

The Shepherd Has Arrived-Mark 6:30-56

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[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions, please get in touch with Pastor Derek at dberry@calvarybaptistsc.church.]

Take your copy of God's Word and meet me in Mark 6:30...

April 19, 2014, was the day I asked my then-girlfriend if she'd marry me. By God's grace, most of you know that she said yes. We set our wedding date for January 3, 2015, and from that point on, every day, our eagerness and anticipation for that great day only grew stronger and stronger. Had it not been for the fact that I was in Huntsville, TX, pursuing my undergrad while Krystal was living in Houston, we would have set the date much closer to the engagement day. Needless to say, I know what it's like to look forward to a day with great expectation, suspense, and joy. I kept pinching myself, asking if this was really happening. I was marrying the woman of my dreams, and when January 3, 2015, hit, it was surreal.

Perhaps you've been in my shoes. I'm willing to say you've had great expectations for a date set, and when the day arrives, it almost seems surreal. Maybe it's marriage or children for you as well. Or perhaps it's acceptance into a collegiate program or an employment opportunity you've always hoped for. Or maybe it's a vacation out of the country or a family reunion. No matter your stage in life, I'm willing to bet there's been a highly anticipated moment in your life.

Whatever you've listed off in your brain as that moment for you, it pales in comparison to the Israelites anticipating the great shepherd that was promised to them in the Old Testament. By this time, the covenant people of God had been humbled. There was a period in which they enjoyed military success. You couldn't tell them anything because it seemed they had it all. You throw in the northern tribes' complete obliteration by Assyria, Judah's seventy-year captivity by the Babylonians in which they were displaced from their land, and then subsequent years under enemy occupation, many Jews came to a better understanding that they're not lions; they're sheep. Suddenly, those Old Testament prophecies regarding a great shepherd coming to guide and care for the

flock become indispensable. For centuries, the Jews have waited for this shepherd to show himself in Israel. And in this passage, we consider his arrival.

1. **The Shepherd brings Calmness (vv. 30-32)**
2. **The Shepherd brings Compassion (vv. 33-34)**
3. **The Shepherd brings Cuisine (vv. 35-44, 53-56)**
4. **The Shepherd brings Coarsen (vv. 45-52)**

To be clear, the shepherd arrived at the incarnation of Jesus. However, this is the first text in Mark where Jesus is implicitly referred to as shepherd by title. Therefore, I believe Mark wants his readers to read this pericope with that theme in mind. As we examine the text, I think that'll become evident. So, let's start with our first point by rereading the first three verses.

So, we pick up in this story where verse 13 left off. Jesus authorized and commissioned the twelve to preach and perform miracles. We don't know how much time has elapsed between these two verses, but it would appear that the apostles experienced fruitful ministry. And often, fruitful ministry is agenda-packed and taxing on the body. Therefore, Mark informs us that Jesus led his disciples to rest in an uninhabited setting. I think we can grab a few good takeaways from these few verses. First, rest is a good gift from God that shouldn't be ignored. Although, as New Testament Christians, we're not under the sabbatical laws of the Old Covenant, the fact that God rested from his creative work on the seventh day was meant to establish a pattern for Adam to follow, among other things. In Exodus 16, when the Lord rained down manna from Heaven, Moses instructed the people to gather twice as much on Friday and that he would preserve their food all Sabbath. Those who were obedient found that the Lord was faithful to his promise. And still others sought food on the Sabbath and couldn't find any. So, there's an element of trust in God's providential care, that he'll provide for your means without having to work yourself to death.

Also, we're about to be introduced to the shepherd motif, so I can't help but hear Psalm 23 in this verse. And I think Mark has that passage in mind. We'll return to this passage later in the message, but for now, consider one of the roles of the good shepherd.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.³ He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. -Psalm 23:1-3

He leads his people to rest. With the good shepherd in mind, let's continue to our second point by reading verses 33-34.

Here, we jump right into the primary motif of this section, the theme of the shepherd and how it ties to the kingdom of God. If you weren't with us when we first embarked upon this journey in the gospel of Mark, I'd encourage you to go to our website and listen and read the third sermon in this series entitled "The Gospel of the Kingdom." The message of the kingdom of God and its initial inauguration and final consummation is woven into the fabric of this entire gospel. So, I'll review the message of the kingdom insofar as it will help us get a firm grasp on the importance of this shepherd imagery, but I'd recommend the past sermon for a more comprehensive treatment.

One may wonder, "If Jesus wasn't primarily teaching his death and resurrection, what was the core premise of his message?" Remember, not even his apostles understood the role of suffering in the Messiah's earthly ministry, yet he commissioned them to preach repentance in verse 7. So they couldn't have been preaching Christ crucified as they'll come to do in the book of Acts. The message of Christ and his apostles at this time was that the kingdom promised in the Old Testament had finally arrived because the King had arrived! The kingdom refers to the reign and rule of God. The testimony of the Hebrew Bible is that when this reign and rule of God arrives, ushered in by the King himself, it'll be a globally recognized kingdom that will utterly eradicate the enemies of God. This kingdom will be a utopia devoid of sickness, death, and demonic oppression. In Mark 1:14-15 Jesus began his ministry by proclaiming that the kingdom is here!

