

feeding . . . gathering . . . carrying . . . leading . (Isaiah 40:11)

February 24, 2009

Dear Church Family,



After encountering the lack of faith in Nazareth, Jesus continues in powerful ministry in other places for the rest of chapter 6. He sends out the twelve and gives them authority over evil spirits. Jesus' ability to transfer His authority to them is a significant development. The instructions focus on what should not be taken as provision for their travel. They are not going to be able to be self-sustained but instead are dependent on the welcome and provision of those who they are called to minister to. There is a relationship of mutual dependency rather than help and ministry only flowing in one direction. And they are not able to minister where they are not welcomed. We can practice this healthy dynamic in our own relationships with unbelievers when we allow them to meet our needs and provide us with help. We also should not attempt to force spiritual conversation on them, but seek and respond to their welcoming of this type of conversation. The disciples are successful in their mission, healing many sick people as well as driving out demons. (The healing of "many sick people" is contrasted with Jesus in Nazareth where only "a few sick people" were healed.)

It is news about the ministry of the twelve that reaches Herod and causes him to think about who Jesus is. This is ministry at its best. Their ministry did not draw attention to themselves or even the work they were doing, it drew attention to the identity of Jesus. As we have seen, in Mark's gospel, who people decide Jesus is and how they relate to Him is the crucial issue for the Kingdom of God. There are many Christians today who would define the crucial issue as primarily doing the works that Jesus did or acting like Him, especially with concern about the poor or justice. For them, imitating Jesus is far more important than a right understanding of who He is and how one relates to Him. This reflects an appropriate rejection of a doctrinal Christianity that focuses solely on right belief about Jesus and virtually ignores the life of discipleship that demands concern for the poor and issues of justice. However, they should not throw the baby out with the bath, and in this case, the baby is relating rightly to Jesus. Christian ministry should grow out of a relationship with Jesus to such an extent that this ministry provokes people to consider Jesus. If our ministry only provokes people to think well of us or even to engage in their own good works, but does nothing to draw people into right relationship with Jesus, then according to Mark, that ministry is not building the kingdom of God.

Herod concludes that Jesus must be John the Baptist raised from the dead. Up until now we only know that John was put in prison (1:14). In a few verses we learn that John has now died and that he was beheaded by Herod. How does something like this happen to such a significant servant of God? Mark tells us in great detail. This story is remarkable both for its detail and that Mark chooses to tell it in a way that the reader has the impression that it happens while the apostles are on their mission (even though it has happened well before that). This story is a foreshadowing of the death of Jesus. At this point, we know that Jesus has powerful enemies (Pharisees plotting with the Herodians) who want him killed. If Herodias is able to get John the Baptist killed, then what about Jesus? John's death is a contrast to the apostles ministering with power and authority over evil spirits. The message is that the life of discipleship is not only about triumphant power. It will involve persecution and suffering. God's servants are not always protected from their enemies as we might expect. By telling the story the way he does, Mark is conveying this message to a persecuted church.

In the next scene, Jesus tries to take the apostles to "a quiet place" for some rest, but a crowd meets them there. Characteristically, Jesus has compassion on the crowd because they are "like sheep without a shepherd." This phrase is from Numbers 27:15-17 when Moses learns he will not be allowed to lead Israel into the Promised Land. He calls on Yahweh to appoint a man to lead them so "the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a

shepherd.” This man is Joshua, which is the Hebrew form of Jesus. This scene has significance beyond the miracle of multiplying the loaves and fishes. This is Israel back in the desert when Yahweh provided for her needs (the NIV “quiet place”, “solitary place”, “remote place”, are all the same Greek word which means “desert” or “wilderness”). Jesus is revealing himself as the one who will lead a new Israel in to the Promised Land of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus wants to provide for the crowd, but He wants to perform the miracle through the disciples and with what they already have, even though it is completely inadequate. We should realize that Jesus often asks us to minister in situations where we are aware that our own abilities and experience are completely inadequate. Instead of disqualifying ourselves on that basis, we need to remember that Jesus can multiply what we have and that He likes to minister through us in this way. It is only at the end of the story that we see what a remarkable miracle this is (5,000 men and 12 basketfuls of leftover pieces!!!). However, there is no expression of amazement or wonder on the part of the disciples, even though we are used to seeing this when they see Jesus do something miraculous. As we soon discover, the disciples participate in this miracle, but they do not take in what has happened and its significance.

