

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 6: 30-44

Peace be with you, brothers and sisters, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it is time for us to read the Bible again; today we will continue to read Mark chapter 6, verses 30-44.

After Jesus completed the first stage of discipleship training, He sent out twelve disciples, two by two, making a total of six pairs. They went to preach, cast out demons, and heal the sick in the region of Galilee, and thus they truly became apostles. Because of their going out, the fame of Jesus spread, even shaking Herod the ruler of the Galilean region. Mark took this opportunity to describe how Herod killed John the Baptist, but the main focus of this chapter is still on Jesus sending out the disciples. Before sending them out, Jesus must have predetermined a time for the disciples to come back together to report their harvest to Him. This is somewhat similar to a final exam after the first stage of discipleship training.

Verse 30: "Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught."

The disciples gathered to Jesus at the appointed time. The Bible does not clearly tell us where this gathering took place, but based on the circumstances at that time, it is likely they returned to Capernaum because Capernaum was the center of Jesus' work in Galilee. They came together, and the disciples told Jesus everything they had done and taught. This was the disciples' first time being sent out, their first taste of the joy of working for God, and their first experience of the glory of working for God. I believe each disciple enthusiastically shared what they had done, and this phase of reporting probably took quite some time. However, Mark does not mention anything about their methods of preaching or the results of their preaching, which must have been guided by the Holy Spirit. This shows us that there is a great difference between doing heavenly work and earthly work. Most saints work in companies, so they are familiar with earthly work. Annual performance reports mostly focus on business results and the methods used to achieve them, so other colleagues can learn from them. But Jesus seems to not care about any of this. He doesn't care about your methods or your results. We can imagine that the methods used by these six teams must have been different.

Peter and Andrew, as a complementary team, must have had a plan and executed it, developing in a balanced way. James and John, being a highly homogeneous team, probably worked very efficiently. Thomas and Matthew's team may have reached out to the marginalized groups, those

often forgotten by others. Simon and Judas, the fervent ones, may have appealed to people's patriotism in their work. Their methods may have been different, but regardless of the method used, the important thing was to fit the team and effectively spread the gospel. This reminds us that Jesus wants to send each one of us, and what works for me may not work for you. Therefore, the method is not important; it can vary from person to person. What truly matters is delivering the message of the gospel through different methods to those who need it.

Similarly, Mark does not record the results at all. Because the disciples were simply messengers sent out, and what they preached was the gospel of Jesus Christ. If there were any results, it was because of the gospel, and those results should rightfully be attributed to the Lord Jesus. The messengers were just faithfully doing their duty. Too much emphasis on results can lead to comparison and competition. Those with poor results may feel disheartened and demotivated, while those with good results may become self-conceited and proud. Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, do not bring the performance-oriented mindset of the workplace into the church. The church is a living organism, and the growth of life cannot be quantified or measured with objective standards. We must recognize that the church is the body of Christ, and in a healthy body, every member should function fully. How can the eye compare itself with the hand? Or the mouth with the foot? May the Lord open our eyes, and let us all learn the acceptance of Jesus Christ. Jesus accepted and praised all six teams.

Verses 31-32: "And He said to them, 'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.' For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves."

However, there was no chance for rest in Capernaum, because they didn't even have time to eat. Therefore, Jesus wanted to take His disciples secretly to a deserted place in order to let them rest. In reality, Jesus knew very well that it was impossible to go secretly to the wilderness at this time because the crowds always followed wherever He went, and they kept increasing. Here we see the tender humanity of Jesus. Instead of taking the disciples by land, where the crowds would follow, Jesus took them onto a boat. A typical fishing boat at that time could probably only accommodate around ten people, so the crowds couldn't possibly follow.

Jesus intended to take the disciples to the wilderness near Bethsaida. Bethsaida was a city located on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, and to the east of Bethsaida, there was a wilderness area on a hillside, which was the place where Jesus wanted to take His disciples. Capernaum was only about eight kilometers away from Bethsaida, which would take about two hours on foot. Therefore, Jesus specifically took His disciples onto a boat so they could rest during the journey.

This time, as they boarded the boat and left Capernaum, Jesus began His second traveling missionary trip with His disciples.

Verses 33: "But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him."

When the people saw them boarding the boat, they surely would have asked where they were going. The disciples couldn't avoid answering, especially since some of those asking were genuinely following Jesus. As a result, when Jesus took His disciples to the wilderness east of Bethsaida, the news spread rapidly. Many people from different cities set out, all heading towards the wilderness east of Bethsaida. Mark's language is vivid; he says they "ran there on foot from all the cities," arriving ahead of Jesus and the disciples. Mark's use of the word "ran" vividly portrays the eagerness of the crowd—they were eager to hear Jesus preach, eager for Jesus to cast out demons and heal the sick. Therefore, they arrived at the wilderness east of Bethsaida ahead of Jesus.

