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Jesus & Compassion

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Series: Unknown  
Mark 6:30-56

**BIG IDEA – JESUS GIVES US PROVISION AND PROTECTION**

You may not know this. *Why would you know this?* Today is a special and significant day for us as a church, because today we turn six years old. Happy birthday, Two Cities Church. I know. We're six years old. We're entering first grade as a church. Isn't that amazing?

God has done more in six years than we thought would happen in six decades. We've grown numerically. We've grown spiritually. We've grown organizationally. Where we started is not where we are today. Where we are today is not how we started. I tell you this all the time because I don't want us to forget the story.

There were 30 of us who moved our lives from the Raleigh-Durham area. We didn't move to Winston-Salem because Winston-Salem is a cooler city than Durham. We love Winston. We had our own international airport. We had DPAC. We had Duke. We didn't move to Winston because Winston was a cooler city; we moved to Winston because we love the city of Winston and wanted to reach it with the gospel.

When 30 of us moved here, there were 70 of you who met us here. Now, you weren't just standing in the parking lot (that would have been awesome), but you joined our launch team. Guys, I just want you to know that we had 100 people who said, "We're going to be all in with our time, talent, and treasure," and that is what launched our church six years ago.

So, if you were on that original launch team that moved with us or met us here, please stand right now proudly. There are not that many of you left. Six people in here. Thank you, guys. God bless you guys. Then we were in Goler. We were at Goler for two years, and we grew to 600 people with two evening services in a building that has now been sold. It was a crazy time in the life of our church.

You guys who were at Goler gave, and you're why we were able to get into *this* building. If you were with us at Goler, please stand proudly now. All right. You can be seated. The rest of you go, "Come on. I drove by Goler one time. Does that count?" No! I get it. We've been in this building for four years now.

Here's what's really neat. If you're in this building right now and you were not with us at Goler and you were not on our launch team, here's what's a cool thought for you to have: you are sitting in the sacrifice of other people. Someone else prayed. Someone else invited. Someone else gave. Someone else was an early adopter.

Here's what's so exciting. When you see that facility, what we're building (it's going to be done in, we hope, about a year), think about all of the people who are going to come and meet Jesus and be made into his disciples, and they are going to sit in your sacrifice. So I just want to say, "Thank you." Thank you for giving, for serving, for praying, for inviting, for believing.

I want to also say *this*. I would feel remiss on our sixth anniversary not to say this. If you are still on the sidelines, if you are still being a spectator, if you're looking for a sign to get in, here it is right now. This is a sign for you guys to get on in. This is a significant geographical and generational move we're making as a church. We are cementing ourselves in the center of downtown for a century to do meaningful gospel ministry, and we just want to invite you and your family.

So, we had close to 100 people come through our Weekender this weekend. You'll hear about that at the end. We have another Weekender October 21 and 22. It would be a great way to connect you and your family to God's global purposes through our local church. So, I'm going to pray. I'm going to thank God. I'm actually going to read a verse.

When I left The Summit, they gave me this little preaching booklet, and on this little preaching booklet is a verse. It's Ephesians 3:20-21. Let me just read that, and we'll pray on our anniversary here. It says, "***Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.***" Let's pray.

Lord, we lift up to you the last six years, and we just commit that our dreams are always going to be bigger than our memories. We just commit that though we are unbelievably grateful for the past, we are unbelievably focused on the future. Because of the Holy Spirit, because of the gospel, because of the promises of God, we always believe the future is bigger and brighter than the past. We are so eager and excited to see what you're going to do in and through and beyond us in the years to come. We pray all this in Jesus' name, amen.

All right. Type or turn to Mark 6. We are in the seventh week of a 20-week series in the gospel of Mark. If you've not been around, you have to catch up online. Listen to the past sermons. Let me just tell you this. We are in a fast-paced, action-packed little gospel (it's little compared to the other three gospels) called *Mark*. We're just following Jesus through the gospel of Mark, and he's going from one place to another.

Last week, we saw Jesus send out his twelve disciples on their first ever short-term mission trip, but we never heard back how it went. I don't know if you noticed that. Mark does this every once in a while. It's called *sandwich storytelling*. He starts a story. He gets excited. He tells another story (some of you are like this), and then he comes back and finishes the story.

If you'll pick up with me in verse 30, we're going to see the disciples come back. We don't know how long they were gone...for a while. They traveled to go places and preach and teach. They come back, and look at what it says in verse 30. ***"The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught."***

This is the first time they're ever called *apostles*. Up until now they've been called *disciples*. Now they get to graduate. They do the first short-term mission trip. They walk with authority and clarity and simplicity, they come back, and they get to be called *apostles*.

Now, one minute on this. There's a difference between what theologians call *big "A" apostles* and *little "a" apostles*. These are big "A" apostles. Big "A" apostles are unique. There were 12 of them. They walked with Jesus. They saw him face-to-face. They wrote Scripture. They had a unique role and responsibility in redemptive history.

