

SUNDAY, JULY 18, 2021
PENTECOST 8B
MARK 6: 30-34, 53-56

“HE SAW A GREAT CROWD AND HAD COMPASSION FOR THEM, BECAUSE THEY WERE LIKE SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD; AND HE BEGAN TO TEACH THEM MANY THINGS.” V. 34


HOW DO WE ENGAGE PEOPLE WHO ARE LOST WITHOUT JESUS?

WELL, WE NEED TO FIND THE BACK DOOR TO THEIR HEARTS, BECAUSE THE FRONT DOOR IS OFTEN HEAVILY GUARDED.

AND THE KEY TO THAT DOOR IS TO **KNOW THEIR STORY.**

THIS IS WHERE I'D LIKE TO SPEND OUR TIME ~~THIS MORNING.~~
TODAY

IT'S A CLICHÉ THAT PEOPLE DON'T CARE HOW MUCH YOU KNOW UNTIL THEY KNOW HOW MUCH YOU CARE, BUT IT'S TRUE.

OUR LIVES ARE OFTEN SO BUSY AND SELF-FOCUSED THAT WE NEGLECT TO NOTICE WHAT THE PEOPLE WE MEET 

ARE TELLING US WITH THEIR BODY LANGUAGE, THEIR MOOD, THEIR TONE OF VOICE.

ARE THEY HAPPY OR SAD? ARE THEY ANGRY OR ANXIOUS OR AFRAID?

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I REALLY GET FRUSTRATED WITH TELEMARKETERS AND DOOR-TO-DOOR SALES PEOPLE.

FIRST THEY INTERRUPT YOUR DINNER, AND THEN, WITHOUT GETTING TO KNOW YOU AT ALL,

THEY IMPLY THAT YOUR LIFE IS DEFICIENT IN SOME WAY WITHOUT THEIR PRODUCT.

SEE, THE THING IS, I DON'T WANT TO BE SOMEBODY'S PROJECT. AND I DOUBT YOU DO, EITHER.

WE NEED TO INVEST IN PEOPLE, AS JESUS DID. AND THE FIRST WAY WE CAN DO THAT IS BY NOTICING.

JESUS, OF COURSE, WAS A
FIRST CLASS NOTICER.

THINK ABOUT THE STORY OF THE WOMAN AT THE WELL,
FOR EXAMPLE. HE NOTICED HOW SHE WAS THERE AT AN
ODD TIME OF THE DAY, PROBABLY TO
AVOID THE GOSSIP AND JUDGMENT
OF OTHER WOMEN IN THE TOWN.

AND FROM THAT NOTICING, HE
COMES TO UNDERSTAND THIS
WOMAN'S SHAME.

AND HERE IN V. 30-32 OF MARK 6,
JESUS NOTICES THAT HIS
DISCIPLES ARE TIRED, SO HE TAKES
THEM AWAY FROM THE CROWDS
FOR DINNER AND A REST.

WE NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT TO
REMOVE OUR SPIRITUAL CATARACTS
SO THAT WE CAN REALLY
SEE PEOPLE THE WAY
THAT JESUS SEES THEM.

WHEN A LARGE CROWD OF PEOPLE
INTERRUPTED HIS PLANS FOR
A LITTLE REST AND RELAXATION,
JESUS COULD HAVE GOTTEN UPSET.
ISN'T THAT WHAT HAPPENS
SOMETIMES WHEN YOUR

PLANS GET INTERRUPTED?

BUT INSTEAD, V. 34 SAYS,
³⁴... HE HAD **COMPASSION** ON THEM,
BECAUSE THEY WERE LIKE
SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD.

HER NAME IS JANICE, AND SHE
WORKS AT THE BANK NEAR
WHERE WE USED TO LIVE.

WE CHATTED BRIEFLY WHEN
I WOULD BE IN HER LINE,
BUT I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW
HER WELL.

BUT ONE DAY I CAME IN
AND SOMETHING
SEEMED OFF.

JANICE WASN'T HERSELF.
SO I ASKED, "**ARE YOU OKAY?**"
SHE SAID "NO" AND BEGAN
TO WIPE TEARS
FROM HER EYES.

I SAID, "**WOULD YOU LIKE TO
TALK ABOUT IT?**"
SHE SAID, "YES," AND
I INVITED HER TO COME TO
MY OFFICE WHEN SHE GOT OFF WORK.

AT THIS POINT, I DIDN'T
NEED ANSWERS. IT WAS TWO
QUESTIONS THAT OPENED THE
DOOR TO WHAT HAPPENED
OVER THE COURSE OF THE
NEXT MONTH IN JANICES' LIFE.

SHE WAS SICK. THE TREATMENTS
WEREN'T GOING WELL. THERE WERE
FINANCIAL PROBLEMS AND A
RELATIONSHIP THAT WASN'T GOING WELL.

I LISTENED AS SHE TOLD HER STORY.
I NODDED AND SUMMARIZED
AND ASKED SOME MORE QUESTIONS
IN ORDER TO MAKE SURE THAT I UNDERSTOOD.

