus people with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish? That's a nice surprise. But the sinless Son Of God taking on Himself the punishment we deserve so that we can be forgiven and have life everlasting!

Feeding five thousand plus with 5 loaves and 2 fish? Having 12 baskets full of leftovers? Kind of surprising, but not really. It's Jesus we're talking about. We have a Savior who loves us. We have a Savior who provides abundantly for us – both for our bodies and our souls. Amen