

Coming Into Focus: A Tale of Two Kings

Mark 6:14-52

Small Group Discussion Guide—2/10/2019

Fictional or real, who is the best example of a good king or leader you can think of (other than Jesus, of course!)? What makes them such a good example?

Read Mark 6:14-29

- We would expect that Herod, as King, would be a strong leader and set a good example for his people. What are at least three ways that we see in this passage Herod fails his people?
- In verse 20, we see a glimmer of hope that Herod might still turn to God. Yet just a few verses later, it is clear this is not the case. Is there a warning we can glean for ourselves from this fact?

Read Mark 6:30-44

- Imagine the emotional rollercoaster the disciples have been on – from performing miracles, to experiencing a devastating loss. How would you feel about Jesus's suggestion in verse 31?
- Jesus knows everything – he wouldn't have been surprised to find the crowds waiting for them, preventing their rest. Yet still he made the suggestion for rest to His disciples... why is that?
- Jesus has compassion on the crowds because “they were like sheep without a shepherd.” What are at least three ways we see Jesus being a good shepherd in this story?
- When the disciples ask Jesus to send the crowds away because it’s late and they need to eat, Jesus tells the disciples to give them something to eat. Why does he not just do it himself?
 - Has God ever asked you to do something when you didn’t think you had the ability/resources to do so? If so, how did it turn out?
- The disciples started this passage in a rough place – tired, emotionally spent, needing some rest. They wanted to get some peace, then they were wanting to send away the crowds, and were likely very hungry. How do you think they ended the day? After seeing God’s abundant provision, do you think they were filled again?
- Does God’s provision for the disciples give you any encouragement (v. 42)?

(If time permits) Read Psalm 23 and then see how many allusions you can find, in Mark 6, to Psalm 23.

- In what ways did Jesus here fulfill the expectation that God, the Good Shepherd, would come for his people? (Leaders: the ten elements of the “Good Shepherd” theme are listed on page 2 of this guide, for your reference).
- What other Old Testament allusions do you see in Mark 6:14-52? To what might they be pointing?

Bring it home:

- Are there any areas where you currently are experiencing hurt or injustice?
- Pastor Josh said on Sunday that Jesus processed his anger into grace. How does Jesus’s example in the wake of Herod’s evil help us understand how we can respond in our situations?
- Are there people needing God’s love that you can be teaching/feeding even in light of this injustice?

Pray as a group for one another, in response to what you have discussed today, asking God to overflow our cups, giving us the resources we need to face whatever comes our way this week.

From Kenneth Bailey's book, *The Good Shepherd: A Thousand-Year Journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament*.

All ten of the core aspects of the traditional story of the good shepherd appear (in some form) in Mark 6.

1. The good shepherd. Jesus accepted that role and fulfilled it.
2. The lost flock. On arrival at the distant shore (Mk 6: 34), Jesus had compassion on the lost flock who had no shepherd.
3. The bad shepherds. This theme intensifies here in Mark 6. Few shepherds of Israel were as bad as Herod (perhaps Ahab?).
4. The good host. As is clear in Psalm 23: 5 and assumed in Luke 15: 8-10, so here God/ Jesus prepares/ provides a meal.
5. The incarnation. Jesus takes up and fulfills the long-awaited role of the good shepherd who is described in Luke 15: 4-7. Here Jesus, the good shepherd, walks on stage and demonstrates his identity through what he does.
6. The price paid. Jesus gathers, teaches, organizes, feeds and leads the flock who is in the wilderness with no shepherd. In the process he proves himself to be the missing good shepherd, and at the same time he confronts Herod. Herod's response is unpredictable, and Jesus may pay a high price for this public confrontation. Is Herod retaliating in Luke 23: 11?
7. Repentance. Neither the Greek word metanoeō nor hints of the Hebrew word shuv appear in Mark 6. Yet a great crowd of people ran on foot around the northern end of the lake in order to be with Jesus. They were not passive. They came to him, listened to him, followed his commands to divide in groups and recline. At the end of the day they accepted his solution to the crisis with Herod and gave up their desire to "make him King" (Jn 6: 15). They remained obedient to the shepherd, who during the day had fed them and demonstrated great compassion for them. At his command they went home. They were "in the wilderness" and they "accepted to be led/ found." This acceptance is a crucial component in repentance as defined by Jesus (see Lk 15: 4-7).
8. Bad sheep. The disciples in the boat reflect the "bad sheep" aspect of the traditional story of the good shepherd. In spite of all that they witnessed, they fail to understand the identity of Jesus that was on display before them.
9. Celebration. This aspect of the story is assumed. The five thousand people "ate and were satisfied." Bread and fish constituted a good meal. For hungry Israel, bread and meat in the wilderness was surely a celebratory occasion. Was it any less so for the five thousand who were likewise fed in the wilderness?
10. The ending. The account of the great throng in the wilderness and the story of the high wind on the sea end with "goodness and mercy" for all. In the first instance the people go home reinforced by hours of teaching and a good meal. In the second, the wind ceases and the disciples (and Jesus) arrive safely on the distant shore.