They're big "A" apostles, but all *apostle* literally means (because we're all to be little "a" apostles)... Little "a" *apostle* just means a sent one. It means someone who's sent out with the authority of another person. So, in one sense, we're all to be apostles and to live sent where we live, learn, work, and play.

Here's what I want us to see. We're going to spend the rest of the morning in the rest of Mark 6. Here's the big idea: *Jesus gives us provision and protection*. We're going to look at the great miracle of the providing of the loaves and the fish. We're going to look at the great protection miracle of Jesus calming the storm and protecting the disciples in the storm, but it's going to start with another way that Jesus provides for us and protects us, and it's that he gives us rest.

## **01 THE NEED FOR REST, RETREAT, & REFRESHMENT**

I want you to see this. This is really interesting. Look at verse 31 with me. ***"And he [Jesus] said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a***

***while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves."***

This is interesting. They just had a season of ministry. We don't know exactly how long, but they've been following Jesus for a while. They just did their first short-term mission trip. Here's what we do know: they've experienced both the success of ministry, which is very exhilarating... They see people baptized. They see people come to Christ. They see disciples made. They see demons cast out. They see people healed.

Also, we know (we saw this with John the Baptist last week), the hostility and the opposition are increasing. This is what often happens, by the way. When you're having a dynamic ministry, both the persecution you experience and the converts you experience grow at the same level. Both the opposition and the opportunities come at usually about the same level.

Here's what I want us to see: Jesus initiates for the disciples to rest. You might go, "Come on, Jesus. This is the height of your ministry. You're super popular. There are a lot more people who need to get saved. There are a lot more disciples who need to be made. There are a lot more people who need to be cared for." Here's what I want us to see: Jesus initiates rest.

Here's my question for you: What is your plan for rest? You don't need to say it out loud, but do you have a plan to rest? Let me tell you why rest is so important: because Jesus doesn't want you to burn out or to blow up. Have you known people who have done those? I think we both know those stories.

Burnout is normally a little bit more quiet. Burnout normally is I'm doing too many things for too long, sometimes with the wrong perspective, but often just with no rest. Have you ever just served in the kids' ministry again and again and again and didn't take a break, didn't take the right time off? Did you ever lead a Community Group or host Community Group in your house for five or six years in a row?

Have you ever been part of a small church (I'm not picking on small churches), and you were serving every week and doing setup and teardown? It's possible to burn out if you don't have the right rest. Now, you don't hear that as much, because people who burn out are usually very nice, they usually leave really quietly, and they usually lie to you about why they're leaving.

What happens more often is blowing up. What is blowing up? This is important to know. You may want to know how people blow up, because you hear about it, then you read about it, and you go, "Oh my gosh! How did he? How did she? How could

they?" Well, we know how this happens. The way you blow up is you begin to find rest in the wrong places.

It starts out a little bit *this*, a little bit *that*, and all of a sudden you're the person who drinks way too much. One night you looked at a website, and now you're going to a website every night. You started texting the wrong person, and now you have this unhealthy relationship.

One of the things that happened was you were like, "I need to find some rest." So, part of learning how to rest is you need to find healthy escapes. If you don't find healthy escapes, you're going to wake up, and you're going to be 45 years old, and you're going to be like, "Why do I have these three to five unbelievably terrible habits?" What they were is how you coped with the busyness of your life.

So, Jesus says you have to rest. Now here's the assumption. We always say there are two sides of things. This assumes you're working hard. You're working hard at parenting. You're working hard at being a spouse. You're working hard at your job. You're actually trying to have a ministry. You're trying to be missional in your living.

This is interesting. There was an article that came out last week in *Fortune* magazine about Millennials. I always pick on Millennials, and I *am* a Millennial. I'm actually what's considered a *geriatric Millennial*. You're welcome. Millennials turned 40 this year. Millennials are between 40 and 25 or something like that.

This article is really interesting. It basically said Millennials want the soft life. I thought, "What is that?" so I read about this. Basically, the soft life... They said the American dream has changed, and I think we've all felt this. Parents have felt this about their kids. Grandparents have felt this. "What's going on with my kid? Why won't he or she get a real job?" Some of you are like, "Yes! I'm listening."

"Why won't they get married? Why won't they have kids? Why won't they grow up? Why are they getting their fourth degree in Russian history?" The reason is... The old American dream was "I will work unbelievably hard. I will save money and make money, and my goal is to live in the suburbs and have a nice house and have a few kids." They said the soft life dream of Millennials is to basically work as little as possible and to have as many experiences as possible.

Some of you understand that. You're like, "That's why he does that." It's so that he and his friends can go travel all the time. That's why he took that job. So, the assumption with rest is you're working hard. This is why the fourth commandment says six days you shall work, one day you shall rest. As Americans, we have two days. We have a two-day weekend.

Have you ever wondered how that happened? You're like, "How did we get Saturday and Sunday?" Because when our nation was founded, they couldn't decide whether to give us the Jewish day off or the Christian day off, so they gave us both. Thank you, Moses. Thank you, Jesus. Right? We're grateful for that. So, I want us to see the principle of Jesus tells us to rest.

