

FOLLOW ME

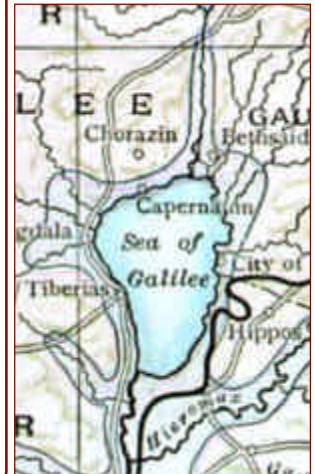
LESSON NINE: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK 6:30-56



FAST FACTS

- Jesus and the Disciples were going away to rest, but were detained by a crowd of 5,000 people who listened to Him teach.
- When evening came, Jesus miraculously fed the crowd, even though they originally had only five small loaves of bread and two fish.
- When the Disciples were having trouble rowing in a storm, Jesus walked on the water to calm the storm and assist them.
- The Disciples were afraid when they first saw Jesus because they believed He was a ghost.
- News of Jesus' miracles spread throughout the land of Gennesaret.

MAP



MARK 6:30-44

As we compare the account of the feeding of 5,000 people with the account of Herod's banquet, we see important differences between Herod and the followers of Jesus. For example, Herod was ultimately concerned only with his own pleasure, even having St. John the Baptist killed as a result of his greed and lust. In contrast, the Apostles exhausted themselves following Jesus and serving the people (this is the only place in Mark where the Disciples are called "Apostles"). Furthermore, Herod's people were left hungry, while Jesus compassionately fed them.



The Disciples should have been able to trust Jesus to provide for His people: they had seen Him work miracles, and had even been empowered by Him to exorcise demons and heal the sick. They were nonetheless shocked when He told them to feed the people themselves: they even guessed that it would take 200 denarii (a typical salary for a day's work was one denarius) to feed 5,000 people! When they collected

food brought by the people there were only five tiny loaves of barley bread and two small fish (see John 6:9), but Jesus miraculously used these to provide food not only for the 5,000 people, but also twelve baskets of leftovers.

There are several reasons for this miracle. The miracle was, for the crowd who witnessed it, evidence

that Jesus is the Messiah (see John 6:14). The miracle also is an image of the Eucharist, as the fourth century hymn writer Prudentius proclaims: "Thou, our bread, our true refreshment, never failing sweetness art; He can nevermore hunger, who is at thy banquet fed, nourishing not our fleshly nature, but imparting everlasting life."

IT'S IN THE BIBLE...

St. Mark describes the people as being "like sheep without a shepherd" (6:34). This points to Moses' prayer that the Israelites not be left as sheep without a shepherd (Numbers 27:17). In John 10:1-30, Jesus described Himself as the "Good Shepherd" Who gives His life for His sheep.

OUR FAITH TEACHES

St. John Chrysostom teaches us to be like the 5,000 people:

Cling incessantly to the things of the Spirit...and let us seek the heavenly bread, and having received it, let us cast away all worldly care. For if those men left houses, and cities, and kinsmen, and all, and abode in the wilderness, and when hunger was pressing, withdrew not; much more ought we, when approaching such a table, to show forth a more abundant self-command, and to set our love on the things of the Spirit, and to seek the things of sense as secondary to these.

MARK 6:45-56

When the Disciples left the area to cross the Sea of Galilee, they rowed into a fierce storm that made it almost impossible for them to travel. Jesus, seeing their difficulty, walked to them upon the water and calmed the storm.

St. John Chrysostom points out that this episode teaches us a great deal about faith. For example, even though Jesus saw in the evening that the Disciples were having trouble, He did not go to them until the “fourth watch” (3-6 AM). Furthermore, He did not simply calm the storm from the shore, or row out to them and then calm the storm — He frightened them by walking upon the water. St. John explains, “Therefore neither did He remove the darkness, nor straightway make Himself manifest, training them, as I said, by the continuance of these fears, and instructing them to be ready to endure.”

We should pay special attention to Jesus’ words in verse 50: “It is I.” The Greek words *ego eimi* are literally translated, “I am,” which in Exodus 3:14 is the name of God, and in the Gospel according to St. John is

used by Jesus to proclaim His divinity (see John 8:58).

St. Mark tells us that news of Jesus’ miracle-working spread throughout the land of Genesaret, leading to people throughout the region bringing their sick relatives and friends to be healed. St. Mark’s description of the people being eager to touch the hem of Jesus’ garment indicates that they had heard about the way in which the woman with the flow of blood received her healing (Mark 5:25-34).



LOOK AT YOURSELF

Why does Jesus nearly pass the Disciples by when He walks upon the water? When God passed by Moses 33:18-23, Moses was unable to look upon God’s glory. Similarly, as St. John Chrysostom points out, Job proclaims that God “alone stretched out the heavens, and trampled the waves of the sea...[He] does great things beyond understanding, and marvelous things without number. Lo, he passes by me, and I see him not; he moves on, but I do not perceive him” (Job 9:8, 10-11).

The reference to Jesus passing by the Disciples, and their inability to immediately recognize Him, reinforces for us that Jesus is God.

There is a lesson for us in this story. Notice when Jesus talked to the Disciples and calms the storm: *after the Disciples cried out*. Blessed Augustine explains, “His intent in passing by them was to serve the purpose of eliciting those outcries in response to which He would then come to bring relief.” The Gospels repeatedly show the Disciples getting into trouble when they are away from Jesus and not relying upon Him. They refused to remember, as Prudentius writes, “How easily can I be shipwrecked...unless you, almighty Christ,

stretch forth your hand with help divine.”

When you face difficult situations, do you believe that you’re strong enough to deal with the difficulty on your own, or do you rely upon God’s grace? The Holy Apostle Paul tells us how we should go through life: “I can do all things in him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). When we face difficult times, it is comforting to know that God will be with us and strengthen us. At the same time, when things are going well, we need to remember that it is God Who empowers us.

WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT FOLLOWING JESUS?

- Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd. Do I know people who live like “lost sheep” who I can help find the Good Shepherd?
- When they felt unable to feed the people, the Disciples

wanted to send them away. How should I respond to seemingly overwhelming problems?

- What kinds of storms do I face in my life? How can I rely upon Jesus during these difficult times?

