

Digging Deeper: The Greater Meaning of Mark 6:34

Friday, October 23, 2026

“Well, on getting out, he saw a large crowd, and he was moved with pity for them, because they were as sheep without a shepherd. And he started to teach them many things.”
(Mark 6:34)

Jesus and his apostles were worn out and had “no leisure time even to eat a meal,” so they took a boat to an isolated place to rest. (Mark 6:31) But the crowd ran ahead and was waiting when they landed. The main point is that Jesus’ love moved him to give of himself even when he was tired. As the day’s text says, he found real joy in serving others, and thinking about that joy can strengthen our own desire to serve.

1 “Moved With Pity”: Feeling It Deep Inside (σπλαγχνίζομαι, *splag·khni'zo·mai*)

The Greek word σπλαγχνίζομαι (*splag·khni'zo·mai*) is related to the word for “intestines.” It describes a feeling so strong that a person feels it deep in the gut. The NWT study notes call it one of the strongest words in Greek for compassion.

So Jesus did not just put up with the crowd. When he saw them, something stirred inside him. Matthew describes the same feeling when Jesus saw people who were “skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matthew 9:36)

- Real service starts with really seeing people. When I look past the interruption to the person, my feelings can change too.

2 “Shepherd”: Someone to Care for the Sheep (ποιμήν, *poi·men'*)

The word for “shepherd” is ποιμήν (*poi·men'*), a person who herds, feeds, and protects sheep. Sheep without a shepherd are lost, hungry, and easy prey. Long before, Moses asked Jehovah for a leader “so that Jehovah’s assembly may not become like sheep that have no shepherd.” (Numbers 27:17)

Jesus saw that the people had been neglected by their religious leaders, and he stepped in to be the shepherd they needed. He said: “I am the fine shepherd; the fine shepherd surrenders his life in behalf of the sheep.” (John 10:11)

- Our brothers and sisters, and the people in our territory, still need someone who notices and cares. I can help fill that need.

3 “Teach”: Giving Them What They Needed Most (διδάσκω, *di·da'sko*)

The word “teach” is the Greek διδάσκω (*di·da'sko*), meaning to instruct or explain. Mark says Jesus “started to teach them many things.” He did not share one or two quick truths and send them off. As the day’s text points out, he kept teaching until “the hour had grown late.” (Mark 6:35)

Jesus knew the people’s deepest need was spiritual, so that is what he gave first. And he did it gladly, living out his own words: “There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.” (Acts 20:35)

- The best thing I can give someone is often my time and the truth from God’s Word, even when it costs me some rest.

Key Spiritual Reflections

- **Seeing the Need:** Who around me right now is like a sheep without a shepherd, and how could I show that person I care? (Mark 6:34)
- **Serving When Tired:** When I feel worn out, how can remembering Jesus' example help me still find a way to serve? (Mark 6:31)
- **Finding the Joy:** When was the last time I felt real happiness from giving, and how can I make room for more of that joy this week? (Acts 20:35)