Now let me be really practical, because what we want to be here, if you're new, is ruthlessly biblical (look at the text) and then highly practical in your life. You need to figure out how you're going to rest *daily*, how you're going to rest *weekly*, and how you're going to rest *yearly*. Some might add *quarterly*, but I would say at least those three.

Now, you know you need to rest daily. Right? I mean, that's what sleep is. Have you ever tried to not sleep? Some of you are like, "I'm not going to sleep. I'm going to go to bed late and wake up early." Then your eye starts to twitch, and everyone thinks you're flirting with them. Have you ever had that situation? You need to sleep.

Most of us think sleep is what we do so we're not tired. That's probably what you think. "Sleep is what I do so I'm not tired." If you actually read about what sleep does, it balances your hormones, organizes your memories, and burns fat. It does so many things for you. Work and rest are built into the fabric of creation. You at least know on a daily basis you can't break it or it'll break you.

So you're going to have to figure out how to rest daily. Most people, like John Stott (he was a pastor for years)... His advice was an hour a day, a day a week, and a week a year you need to figure out how to rest, bare minimum. So, you're going to have to figure out what is restful to you...again, so you don't have unhealthy places of rest, so you can have healthy places of rest.

By the way, the spiritual disciplines...Bible reading, prayer, journaling, memorization, meditation...are supposed to be restful. If they're not restful, you're doing them wrong. You just need to repent and say, "I'm so sorry. I turned this into a to-do list. My Bible reading is supposed to be a time of rest for me."

So, you need to figure out how to rest daily. You need to figure out how to rest weekly. Jesus built that into creation as well. We see that God rests. I've given whole sermons on the Sabbath. Let me just say this really quickly. You need to figure out how to rest weekly. Here's the principle: when you break God's law, it breaks you.

Some people go, "I don't need to rest. I'll just keep working." Let me tell you what happens. You've seen this. Maybe this has happened to you. If you don't take a voluntary sabbath, you'll take an involuntary sabbath. Have you ever met *those* people? "Where's Jim?"

"Jim's in the hospital."

"Jim is in the hospital?"

"Oh, yeah, he blew out his adrenal glands. He's so stressed out of his mind. He hasn't been able to sleep."

I'm not saying this is why everyone is in the hospital, but I'm saying Jim didn't take a voluntary sabbath. So then you take an involuntary sabbath, which I wouldn't recommend because they're a lot more painful and last a lot longer.

Then you need to figure out how to do something yearly. Some of you have been looking for a verse on vacation. Here it is. There are principles in the Old Testament. There are festivals. There are feasts. There are times of renewal and relaxation. Basically, you need longer seasons to get away.

A helpful principle is you need to know when your next break is. You and your spouse need to know, "When is our next break? Our family needs to know. We're going hard, but when is our next break? Yes, we're going to rest daily; yes, we're going to rest weekly, but when do we get away to enjoy one another and enjoy what God has given us?"

Jesus gives two principles to rest. I want you to see this. Look with me again at verse 31. **"And he said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a desolate place...'"** Look at the principle of *place*. **"...and rest a while."** He says, "Come away by yourselves." In other words, he says, "Come away as a group and rest in a quiet place."

I don't have a lot of time on this, but just to ask you... These are really simple questions, but they would be worth talking about as a Community Group. They'd be worth journaling about. They'd be worth having a conversation over dinner. What are the places and who are the people who are restful?

Let me ask you a really practical question: Is there any part of your house that's restful? I don't do a lot of marriage counseling. You don't want me doing your marriage counseling usually. I only have five or six plays in my playbook when it comes to marriage counseling, but one of them is to ask, "What does your master bedroom look like? Is your master bedroom at all a place of rest?"

"Oh, no. We don't have a lock on the door." I'm like, "Wrong answer." "Oh, yeah. The kids sleep with us every night." No. Wrong answer. "It's where all the dirty laundry is, and we work out of there." Wrong answer. You need to have a place, and for most couples, it needs to be the master bedroom. This is a place of rest. This is a place of retreat. This is a place of relaxation.

Do you have any places? Is it Lake Norman? Is it Boone? Is it Tanglewood? Is it Salem Lake? Where do you go to get refueled and rest? Is it your back deck? Is it a chair in the house? You need places. Okay, that's places. Then here's the other principle: you need *people*. Let me tell you who those people are not: your in-laws. I'm saving you a little bit of marriage counseling.

This is what happens. I mean, there are some exceptions to this. I love my in-laws, and my wife loves my parents, and all that. What every couple normally has happen about year three or four, especially once you start having kids... You look at each other, and one of you has to say... Normally, the more extroverted or assertive person just says, "Hey, I have to be honest, honey. It is not restful when we go away with your family."

Do you ever come back from a vacation with the in-laws and you're like, "I need a vacation from my vacation"? Because it just wasn't a restful time. Okay. That doesn't mean you don't vacation with your in-laws. You have to find out... Now, this is very, very hard. If you can find one or two couples or families that are life-giving...