The following is the well-known miracle of feeding the five thousand with five loaves and two fish. This event is recorded in all four Gospels: Matthew 14:13-21, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-5. Though all four Gospels record the event, each emphasizes different aspects, so the way it is narrated varies slightly. Each Gospel author places the same event in different contexts to highlight the truth they want to convey. Therefore, when reading the Scriptures, it's important to try to understand the author's perspective in order to grasp the truth they want to convey.

Among the four Gospels, only Mark provides detailed information about how the crowd came to the wilderness near Bethsaida. Jesus originally intended to take His disciples there to rest, with the intention of preparing for further travel. Their rest in Bethsaida marked the beginning of Jesus leading His disciples on the second traveling missionary trip. Mark's Gospel emphasizes Jesus' discipleship training—how Jesus, as God's servant, came to serve men. Similarly, Jesus trained His disciples to serve as God's servants to humanity. Thus, in Mark's account of the feeding of the five thousand, we focus on Jesus' discipleship training.

Verse 34: "And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things."

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The crowd had already gathered in the wilderness near Bethsaida. Jesus allowed His disciples to rest briefly on the boat before leading them down to the slopes of the wilderness. When He saw that the hills were already crowded with people, the Bible says, "Jesus was moved with compassion for them." Here we see that Jesus didn't intentionally plan to work, but when the crowd gathered around Him like sheep without a shepherd, Jesus immediately felt compassion for them and began teaching and providing for their needs.

The concept of Israelites being like sheep without a shepherd originated from Numbers 27:17, "lest the Lord's congregation be like sheep without a shepherd." The context here is when Moses was aging and struck the rock at Kadesh for the second time, which went against God's governing and prevented Moses from entering the Promised Land. Moses asked God to appoint someone else to lead the Israelites into the land, so they wouldn't be like sheep without a shepherd because sheep cannot survive without a shepherd. Therefore, God appointed Joshua to succeed Moses and lead the Israelites.

Among the four Gospels, only Mark adds this statement regarding the feeding of the five thousand. This implies that the twelve disciples were to continue Jesus' work of shepherding God's flock. Jesus' next task would be to teach and train His disciples how to shepherd God's flock.

Verses 35-36: "When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.'"

The day was already late, and Jesus was teaching the crowd in the wilderness. In Luke 9:11, it is mentioned that Jesus was speaking about the kingdom of God and healing those in need. Perhaps Jesus had been working for several hours by this time, and the disciples were by His side, learning from Him. As the sun was setting and the day was drawing to a close, the problem of feeding so many people in the wilderness became a significant issue. The disciples identified the problem and proposed a solution: dispersing the crowd so that each person could go to the surrounding villages and countryside to find food for themselves. This approach of decentralization, with everyone taking responsibility for themselves, reflects a common method of problem-solving in the world.

However, the crowd that had come seeking Jesus were like God's flock. Just as Moses had led the two million Israelites in the wilderness for forty years, faithfully providing them with manna and water by God's hand, this was the attitude a shepherd should have towards their flock. Dear brothers and sisters, while the world's approach may be for each person to take care of

themselves, in God's household, believers should look after each other's needs. Many churches gather for meals after Sunday services, providing opportunities for fellowship and sharing. How a church handles the provision of food can reflect whether it truly feels like a home. Many churches operate on a user-pay principle when it comes to meals. It's important for us to carefully consider whether this reflects the familial atmosphere that should exist in the church. When the disciples suggested dispersing the crowd to find food for themselves, Jesus personally taught and trained them on how to be good shepherds.

Verse 37: "But He answered and said to them, 'You give them something to eat.' And they said to Him, 'Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?'"

Here, it seems like Jesus is presenting the disciples with a challenge. With just a simple statement, Jesus tells the disciples, "You give them something to eat." The disciples seem to be trying to avoid the responsibility that a shepherd should bear, but Jesus doesn't let them off the hook. He urges them to figure it out because this is part of their training as Jesus' disciples. The disciples almost respond in a protesting tone, indicating that even if they were to use two hundred denarii to buy bread, it still wouldn't be enough for so many people. One denarii is one day's wage; two hundred denarii equivalent to about two hundred days' wages, which was a significant sum. Even if they had that much money to buy bread, it still wouldn't be sufficient. Jesus doesn't entertain their protests; He continues speaking.

Verse 38: "But He said to them, 'How many loaves do you have? Go and see.' And when they found out they said, 'Five, and two fish.'"