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." -Mark 1:14-15

So, if you want entry into this kingdom, you must repent and believe! However, the current state of Israel would've confused Jesus' contemporaries regarding the kingdom's nearness. "How on earth is the kingdom here, Jesus, when we're still under Roman occupation? And by the way, you look nothing like a conquering king who tramples over his enemies. So, our appraisal of both you and our circumstances tell us we're still waiting for the king to bring his kingdom." Remember, even John the Baptist struggled with this concept while in prison. Jesus' contemporaries all missed what was hiding in plain sight in the Old Testament. The Kingdom would not come in one fall swoop. God's providential design was for the kingdom to be fully established in two phases. The kingdom and its effects would be introduced in the first Advent, where Jesus deals with humanity's greatest enemy, sin. And then, there would be a period of overlap between this age and the age to come, commonly referred to as the already but not yet. Jesus' second coming will closely resemble what many were expecting in his first—global and universal reign over his enemies.

It's not as if Jesus left the Jews without any testimony that he is the promised King of the Old Testament. He didn't just show up and say, "I'm that guy, believe it or not." No. The authenticating signs of the kingdom followed him. As a foretaste of a world with no death, he raised the dead. As a foretaste of a world with no devil, he cast out demons. As a foretaste of a world with no illness, he healed the sick. As a foretaste of a world with no death, he raised the dead. And as a foretaste of a world with no sin, he forgave sinners.

And also, for more proof that this kingdom has arrived, this text informs us that Israel has received her promised shepherd. This, too, was a promise that was fastened to the kingdom. Do you want evidence that the kingdom is here? Read the Old Testament that promises a Shepherd-like-King who ushers in the reign and rule of God, and then acknowledge that Jesus is he. He's here. That's what Mark wants to get across to his audience. So, this truth can strike us as it would have the original audience; let's turn to Ezekiel to consider this promise.

The prophet Ezekiel is ministering to the southern kingdom of Judah in the wake of its exile into Babylon in 586 BC. The prophet does promise a hopeful future, but only after providing a covenantal justification for the judgment that Judah had received. Ezekiel's message is laden with exodus language, signifying the significance of this historic event. He tells them that God will lead them out of their current bondage through a new shepherd, pointing to a second and greater exodus. One of the prophet's primary legal indictments was against the failure of the shepherds in Judah. This failure played a substantial role in their judgment. Let's walk through Ezekiel 34.

The word of the Lord came to me: ² "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? ³ You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. ⁴ The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. ⁵ So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; ⁶ they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them. ⁷ "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: ⁸ As I live, declares the Lord God, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, ⁹ therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: ¹⁰ Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against

the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them. -Ezekiel 34:1-10

So, clearly, we find that the Lord is not pleased with the shepherds of Israel. They show no regard for the apparent needs of the flock. And since the flock belongs to God, their mishandling of his people indicated their rejection of him. The shepherds failed in their duties, and so went the sheep. But it isn't all doom and gloom. Judgment had to be handed down to these negligent shepherds; however, the prophet also provides a glimmer of hope. Let's continue reading.

¹¹ "For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. ¹² As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³ And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. ¹⁴ I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. ¹⁶ I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice... ²² I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. ²³ And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴ And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken. -Ezekiel 34:11-16, 22-24

So, these passages promise a new shepherd who will be Yahweh and the servant David (Jesus). And the expectation, according to the text, was that this shepherd would arrive alongside the kingdom of God. Let's continue reading.

²⁵ "I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. ²⁶ And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. ²⁷ And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver

them from the hand of those who enslaved them. ²⁸ They shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them. They shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid. ²⁹ And I will provide for them renowned plantations so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the reproach of the nations. ³⁰ And they shall know that I am the Lord their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Lord God. ³¹ And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord God.”
-Ezekiel 34:25-31

You can't miss the kingdom imagery plastered throughout this text if you read closely. We see this reiterated in chapter 37.

²³ They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.²⁴ “My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes.²⁵ They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever. ²⁶ I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore.

As we've read, Israel has had its fair share of incompetent and downright evil shepherds. Typically, the shepherds reflect the hearts of the people, so Israel is not given a pass here. If they were obedient to God's Word, they would've replaced those shepherds with those after God's heart. Moses' prayer before his death was that Israel would have a shepherd to guide them.

¹⁶ “Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation ¹⁷ who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.” -Numbers 27:16-17

And sure, Joshua provided partial and temporal fulfillment as he led the people to the promised land. But the problem is that he died! He's no longer here to guide Israel. And he, too, was deficient for such a task at hand. But behold! Mark presents his readers with the promised Shepherd who would usher in the kingdom! These Old Testament passages provide us with the biblical goggles needed to read the Mark 6 passages for all their worth. With that in mind, let's consider our third point this morning.