AND IT WAS BEING UNDERSTOOD THAT
OPENED JANICE UP TO A CONVERSATION
ABOUT JESUS AND WHO HE IS FOR HER.

I TOOK MY CUES FROM WHAT SHE TOLD
ME AND TALKED ABOUT JESUS AS

HEALER.
PROVIDER.

WE TALKED ABOUT FORGIVENESS,
AND SHE ASKED ME IF I WOULD
PRAY WITH HER.

A FEW WEEKS AND SEVERAL
CONVERSATIONS LATER, JANICE
BECAME A FOLLOWER OF JESUS,

AND ASKED HIM TO TAKE
CONTROL OF HER LIFE, WHICH
HAD BEEN SPINNING
OUT OF CONTROL.

JANICE WAS LIKE A SHEEP
WITHOUT A SHEPHERD BEFORE THAT.

WHAT SHE NEEDED WAS SOMEONE
TO LISTEN.

NOT SOMEONE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT
BIBLE VERSE THEY'RE GOING TO QUOTE
NEXT WHILE SHE'S TALKING, BUT
SOMEONE TO REALLY LISTEN.

IT DOESN'T TAKE A PASTOR TO DO THAT.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO MEMORIZE AN OUTLINE
TO DO THAT.

YOU JUST HAVE TO BE FULLY PRESENT.

IS IT POSSIBLE THAT WE COULD "LISTEN"
MORE PEOPLE INTO THE KINGDOM?

IT'S AN ACTION THAT PROJECTS

HUMILITY,
LOVE,
INTEREST,
ACCEPTANCE &
RESPECT.

PLEASE DON'T HEAR ME SAYING THAT IT'S
NOT IMPORTANT TO KNOW THE GOSPEL OR
TO MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE.

I'M SIMPLY SAYING THAT THOSE THINGS
MAY NOT BE THE KEY THAT OPENS UP
THE DOOR TO A PERSON'S HEART.

JESUS HAD **COMPASSION** ON THEM.
THE WORD LITERALLY MEANS, "TO FEEL WITH."
THAT'S HOW WE ENTER THE STORIES
OF PEOPLE WE MEET AND PRAY FOR.

IN OUR NETWORKED WORLD,
EVERYONE NOW HAS A PLATFORM,
AND EVERYONE'S VOICE IS VYING TO BE HEARD.

AT THIS VERY MOMENT, YOUR
TWITTER FEED,
EMAIL INBOX, &
FACEBOOK WALL
ARE OVERFLOWING WITH
ARTICLES,

EDITORIALS, &
OPINIONS.

WE'VE BECOME INUNDATED WITH INFORMATION, &
COMMUNICATION OVERLOAD HAS BECOME THE NORM.

WHAT ISN'T NORMAL THESE DAYS IS PEOPLE
QUIETLY,
ATTENTIVELY AND
SINCERELY LISTENING
TO SOMEONE TALK.
DOING SOMETHING SO COUNTERCULTURAL
MAKES AN INDELIBLE IMPACT.

DOING IT IN THE AUTHORITY AND POWER
OF JESUS CAN CHANGE A LIFE.

ONLY AFTER THE NOTICING AND LISTENING,
AND HAVING COMPASSION DID
JESUS TEACH THE CROWDS.

ONLY AFTER "FEELING WITH"
THEM ABOUT THEIR LIFE, *Having Compassion*,
DID HE PROCLAIM THE
GOOD NEWS OF GOD.

THE POINT, OF COURSE, IS THAT
BY THAT TIME, THEY WERE
OPEN, THEY
WERE READY
TO RECEIVE.

JUST LIKE JANICE.

SEE, THE TRUTH IS THAT GOD HAS
SOUGHT YOU OUT AND LISTENED TO YOU.

HE'S HEARD
YOUR JOYS AND SORROWS,
YOUR COMPLAINTS AND YOUR FEARS.

THROUGH JESUS' CROSS AND
RESURRECTION, HE'S MET
YOUR DEEPEST NEED.

HE'S MADE YOU PART OF HIS
FAMILY THROUGH BAPTISM, AND
PUT A WEB OF BELIEVERS AROUND
YOU WHO WILL SUPPORT AND
CARE FOR YOU IF YOU LET THEM.

AND NOW HE SENDS US TO
DO THE SAME FOR OTHERS.

WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE IF
EACH OF US INDIVIDUALLY,
AND ALL OF US TOGETHER
BEGAN TO NOTICE
WHAT'S HAPPENING
IN THE LIVES OF
THOSE AROUND US?

TO ASK.

TO LISTEN.
TO CARE.

I THINK THAT AS THE OLD HYMN
PUTS IT, HEARTS WOULD BEGIN TO
UNFOLD LIKE FLOWERS BEFORE THE LORD.

EACH OF US IS A CONDUIT
THAT JESUS CAN USE TO
MAKE THAT HAPPEN...
TO BRING PEOPLE TO HIM.

AND EVERY OCCASION IS
AN OPPORTUNITY, IN THE NAME OF JESUS.