Jesus sends the disciples on to Bethsaida and withdraws to be by himself. By the time he comes to them walking on the water, they have been straining at the oars against a headwind for at least 8 hours. This means they are making virtually no progress against the wind. Yet it says that Jesus was going to “pass by them”. Was he really not going to stop and help? A better explanation is that the phrase “pass by them” is meant to recall Yahweh showing His glory to Moses by putting him in the cleft of the rock and “passing by him” (same Greek phrase in the Septuagint). So, Jesus wants to further reveal His glory to the disciples by passing by them walking on the water. However, instead of seeing His glory they think He is a ghost and are terrified. Jesus has to calm them down and then calm the wind. Now we see a reaction and they are “completely amazed” which means to be stunned. We have seen this reaction before at the raising of Jairus’ daughter, only this time Mark indicates that they should not be reacting this way. They have “not understood about the loaves”. The word for understand is the same word in 4:12 quoting Isaiah “ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding.” This is not good for the disciples to be displaying this characteristic. Even worse, Mark says that “their hearts were hardened” which is what Jesus says about the Pharisees in 3:5. With all they are hearing and experiencing, they are not realizing who Jesus is. They keep being stunned by the revelatory events that identify his divinity. They are not gaining understanding or wisdom but keep reacting the same way over and over. They are not being changed. We will see more on this the next few chapters and we need to pay attention because if the disciples can be like this, then we can too.

They land in Gennesaret even though they were sent ahead to Bethsaida. There is no explanation for this in the gospel, but it indicates that plans in the Lord can change. We do not always end up where we have been rightly convinced that God is leading us. Chapter 6 closes recounting the high point of Jesus’ healing ministry in the gospel of Mark. Now everyone who touches the edge of his cloak is healed. This all begins with the people recognizing Jesus, exactly what the disciples fail to do when they see Him on the water. Do we recognize Him in our lives?

In Him,

Bo

<http://www.christshepherd.org/pastlet.htm> (and follow links to download MP3 audio file of sermon)

Announcements

*Congratulations to Erik & Linda on the birth of
Javier Emmanuel (7lb 14oz, 20 inches) February 18!*



We’re planning a water **baptism service this spring**. Please contact the office if you are interested.

Answering the Hard Questions—a C.S. Lewis Institute Apologetics Series seminar featuring Michael Ramsden, European Director Zacharias Trust (Oxford England), Friday evening and Saturday morning, March 6-7 at McLean Presbyterian Church. For registration and further information, visit www.cslewisinstitute.org or phone 703-914-5602.

Ladies, you are invited to a double **baby shower for Sarah Lasmanis & Melanie Sunukjian** on Saturday, March 14, at 2PM at Meghan Livingston's home. RSVP to Kristi (202-379-8930) and indicate if you are interested in a group gift.

Intercession News:

- "Seek God For The City 2009" 40-day (February 25 to April 5) prayer booklet is available at the office and on Sunday. Suggested donation \$3 each. Take advantage of this tool to learn and practice praying without ceasing!
- COSC Night Of Prayer, March 7 Saturday, 6pm to midnight at COSC Fellowship Hall.