Pay careful attention to the setting of this story. Verse 35 says they're in a desolate place, which is why the disciples wanted to send the crowds to surrounding villages for nourishment. If you recall, Ezekiel is heavy with exodus language, signifying that the future shepherd would lead his people to a second exodus that would far eclipse the first. So, it's noteworthy that this scene is in a wilderness, which would've been an important element in second exodus theology. The miracle the disciples were about to witness was a recapitulation of the miraculous feeding in the wilderness of the exodus account. By that original miracle of providing manna from heaven, Yahweh made himself known as a compassionate provider and shepherd for his people. And now Jesus, Yahweh of the Old Testament, is in the wilderness supernaturally and compassionately providing food for his people. Verse 34 calls him compassionate, which is most likely an echo of Isaiah 49:10.

They will not hunger or thirst, the scorching heat or sun will not strike them; for their compassionate one will guide them, and lead them to springs. -Isaiah 49:10

So, in the Torah, particularly the book of Deuteronomy, we find that the wilderness was where Yahweh taught his people that he would be their provider. He would shepherd them. And don't miss this: the provision pointed to something more than just physical sustenance.

³And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. -Deut 8:3

And what do we find him doing in Mark? He not only feeds the people with bread but verse 34 says he feeds them with the Word of God. Are you starting to see the big picture here? Hear me, saints, Jesus cares for his sheep. He provides nourishment for his sheep. He leads them to green pastures. And it's not a coincidence that Mark points out that while in a desolate place, Jesus had them sit down on the green grass in verse 39.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. -Psalm 23:1-2a

He's going out of his way to prove to his readers that Jesus is the good shepherd of Psalm 23. He's the God of his sheep. He's greater than Moses, who liberated the people from bondage and instructed them regarding the manna in the wilderness. He's greater than Elisha, who fed a hundred men with twenty loaves of bread. His care for

his sheep is meticulous in this passage, and he carries the same disposition for his people today! Saint, He cares for you! He clothes you. He feeds you, both with the Word and food. He houses you. He loves you. He gives you all you need for life and godliness. And this is why anxiety and worry for the Christian is sinful. When you find yourself grumbling or filled with fear concerning the issues of life, you're meant to see yourself as the Israelites in the wilderness. Just as their shepherd Yahweh in heaven promised to provide for their needs through natural and supernatural means, he does the same for his people today. Do you trust him to shepherd you, saint?

You should. If he didn't spare his own Son but gave him up for us, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? His love for his people is particular saint. This isn't a general type of love like the way I love all the women in this church as my sisters. It's a specific love for his bride that was handpicked before the foundations of the world. The ultimate shepherding act of Jesus was the laying down of his life for his sheep. He didn't die to make salvation possible. He died to save his people from their sins. And we find this particular language in Scripture.

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. -John 10:14-15

He has a unique and particular love for his sheep, so much so that he receives God's wrath on their account. This should encourage you, saint. That if God chose you before the foundation of the world and died on your behalf, then he's certainly shepherding you through life now.

Revisiting this theme of kingdom, we find in verse 42 that all ate and were satisfied. Here's another foretaste of what's to come, along with verses 53-56. All will be eternally satisfied in the consummated kingdom, devoid of any sickness. And yet, Jesus has returned to his Father, so regarding shepherding, what has he left here on earth as an authenticating sign of the kingdom? Pastors in local churches. Now, hear me out. We get the word Pastor from the Greek word for Shepherd. And not only does the Old Testament prophecy about the Shepherd to come, but it also predicts that God will supply his people with undershepherds or pastors.

¹⁵ "And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. -Jeremiah 3:15

Yahweh, God is pointing to a future day where God's people will be supplied with competent and faithful pastors. And Acts 20 informs us that we're now living in that day.

28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. -Acts 20:28

Notice that the appointing is not their doing. Paul says it is God who has made you pastors of this church in Ephesus. He's fulfilling his promise to provide pastors after his own heart, thereby signifying that the kingdom has indeed been inaugurated. Now, just two practical takeaways to this point.

First, this is a clear indicator of the importance of church membership. Pastors don't just float around in the abyss. The Holy Spirit appoints them to particular local churches through the congregation. So, if you're a Christian who has entered the kingdom through the poverty of the Spirit, you best demonstrate the kingdom's nearness through local church participation submitted to pastors.

17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. -Hebrews 13:17

Secondly, I think pastors in the plural in Jeremiah 3:15 are not only meant to signal that he's sending a plurality but that there should be a plurality of pastors in each local church. This isn't prescribed in the NT, so churches with solo pastors are not in error. However, the consistent testimony of the NT is several pastors serving within one local church. Many practical benefits go along with this, but I think we should, as a church, look forward to that direction to align with the apostolic churches.

To our last and shortest point. Consider the disciples' response to the Lord Jesus walking on water in verses 51-52. They have more OT Israelites in them than they may have realized. Like the Israelites in the wilderness, their hearts were hardened after miraculous events that should have driven them to worship further. I think the disciples' failures also serve a pastoral function of providing hope to Mark's readers. Even though the disciples failed time and time again, they were nevertheless Jesus' servants and apostles. Thus, Mark's readers, despite their failures, can also, through repentance and faith, continue to be Jesus' servants. And for us as present-day readers, it gives hope that our failures can be forgiven and that despite our weakness, God may still use us to proclaim the gospel and bring healing and hope to a hurting world.

Let's pray.