Here's normally what happens. The wives try to set the husbands up together. "Jim! Bob! Meet each other. You both like baseball." It's like, "Uh..." You need to find couples. He likes him, and she likes her, and the kids are about the same age, and they play together without us being worried the whole time.

So, here's the principle: people, places, daily, weekly, yearly, so that you don't burn out, so that you don't blow up. Done. But here's what happens, and this is the tension I want us to see. Look at what happens in verse 33. ***"Now many saw them going..."*** They saw them get in a boat and go away to a desolate place. ***"...and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them."***

We're going to see in a minute Jesus doesn't get to rest, though he planned to rest. Here's the tension. I don't have an answer. I thought about this all week, and we'll just talk about it together and the tension of it. When do you know "It's time for me to rest," and when do you know "I need to not rest right now because I need to help another person"? Have you ever felt that?

It's like, "Saturday is my day off this week," and your friend calls and says, "I'm moving." You're like, "No!" "Can you grab the other end of the couch?" It's like, "That's not how I was planning on spending my Saturday." I think what you have to do is... We see Jesus. He's able to be interruptible. He really cares for rest. He actually is going to initiate rest. At the same time, he's very interruptible.

I think the only way for you to know this is you have to talk to your spouse about this, you have to be in community, and you have to see, "Am I more prone to over-serve



people and not take care of myself?" That normally happens with people (and I know none of you want to think you're this) who are insecure...people who are insecure, people who really want to be liked, people who have lower self-esteem, which is okay. That's some of you.

They're people-pleasing. They struggle with peer pressure. They struggle with codependency. They struggle with saying the word *no*. Those are the people who go, "Yeah, I'll lift the other end of the couch," and they don't really want to. They know they need a break, but they don't know how to tell people "No." There are other people for whom it's just you have to get over... You're a little bit more selfish, and you think...

Here's what you wish. I wish this happened too. Don't you wish that everything that would ever go wrong in somebody's life would happen Monday through Friday, 8:00 to 5:00? Partly because you could go, "I'm busy. Sorry. I'm already working." Sorry. Marriages don't fall apart between 8:00 and 5:00. Kids don't rebel between 8:00 and 5:00. People don't get bad news about their health only between 8:00 and 5:00.

## **02 SEEING PEOPLE SPIRITUALLY (SHEEP)**

So, this is the tension. Jesus is interruptible. Now look at what he does here. Verse 34: ***"When he [Jesus] went ashore he saw..."*** That's always a key thing with Jesus: seeing. ***"...he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things."***

The reason Jesus was willing to serve was because he saw people spiritually, and he saw people at the soul level. It says he looked out, and he saw them as sheep without a shepherd, as people who needed to be taken care of. We tend to look out and see people (let's just be honest) superficially and surface level. I mean, of course. I can see the logo on your shirt, and I can see the car you pulled in with, and I can see the job you have as soon as you tell me it, and I can kind of see your family looks like it's all together.

By the way, what I've seen in 15 to 20 years of ministry is the people whose lives seem most together on the outside are usually, as a general rule, falling apart on the inside. That has happened again and again and again. I'm not always sure why. I think it has something to do with what it maybe cost a person to have what they have and the other things that maybe they've had to sacrifice to get there.

You'll meet these families, and immediately you'll be really, really impressed. "You do what? You live where? And everybody in your family looks attractive?" Then they open up to you. Somebody in there is breaking their heart or their life is falling apart or they've had the wrong priorities for a decade.

So, Jesus is able to see people spiritually. We tend to see people selfishly. "What can you do for me? Could you connect me to somebody? Could you get me a better job? Could you open some doors? Do you have resources and relationships that I need?" Jesus always sees not so much what people can do for him but what he can do for them.

Look at what it says in verse 34. It says he had compassion. This is a word only used of Jesus. It's used nine times in the Gospels to just talk about Jesus. *Compassion* literally means to be moved in your bowels. Today, to be moved in your bowels means something a little different. Some of you go, "I don't ever want to be moved in my bowels again."

Let me talk about this for a second. Back then, they thought of the center of a person as right *here*. What do you think is the center of you? You think the center of you is up *here* probably. Some of you who are more feelers probably think *this* is the center of you. Well, they thought the bowels were the center of them. You may go, "Why would people think that? Were they not very smart?" Here's why they thought that.

We don't even know this, but until about 200 to 300 years ago, people were always scared because there were so many terrible things (we are so unbelievably protected we don't even understand it), and people were almost always hungry. Now, today, obesity is a bigger problem than starvation in our world. How would you feel if you were always scared and always hungry? Where would all of your feelings come from? They would come from right *here*.

So, it says Jesus feels compassion for the people. Notice what he does. We're going to see in a minute he's going to feed them, but what does he do before he feeds them? He teaches them. This is so encouraging to me. In fact, he's going to teach them for so long it's going to get late and they're going to miss a meal. This is a great verse for long teaching of the Bible.