For the Men of COSC

- Come to **breakfast Feb 28** at a new time: 9AM! Doug Stevens will be teaching and sharing his experience of the attitudes and actions of pursuing the prize.
- For those looking for weekly connection, come and visit our **Samson Society Meeting** on Tuesdays from 730-830 PM (with time for continued fellowship afterward) at 616 South Carolina Avenue SE. For more information, email Matthew Tropiano at matthew.tropiano@navy.mil

Care Company Opportunities: (Contact 202-422-7032 or monique@carecompanydc.org)

- **Adult Literacy Volunteer**—We are looking for men interested in mentoring men from Central Union Mission who have a desire to learn to read. Please contact us ASAP if you would like to find out more information.
- **Little Lights**—Volunteering Opportunities for after-school programs. Little Lights works with children in the Potomac Gardens community, offering after-school activities such as homework help, tutoring, photography and journalism, Bible studies, choir and dance, as well as one on one mentoring. Interested in learning more? Pick up a flyer from the foyer table at church or visit their website: www.littlelights.org

Bulletin Board

Postings not officially sanctioned by COSC.

JESSE TREE BANNER WORKSHOP: "Christmas in July". During the workshop, each participant/family will create a custom made Jesse Tree Banner and all associated elements. Contact Amy if you're interested in learning more. She'll send you all the pertinent details. Amy, 202-549-1112 or amyherbert@verizon.net

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER for Grace DC Church: (www.gracedc.net) to oversee 4-6 year old class Sunday evenings. Duties include preparing lesson (with the help of the nursery coordinator), overseeing the care of the children, and teaching the lesson. Hours would be Sunday evenings, 4:30-7pm, plus time spent during the week preparing. Compensation is \$22/hour. Emily, emily.baldwin@gmail.com

MARCH 7 THRU EASTER "Simple Gifts" EXHIBIT: a local painter painted several Capitol Hill church buildings to portray the lyrics to Simple Gifts. Ours is one of the buildings. The exhibit will be at Capitol Hill Presbyterian (4th & Independence SE), and an opening night reception Saturday, March 7, 5pm-8pm. They will have paintings and prints available for purchase.

HOUSING

Needed...I've recently been given notice the apartment I am renting has been sold, and I need to be out in early March. I'm looking for a room in a house or apartment with one or two female Christian professionals or could rent a room from a family or single woman, short- or long-term. Kristen; 650-793-3756 or kharitao@yahoo.com

Pentagon City: Great location near the metro. \$720/month; available March 7. Two mid 20's christian females seeking a third, preferably in her 20's. We are looking for someone very clean in common areas, respectful and responsible. No drinking/smoking/drugs please. Carly, carlyjohnston@hotmail.com

Lincoln Park: 2nd floor apt (1 BR + den) overlooking the park. New wood floors, exposed brick walls, fireplace, dishwasher, new A/C units, Share W/D with other two apts. Heat, Water, Direct TV, Wireless Internet included. Near Eastern Market. No smoking or pets. April 1. One month security deposit and first month's rent due at lease signing. James, 202-365-1000 or jmullings@verizon.net

Dupont area sublet: Furnished studio, 400 sq. ft. available immediately on a week-by-week basis. 1500 Massachusetts Av NW. Near Dupont Circle/McPherson Sq, convenient to groceries, restaurants and Dupont area. \$325/week, plus \$100 security deposit. Includes utils (energy, heating/AC), small grocery store in building, 24-hour reception desk, laundry area. Smoke-free, pet-free. Jacqui, jveloz@hotmail.com

Capitol Hill: \$1250/month 1 BR, 1 BA apt available mid-March. 1st floor of rowhouse on a corner, access to shared patio. Renovated in 2003. Full-size windows in LR and exposed brick. All new kitchen includes single unit washer/dryer. The bedroom has 2 full sized windows and built-in bookcases. 5 min walk to Lincoln Park, 10-15 to Union Station, Capitol and Senate buildings, Atlas District, 15-20 to House Buildings, Eastern Market. Rent incl water/sewage. Heather, 202-495-8120 or hamcolvin@yahoo.com
