



## Mark 6:30-34

**30 The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. 31 Then he said to them, 'You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while'; for there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. 32 So they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. 33 But people saw them going, and many could guess where; and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them. 34 So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length.**

Other readings: Jeremiah 23:1-6 Psalm 22 (23) Ephesians 2:13-18

The disciples have been sent out 'two by two' by Jesus in order to preach repentance and to heal the sick. After some time they return. While the evangelist normally refers to the followers of Jesus as 'disciples', those who are in the process of learning, as they return from their missions he calls them 'apostles', those sent out.

Jesus is concerned for their well-being and invites them to go with him to a lonely place in order to find peace and rest. It seems that the popularity of Jesus has influenced the mission of the disciples and that they too were in great demand. Their plan for some time of peace and quiet is frustrated. A crowd has already gathered at their destination. Mark speaks constantly in the early chapters of the gospel of the crowds who are eager for the words and works of Jesus.

This passage comes just before the multiplication of the loaves and fishes to feed the five thousand. Before giving them food to eat Jesus teaches them 'at some length'. We see anticipated in this chapter the two ways in which Jesus continues to feed us: by Word and Sacrament. All this is motivated by his compassion for the crowd who are 'like sheep without a shepherd'.

The image of the shepherd who cares for the real needs of the sheep is often used in Scripture for those who have responsibility to care for people. The prophet Jeremiah speaks of the shepherds, in this case the rulers, who let the flock be destroyed and scattered, and looks forward to the coming of true shepherds. The psalm speaks of the Lord as the perfect shepherd who sees to the needs of his people, and the reading from Ephesians speaks of Christ as 'the peace between us', who reconciles Jew and Gentile.

*Why is the image of the 'good shepherd' so popular?*

*How can we treasure more deeply the gifts of Word and Sacrament?*

*Let us pray for leaders who will have the good of their people as their priority.*

*Let us pray for those who are exhausted by ministering to others and can find no place of rest.*