Here's the thing. When we talk about this, I don't want us to forget this. The main problem with men and women, according to the Bible, is ignorance. That is the greatest problem. There are other problems that seem more obvious to us. "This person is hungry. This person is anxious. This person is bitter." No, no, no. Yes, all that's true, but here's the greatest problem: they're ignorant. It's what they don't know.

It's either what you *don't* know or what you *won't* know. That's hard. So, if you're not in church, it might be what you *don't* know. If you're in church and you've heard good Bible preaching, it's what you *won't* know. It's what you'll be willfully blind to. It's what you'll suppress, Romans 1 says.

### 03 THE MIRACLE OF FEEDING 5,000

So, Jesus has compassion, and then he teaches them, but I want you to see what happens next. This is really interesting. Look at verse 35. **"And when it grew late..."** So, he had been teaching for a long time. **"...his disciples came to him and said, 'This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late.'" Remember, they went on a boat, and other people came, so they're far away.**

Verse 36: **"Send them away..."** Look at the disciples. "Send these people away." **"...to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."** There's a need that needs to be met, and they're like, "Let's send these people away to go meet this need by themselves." Jesus is going to say, "Hey, why don't you give them something to eat?" and he's going to help them give them something to eat.

Here's the principle, I think. How often do we send people other places to have their needs met instead of sending them to Jesus? Do you know what I'm talking about? I mean, there are a lot of examples of that. Jesus wants to meet a need, and we go somewhere else. We go to Google instead of God. That would be a little example. This is why I'm not a huge fan of counseling that is not explicitly Christian.

I'm sure there might be a place for it, but in my general experience, when I'm talking to some couple... They eventually come in here, and they're like, "We've been in counseling for two years, and they think we should get divorced." "Where are you going to counseling?" Inevitably, it's not Christian counseling. Here's a big one. Hear me out. I'll walk on this tightrope carefully with all of us and try to be careful how I talk about this.

How often do people go to medication immediately instead of going to Jesus? We're not saying there's no place to take a pill. If my kids get sick, pill and prayer. We believe in both. "Here's a pill. We're praying." We're not against pills, but how often do we...? Hopefully you know this. We are an overmedicated society. "Oh, you feel guilty? Oh, you're depressed? Oh, you're anxious? There's a pill for that."

Well, maybe. There are certain things that are biological, and we're not against pills. Let me say it again. But try *this* on. You feel guilty? You feel depressed? Maybe you're guilty. Maybe I don't want to give you a pill that's going to make you a shadow of who you are and disintegrate your personality and make you not know what's going on. Maybe I want to talk to you about guilt.

This is why before I would... Obviously, I'm not a doctor. I'm not a psychiatrist. I don't prescribe medication. But if someone asked me, "Should I take some medication for this?" the first thing I would say is, "Well, before that, let me ask you this question: Is there anything you'd like to tell me? Is there anything you need to confess?" No one

wants to ask *those* questions. "Is there anything in your life that would need to change?"

So, we need to be very careful that we don't send people other places for needs that Jesus says he wants to meet. Look at how he meets it here. Verse 37: **"But he answered them, 'You give them something to eat.' And they said to him, 'Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii [half a year's wage] worth of bread and give it to them to eat?'"**

Look at this. We know from a different gospel... Mark doesn't tell us this. Another gospel tells us. Guess who speaks up: Philip. Jesus says, "Hey, I would like to do something great through you. I would like to do a great work. I would like to do a great miracle. I'd like to meet a lot of people's needs." Guess what the first thing is the disciples say, Philip especially. "It's too expensive." Philip would make a great deacon on a financial committee.

How many works of God have been hindered or never got off the ground because people were overly and only concerned about finances? We're not saying finances aren't important. We're not saying just take out a bunch of debt. We're not saying spend money and don't think about it. But how many buildings were never built, how many ministries were never launched, how many churches were never planted, and how many missionaries were never sent because somebody said, "This is going to be too expensive"?

I love what Bill Bright did. He's one of my heroes. He started Campus Crusade for Christ, which is now Cru. You're talking about a serious dude. Read about him sometime. He did a 40-day fast, water only, all his adult life. You don't know anybody who does that. You have to be so unbelievably serious to do that.

He would always gather his leadership team every year, and they'd go away for a retreat, and he would say, "Hey, guys..." They had a worldwide ministry. He'd say, "Guys, we're not talking about money until the end. I want us to dream. Let's dream some God dreams. I want us to have some vision. Where do we want to go, and what do we want to do?" At the very end they'd figure out how to fund it. They believed provision follows vision.

So, Jesus says, "Give them something to eat." Verse 38: **"And he said to them, 'How many loaves do you have? Go and see.' And when they had found out, they said, 'Five, and two fish.'"** This is amazing. Jesus' first question to them is "What do you have?" Let me ask you that...*What do you have?*

Here's the humbling thing. The disciples didn't even know what they had. How can you give something to Jesus that you don't know you have? You can't. We talk here a

lot about stewardship. I talk about stewardship. Stewardship is one of the main biblical themes in all of Scripture. All that I think I own is really from God on loan. That's stewardship.

