

Bible study on Mark 6.30-34,53-56

Begin with an opening prayer

God, our loving Father,
who gently guides and leads us,
restore our souls today
as we come together today.
Let us not hurry, but sit at your feet,
gazing upon your lovely face.
Amen.

Read the passage

Consider different ways to read the text. For example, hearing it in more than one version of the Bible.

Explore and respond to the text

Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once, or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.

Bible notes

This week, the lectionary gives us two short pieces of text that are often overlooked because they are the connecting verses between more prominent stories. The Sea of Galilee is rather like a huge Scottish loch. If someone had access to a boat, it would be easy therefore to row or sail across to another place. Unfortunately, because of the hilly ground, anyone watching from the shore would also have a good view of your progress and could make a guess as to where you were going to land and so could make the journey on foot to greet you. This is what happened when Jesus took his disciples away to a quiet place to rest. The crowds got there before them. But Jesus has compassion for these people who are desperate to receive his teaching and guidance. However, he does take time to be alone when the crowds are gone – even sending his disciples away (6.45-46). The next time that the boat lands and Jesus walks on the shore, the same thing happens – many people rush to be near him and to ask him for healing.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

Jesus seems to have been recognised and followed by crowds wherever he went, with little time to rest or even eat on occasions. No wonder that Jesus' desire, for himself and his disciples, was to get away and have some 'me time' – even though his plans were somewhat thwarted. Busyness – with all its attendant stresses – is a common problem; for some, the idea of rest as a way of 'retreating to advance' is too counterintuitive. However, are we not in a better position to show compassion to others if we first look after ourselves? Anyone who has flown will have been told to put on their own oxygen mask before looking to assist anyone else – putting oneself first is not always the wrong thing to do. Where do we go to for our spiritual 'me time'? And do we seek rest when we most need it?

Questions for reflection

You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues of sharing.



- A scene of tranquillity, or a rush to get home before sun set, or... what do you see?
- How do you maintain a healthy balance between rushing and resting?
- What part does God play in achieving that balance?

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, that you always had time for people.
Even when you were tired and needed a rest,
when the crowds gathered your compassionate heart
healed and restored all those who came to you.
Thank you that you are kind and caring
and lavish your love upon us.
Your self-giving love has set us free
to be the people you have called us to be.

Thank you that you are present
in the big and small things of our lives,
in the ordinary and everyday times,
and in the extraordinary and special times.
You never leave us or forsake us.
Thank you, Lord, our Shepherd and King.
Amen.

A prayer to end the Bible study

O God, in Scripture
we read that you rested on the seventh day –
after all the busyness and work of creation;
and we read of Jesus' desire for his disciples to rest.
As your followers, your disciples, now,
and as we return to our busy lives,
may we know the rest you offer
every day of this week.
Amen.