In response to Jesus' question, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see," it's essential to note that Jesus doesn't ask about what they lack but rather what they possess. Dear brothers and sisters, every saved saint has experiences with the Lord, some more, some less, and these experiences are like your five loaves and two fish. We should not forget what we have, nor should we underestimate it. When the disciples said they didn't have two hundred denarii, Jesus reminded them to go and see what they did have. Upon hearing Jesus' words, they went and assessed their resources. John 6:8-9 tells us that Andrew brought the five loaves and two fish from a little boy, who was perhaps not far from Jesus and overheard the conversation. There may have been other adults nearby who had more food than the boy, but they might have thought, "What difference will my little food make with so many people?" Hence, they didn't dare to speak up. Only this little boy, in his innocence, heard Jesus' words and promptly offered what he had,

willing to put forward his five loaves and two fish. Perhaps this food was prepared by his mother for him to eat on the way. The disciples then presented these five loaves and two fish to Jesus.

Verse 39-40: "Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties."

The disciples also didn't know what Jesus was going to do; they simply obeyed His commands. And in this simple obedience, they participated in a great miracle. God is a God of order; from the beginning, His creation followed a certain order, and now, Jesus performing miracles follows the same pattern. He first had the multitude sit down in groups. People usually came in groups, naturally forming clusters of acquaintances and friends. So, the disciples instructed them to sit down in groups, arranged in rows, with one hundred in each row and fifty in another. The multitude sat down along the hillside, filling it completely, yet in an orderly manner. Following Jesus' direction, the disciples organized the crowd accordingly.

Verse 41: "And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among them all."

The five loaves and two fish might have been barely enough for one child initially, but now, as Jesus took them and looked up to heaven to bless them, He was essentially entrusting them into the hands of the Father, adding His blessing. Then, He began by breaking the loaves and giving them to His disciples to distribute to the people. This distribution went on in an orderly manner, with each disciple passing the bread down the rows, and as it went, it multiplied abundantly.

Verse 42: "So they all ate and were filled."

In this miracle, the twelve disciples participated, and everyone present experienced it. They all ate and were satisfied. The five loaves and two fish, when held in their hands, were merely five loaves and two fish. But when surrendered into Jesus' hands, blessed, and broken, they were able to feed the multitude. The sequence is crucial here. In our own hands, the loaves and fish remain limited. Only when surrendered to Jesus, blessed by Him, and broken, can they satisfy the needs of the people. A loaf, if kept intact, remains just a loaf. But when broken, it can supply the needs of many. Eventually, everyone ate and was satisfied. Just as it was with material bread and fish at that time, the same principle applies to spiritual food today. Dear brothers and sisters,

every gathering of Christians is essentially a sharing of the five loaves and two fish. Our understanding of God's Word, represented by the loaves and fish, might seem insufficient individually. But if we are hesitant to share, the gathering may lack abundance. However, if everyone is willing to share what they have, no matter how little, and if it is blessed and broken by God, it can contribute to God's infinite abundance, satisfying the needs of everyone present. As a result, everyone will be spiritually nourished. Therefore, whenever we gather, we must not come empty-handed. We should at least bring our five loaves and two fish and be as generous as the child who offered them, sharing them with our brothers and sisters. In doing so, every gathering will be rich and fulfilling.

Verse 43: "And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish."

Material food should not be wasted, and neither should spiritual food. Jesus instructed His disciples to gather up the leftover food. Originally, there were only five loaves and two fish, but now they collected twelve baskets full of leftovers. Twelve is an eternal number, symbolizing that through breaking and sharing, the surplus we gather is far richer than what was initially offered, and this surplus can perpetually supply our needs, represented by the twelve baskets.

Verse 44: "Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men."

If we consider the inclusion of women and children, this miracle with the five loaves and two fish fed at least over ten thousand people, which is truly a great miracle and the first miracle in which the disciples participated. Jesus trained His disciples that as long as you are willing to offer up all that you have, through God's blessing and breaking, it can meet immense needs and still have plenty left over for the future. Dear brothers and sisters, such miracles continue to happen today, especially when every Christian comes together in gathering, willing to offer what they have prepared. It will surely be a spiritual feast, and what everyone experiences and enjoys always exceeds what we offer.

Let's pray: Lord, the miracle of the five loaves and two fish was not only a training for the twelve disciples but also a lesson for every one of Your children today. Help us not to underestimate what we have. If we faithfully offer all that we have, You will surely bless and break it to meet the needs of many. May every gathering in the church, whether on Sundays, in small group Bible studies, or prayer meetings, be turned into a sharing session of the five loaves and two fish. Because of everyone's willingness to offer what they have prepared, let the abundance of Jesus Christ be more than enough to meet the needs of each person. Bless my church with heavenly

abundance of provisions, so that every saint may have a rich harvest, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.