The principle under stewardship I probably *haven't* taught. Stewardship is management. A component of stewardship is generosity. A component of stewardship is leveraging, but there's a principle underneath all of that, and it's this: *you can't steward what you don't know you have*. So, the foundation of stewardship is I need to realize what God has given me.

Don't answer out loud, but what has God given you? How much money do you have? What's your salary? "Okay, God. I can't use this if I don't know what it is." How much time do you have? The average American has four hours and 57 minutes a day of discretionary time, not including weekends. That's a lot of time.

It makes sense. You have an hour or two in the morning. You have maybe an hour for lunch. You have an hour or two or three at night. What do you have? Do you know your spiritual gifts? Most people don't. How can you give Jesus your spiritual gifts and say, "Use them" if you don't know what gifts they are?

How about your stage of life? If you're young and single, you're like, "Wow. I have energy and strength and vigor, and I'd like to give it to God." So, here's the very simple principle right out of the story: I have to know what I have, and then I have to give it to God and ask him to multiply it. That's it. Whatever God has given me, I say, "Lord, thank you."

It might be little. I have seen godly people... It's like, "I have this little apartment. I barely can afford it, and it's little. It's a one-bedroom, but you know what? I could host a Community Group" or "We could have some families over" or "It's our first year of marriage, and we can dedicate this small space to the Lord and ask him to establish a home in this little space he has given us." You can do that.

I want you to know (I think I would be remiss not to say this on our sixth anniversary) the story of Two Cities Church has been our church giving Jesus five loaves and two fish and saying, "Can you do something with this?" When we started this church, there were five of us: my wife, our three kids, and me. The three kids were young and weren't believers, so we started this church with two Christians and three non-Christians.

I had never been a senior pastor in my whole life. I just thought, "I like the Bible, and I like to talk a lot. Let's see if this works." I love our launch team, but they were 100 people, and they were just a ragtag group that said, "We'll be early adopters." Then

we took a building downtown that has now been sold, and we went to night services when everybody was canceling their night services.

We moved onto Northwest Boulevard. If you saw these buildings before... To look at these buildings you needed to get a tetanus shot. We just said, "Lord, we're going to take these five loaves and two fish and ask you to multiply them." That's what God has done. Now look at what happens here. They multiply. Look at what it says in verse 39.

***"Then he [Jesus] commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men."***

Now, they didn't count like pastors do. These were really 5,000 people. They weren't counting pregnant women twice. They weren't counting the band every service. It was actually more than 5,000 because this was not including women and children. People think this was 15,000 to 20,000 people.

Here's what I want us to notice. There are a couple of principles here. First (you can read it in all of the accounts), Jesus doesn't give out any bread, and he doesn't give out any fish. Jesus gives it to the disciples, and the disciples give it to the people. So, from the people's perspective, it looks like the disciples are meeting their needs, but really it's Jesus meeting their needs. Welcome to all of ministry.

All of ministry is I go to Jesus, and he gives me something. He gives me grace. He gives me knowledge. Then I go and give that to another person. He gives me money. I go and give that to another person, and they think it's me. I need to remind myself, and I need to remind them, "This is actually Jesus meeting your need."

Here's what else is interesting. You may want to ask yourself *this*: Did the 15,000 people know this was a miracle? I don't think so. Have you ever been around 15,000 people? That's a lot of people. There are no microphones. There's no way to communicate all this stuff. How would they know there was no fish and no bread?

The only people who saw the miracle and knew it was a miracle were the disciples. This was to teach them a lesson. This was to teach them about how Jesus Christ provides for us. At the very end, it says there were 12 baskets left over. Literally, in the Greek, that's more like the word *backpack*. Each disciple got their own spiritual souvenir backpack with fish that had never swam, and they got bread in there.

Here's the principle here. First, you see what they call the *provision of providence*. Jesus gives us everything we need, but just enough. You also see that Jesus often meets your needs by you meeting other people's needs. Jesus often meets your needs as you meet other people's needs. Have you ever seen this? You say, "I'm going to hold this person accountable," and you're really meeting their need, but guess what.

Have you ever held someone accountable? It's like, you'd better get *your* life together. Have you ever said, "Let's go read the Bible together," and then you woke up and went, "I actually don't read my Bible very much"? Have you ever disciplined somebody and went, "Well, I'd better get *my* life together"? Have you ever done some marriage counseling and went, "Well, I'd better work on *my* marriage"? Often what happens is as you minister to other people, it is the very thing God uses to grow *you*.

#### **04 THE MIRACLE OF JESUS WALKING ON WATER**

So here ends *that* miracle. It's a picture of Jesus' provision. He provides rest. He provides food. He provides spiritual food by teaching. Then here's the famous miracle of walking on water. Verse 45: ***"Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat..."*** They are leveraging that boat for all they can do. Jesus is sleeping on that boat. They are traveling on that boat. They are teaching from that boat. Here it is.

