

Provision

Mark 6:30-44; Ephesians 2:11-22

Sunday, July 28, 2024 10th Sunday after Pentecost

First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- **Introduction**

Awhile ago I read an article in which a student asked a college professor what was the earliest sign of civilization? Instead of pointing to an archeological discovery, the professor pointed to a picture of an ancient human leg bone. She said that this is the earliest known example of a broken bone that was set and had healed properly. The civilization was revealed in the kindness. In the animal world a broken bone was the kiss of death, but at some time in the ancient past somebody took the time to care for a person with a broken leg, and did so long enough for the wounded person to recover. It was in that care for one for another that the heart of civilization was revealed. So today, let's take a look at this passage from the ministry of Jesus to consider the provision and the kindness of God.

- **Set the stage**

Mark-Jesus feeds the 5,000

The passage in Mark's gospel is believed by the scholars to be one of two times Jesus performed a miracle involving food. In this particular situation Jesus had been teaching out in a deserted area for some time and people were beginning to get hungry. The disciples suggested that they are all dismissed so that they can find food from neighboring villages. Jesus responded by suggesting that they feed them. An impossible situation the disciples protest, but Jesus simply asks them to donate what they have. Everyone was organized and sat down in groups of hundreds or fifties. Jesus then blessed the food and it turned out to be enough to feed everybody. It's not that people were inspired to donate from their own supply, but that God multiplied the food in order to demonstrate his profusion and his endorsement of the ministry of his son. The whole episode looked back to the forty years that Israel spent wandering in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses. God provided for what they needed back then and there were numerous verses in the Bible that talked about God's provision.

- **Main Point**

Provision is based on compassion and is shown in at least three ways

The main point for today is that God provides, and his provision is based on his compassion and kindness. He does not promise to give us everything we want, but he does promise to give us what we really need. Here are a few examples...

31-rest awhile...self care and privacy, and time off

In verse 31, Jesus listened to the reports of the disciples who had been held to different villages ministering to the people and He told them they needed to come aside and rest by themselves in a deserted place and recuperate. His first concern for his disciples after the journey was that they take time for some self-care, , privacy and time off.

34-instruction, for they were like sheep without a shepherd

That did not happen, however, for when Jesus and his disciples made it to the private place people who had anticipated their arrival were actually there waiting for them. Instead of being disappointed, Jesus felt compassion for them. Verse 34 tells us that Jesus was moved with compassion for them because he discerned that they were like sheep not having a shepherd. The word for compassion is very significant. It has a literal translation of "feeling from the guts." It is concern for another that's deep and visceral. Moved by that compassion, Jesus began to teach them and continued doing so for some time.

37-provide food. Give trusting in His resources, not yours.

It isn't until we reach verse 37 in the episode that we actually start talking about food. The disciples, being practical people, told Jesus that the day was getting on and that the people should be dismissed to go find food. Jesus, being impractical, suggested that they be fed and that they act and what they can do and not be restricted by what they cannot do. The disciples organized the people and presented what food they had to Jesus. Jesus blessed the food and the rest is history.

- **Application**

- Find a Sabbath

As far as applications are concern, the first one is to find a Sabbath. The traditional Sabbath starting at sundown on Friday and ending at sundown on Saturday is still a good choice, and observed by Jews around the world, but some people have work schedules that make that impossible. If that be the case, schedule time off on a day off and hold to it. There is a story I've learned from volunteer work at the hospital that involves a conversation between a teacher and a college professor. The teacher led a class in which the professor was a student, but the professor, already a knowledgeable man, spoke so much that the teacher had little opportunity to speak, so she pulled out a tray, two cups and some tea. She poured so much tea in one cup that it overflowed despite the professors protests. The teacher explained that sometimes your cup can get too full and you need to empty some of it before putting more in. There have to be times where you can relax and empty your cup.

- Be always a learner. The wise love correction

Another application is to always be a learner. Sabbath times off aside, it is good to have an open mind and be ready to learn. The Book of Proverbs says that a desire to always learn is an indication of wisdom, and Jesus, when He saw that the people were like sheep without a shepherd, demonstrated His compassion by teaching. Always be a learner.

- Give with a vision of the Lord's greatness, not your limitations.

Finally, be ready to give when you have a chance and don't give much attention to how much or how little you have to give to someone in need. Most needs are too much for one person, or one church to fully meet. But you're not asked to meet every need, you're asked to do what you can. The rest is up to the provision of God.

- **Conclusion**

This miracle in which Jesus fed over 5,000 people was done to demonstrate the compassion and provision of God. If you read through the story, you learn different applications to our lives, like finding time to empty your cup and rest, always be open to learn and give with an eye to God's greatness, not your limitations. You pray hard and do what you can do.