***"...and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray." Great. Often, Jesus would get away and pray. Verse 47: "And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them."***

This is the second storm in the book of Mark. We kind of skipped over and skimmed over and summarized the storm in Mark 4 really quickly, but this is the second time a storm comes. Now, storms in the Bible, if you don't know this, are really big deals. Genesis 6-9 is the story of Noah and the flood. I mean, that's just one big storm for 40 days. What were the plagues about? That's just one big storm...well, multiple storms.

A storm is a reminder that you're not in control. We live in an unbelievable time to be alive. We live in the illusion of control. It can be 25 degrees out, and you can go to bed and set your thermostat at 72 degrees. It's really unbelievable how you can get your food, and you can put it in your fridge, and you can decide you want it 36 degrees. Do you want to put it in the freezer? Most of you feel very in control of your schedules.

The one thing in life, even in 2022, that reminds us we're not in control is storms. Thank the Lord for meteorology and all that. We can kind of predict a storm, but go talk to somebody who lives at the beach. What are *you* going to do if a hurricane comes? It just reminds you you're not in control. Go talk to someone in Oklahoma

when it's tornado season. We don't like storms. They remind us that we're finite, that we're fragile, that we're vulnerable.

Here's the reality. I need to say it out loud. I hate this. It's just the truth. There's nothing you and I can do to protect ourselves from a storm never coming to us. Do you think you can make enough money? Is there a house or a neighborhood you could live in where a storm wouldn't come? Are there people you could know where a storm wouldn't come? Well, how about Steve Jobs? Wealthy, networked, creative, powerful...pancreatic cancer.

Sometimes storms come. You need to be ready, because sometimes you can hear the wind and see the waves, and you go, "A storm is coming." Other times, it's like, you found out something about your spouse or your kid that you didn't want to know. Storm. You're like, "I'm not where I was. Everything changed." You get a phone call. You go to the doctor. So, storms are coming.

Here's the principle. This is probably the deepest thing I'm going to say this morning. I don't have time to explain all this, but here's what we know: Jesus sent them into the storm. I know. It brings up all kinds of questions. It *should*. There are only two options. Jesus sent them in the boat and didn't know there was going to be a storm or he sent them and knew there was going to be a storm. I want to choose option *B*.

By the way, there's actually a great comfort. If you're in some storm and Jesus didn't know you were going to be in it, how is he going to get you out of it? Now look. When we talk about this, we have to use soft language, like "God allows" and "God permits." That's the right language to use. But there are storms in your life. There are two types of storms: correcting storms and perfecting storms.

*Correcting storms* are what we were just praying about a few weeks ago for people who we love who are far from God and close to us. Correcting storms are "I got myself into this mess, and God is using this storm to discipline and redirect my life." Those are the worst storms, because you kind of stand there and go, "Oh." It's just you by yourself, and you wake up at 3:00 in the morning, and you're like, "I did this. I got myself into this. I broke the trust."

Then there are perfecting storms. *Perfecting storms* are "God is just using this in my life." By the way, the Bible says you want to have a clear conscience. Why? So when a storm comes you can go, "My conscience is clear. I have been trying to live above reproach. I have been confessing my sin. I have not been hiding things. This is not a correcting storm. This is a perfecting storm."

This is why Paul talks all the time about having a clear conscience. If you meet people who have been through storms... And you *will* meet people, and *you* will go through



storms. You find that if a person goes through storms, their hold on the world is not as tight. Their longing for heaven is deeper.

So, what I want us to see really quickly is that Jesus sees you in the storm after he sent you into the storm, and Jesus actually not only sees you in the storm; he comes to you in the storm and speaks to you in the storm. Look here. ***"And about the fourth watch of the night..."*** That would be between 3:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. By the way, they've been in this storm for a while. Sometimes you're going to feel that way.

***"...he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, 'Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.' And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened."***

So, there comes Jesus surfing on the sea. Jesus is water skiing without skis right onto it. What's interesting is whenever you hear about Jesus walking on water... If you ever look at pictures, like, if you Google Jesus walking on water, it's always a calm day, and Jesus' hair is blowing, and he's walking on peaceful water. Actually, if you read the story, he's not just walking on water; he's walking in a storm.

Think about this for a second. What were they so afraid of? When you're in a boat, if there's a storm, what are you most afraid of? The water, the waves, and the effect the water and the waves can have. And what does Jesus do? He's walking on the very thing that seems so terrifying. Often, Jesus comes to you in your suffering on the very thing you fear. "I was going through cancer, and Jesus came to me uniquely in my cancer." "Jesus came to me uniquely in the most difficult time in my marriage."

The Bible says Jesus comes, and he speaks to you. Here's the temptation. When you're going through a storm, the temptation is to feel like, "Nobody knows. Nobody cares. Jesus can't do anything. Jesus doesn't see me." I was talking to a couple recently. They're an older couple in our church, and their adult daughter is breaking their hearts. This is a common story. They pulled me aside a couple of weeks ago and said, "Can we meet with you? We need to talk about it."

Then they said this to me. They said, "Kyle," and they told me what she's going through. They said, "We have not been able to tell another person for three months." Have you ever done that? Something happened to you, and it's so terrible. When you talk about it, you cry, so you can't tell anybody about it. They said, "Kyle, we haven't been able to tell another human for three months that this is going on." It's like, "Okay. Jesus sees."

What Jesus does is he comes, he gets in the boat, and it calms down. Here's what it says. It kind of leaves us a little bit on a discouraging note. "The disciples hearts were hardened." Do you see that? It says they didn't understand the loaves. What didn't they understand about the loaves? We don't know all of the answers. Is it possible that they already forgot? That happens to us a lot. We forget that God's past grace in our lives is a promise of God's future grace in our lives.

So, what happens at the very end is their hearts get hardened. Maybe, some think, because they saw Jesus meet other people's needs, the 15,000, but they didn't think Jesus was going to meet *their* needs. So, as we summarize what we just talked about, this whole end of chapter 6 is about Jesus giving us provision and protection. Let me ask you a few questions as we close.

First, where do you need to rest? You need to have a marathon mindset. You need to figure out how to rest in healthy ways so that you don't burn out and you don't blow up. We want you to be a joyful 75-year-old man or woman, loving the Lord and finishing well, and that starts by learning how to rest well.

Secondly, I want you to think about what God has given you. What is the time he has given you? What are the talents he has given you? What is the treasure he has given you? Some of you guys might be in a storm right now. I want to warn you. Some of you may be heading into a storm, a correcting storm. You can kind of see it. You can hear the wind. You can see the waves. You are making decisions, and you are heading in a direction that's going to lead you right into the eye of the storm.

Here's what Jesus has given us. In John 6, Jesus does the loaves and the fishes, and then after he does that, he teaches that he is the Bread of Life. So, how we want to end this morning is we want to take Communion together. I want to talk to you about Communion for just a moment. Communion is one of the ways God has designed for your heart not to get hardened. You can be a Christian... You can be a disciple, and your heart can still be hard. That's what happened with the disciples.

Now I want to tell you something about Communion. I've been on church staff now, here or other places, for about 12 years, and I always fear Communion. I always know when it's coming, but I'm always afraid of it because I know how serious it is. Here's what I want to tell you: Communion is not something to be taken lightly. It's both serious and celebratory. The Bible says, "Do not eat Communion in an unworthy manner."

So I want to talk to us. I want to give you a moment. We're going to pray before we do it. If you have bitterness and unforgiveness in your heart toward somebody, I'm going to ask you to do one of two things. I'm going to ask you to not take Communion. If you

have bitterness and unforgiveness toward somebody, I'm going to ask you to stay seated and pray about that. Or, when I pray, I want you to release that.

Sometimes I'll do this when I pray. I go like *this*. It's like a symbolic, "Lord, I give this to you." If you need to be reconciled to somebody and you haven't been, I'm going to ask you to not take Communion, or I'm going to ask you to commit immediately that you're going to call this person, you're going to text this person, you're going to reconcile with them today, and you take Communion.

If you are in a place right now, and you're like, "You know what? I'm in love with some sin, and I'm not going to give it up," then I'm going to ask you to please not take Communion, but if when I pray you say, "Lord, I did it again this week, and I'm really sorry. I don't want my heart to be hardened, and I'm going to come forward and take Communion," then I invite you to take Communion.

Communion is the family meal of the church. In fact, they used to sit around tables, and they would talk about what God did in their lives, and they would share bread and wine together. They would celebrate the broken body and shed blood of Christ. So that's what we're going to do.

This is for Christians. If you're here and you're not a Christian, we want you to take Christ but not take Communion today. We want to walk with you. This is a meal for believers. So, I'm going to pray for us and give us a chance to search our own hearts, and then when I'm done praying, I want you to come forward. The ushers will be here, and we'll receive Communion. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we come to you, our great provider. We look at the cross of Jesus Christ, and we see provision. There is no greater picture in the world of provision and protection than the cross of Christ where you provided what we needed. What we needed was a perfect person, and you were that. What we needed was a willing sacrifice, and you were that. What we needed was somebody to go in our place and be our substitute, and you said, "I will do that," and you provided all of those things.

You've protected us. You've protected us from Satan, sin, and death at the cross. You've protected us from the coming wrath of God. Communion is just a symbol and sign of that. I just want to give people a moment right here, Lord. If there's somebody they need to forgive... Forgiveness, in part, is no longer letting what someone else did define you. We just want to give it to you, Lord. Forgiven people forgive people. We're going to forgive.

Lord, if there's someone we need to reconcile with, I pray that we would commit to that. Lord, if there is some sin that is a besetting sin in our lives that we are falling in love with that is leading us right into the heart of a storm, Lord, I pray we would right

now soften our hearts, repent of it, and that together, as a church family, we would come together to receive. As the gospel is received, so is the bread and so is the cup. We pray all this in Jesus' name, amen.