

## 36 Mark 6:53-56 Ministry Method

### Text

53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore.  
54 And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him 55 and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was.  
56 And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

### Introduction

Christianity is not a religion, it is a business that is run professionally. Its success can be easily identified, as its directors, the pastors, move around in nothing but Mercedes-Benzes and designer three-piece suits, with expensive cellphones. Soon they will be in chauffeur-driven limousines.

This is a summary section. They describe in general terms the ministry of Jesus. Mark is not giving us a blow by blow account of the life of Jesus, there is just too much activity to record it all. Mark will sometimes just give us one account and then move on to another account. He will sometimes follow Jesus for a 24 hour period. He will sometimes embed one account inside of another account as we have seen. And sometimes he will circle at 30,000 feet and give us a summary account as he does in today's passage.

*53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore.*

They land at Gennesaret instead of Bethsaida; probably due to being blown off course. Gennesaret was a fertile stretch of land about three miles long and a mile wide. It is a place of amazing fertility. Josephus says that there was no plant that could not grow there. The trees would have a much longer fruit bearing season.

"The fruits of Gennesaret had such high reputation among the rabbis that they were not allowed in Jerusalem at the time of the feasts, lest any might be tempted to come merely for their enjoyment." (Neubauer, Geog. du Talmud, 45 f).

Land this fertile will naturally be well inhabited. It was a densely populated region. The disciples and Jesus land on this fertile section of Palestine and anchor their boat there.

### Tireless Activity

*54 And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him*

Here is a question, "How did they recognize him?" Because of his tireless activity. There was no photography back then. There was no Internet or TV or any other medium that people could recognize an individual. Perhaps over some period of time an individual may have been

commemorated by a statue or a painting or something like that. But for as short of a time as Jesus has been about his ministry there is only one way that people could recognize him - they have seen him before.

Jesus is constantly on the move. He is going from house to wilderness, from wilderness to synagogue, from synagogue to sea-side, from the east shore to the west shore to the north shore back to the west shore, from village to village, from mountain to sea, from Jewish regions to Gentile regions, Jesus is going everywhere. He is constantly active, teaching and healing in place after place. People know him because he is everywhere. People recognize him because he has made himself known. He has presented himself to people.

Everywhere Jesus goes he is ministering to people. This is very unlike the church today. We do not make ourselves known. We keep to ourselves and if people want to come to us that is ok, but we are not going to them. And if we do attempt to make ourselves known to others it is in a very different way from how Jesus did. Our propensity is to make ourselves known through some form of showmanship. Let us look back at what we have already seen in Mark and learn some lessons from Jesus.

## **Constant Movement**

Jesus was active. Idle hands do not glorify God. Spurgeon had nothing good to say about the lazy.

Many a parson buys or hires a sermon so that he may save himself the trouble of thinking. Is not this abominable laziness?...I wish all religious people would take this matter under their consideration, for some professors are amazingly lazy and make sad work for the tongues of the wicked. I think a godly plowman ought to be the best man in the field and let no team beat him.

Our children should know what it means to be busy. I do not in the least intend to make them grow up before their time, but I do intend that they grow up. I do not want to take away their childhood, but I do want to make sure that their childhood is not teaching them to be slothful. It is too easy to simply let children go do their own thing. We must play the part that God has given to us as parents to train them in what is right and to do right.

We should be setting the bar at our places of employment and as Spurgeon said the Christian plowman should "let no team beat him." We should be setting the standard because we work not for our employer first, but our Lord. Can we not, for the joy of His pleasure pick our feet up and be industrious in our activities? In this God will be glorified.

But more specific to where we are at as a body, what can we be doing different in light of Jesus' constant activity? Jesus never allowed Satan a moment of downtime to work doubt and fear in his mind.

## **Careful Prioritization**

Jesus prioritized. Family was important, but there was a definite limit to it. Food was important, sleep was important, but these were regularly passed up for teaching opportunities, ministering to

people's physical needs, and prayer. Good things can become bad things when we allow them to distract us from what we should be doing. Good things become bad things when they keep us from the best things. The priority that Jesus set on things is very different from the priority that we set. Let me make the bold suggestion that Jesus actually had it right. What does this therefore mean for us? What should we be doing different in light of this prioritization?

This is a difficult question to which to address ourselves. We must comb through scripture, understand the doctrine of marriage and assess the emphasis that it places on it. The same with parenting and family in general. We must resist constructing false dichotomies. Part of the problem may indeed be compartmentalization. As an example let's just take marriage and parenting. Both are important. Because of the level of needs that exist perhaps the bulk of the time is spent on parenting. But it is important to take those dates to focus specifically on your marriage. At the same time, are those date nights times that we are not parenting? I believe that part of parenting well is showing to you kids the importance of marriage. Personal or couples devotions are a thing unto themselves, but they also serve as a time of teaching by way of example regarding the importance of scripture reading.

By doing ministry as a family, or in front of family, we are also making it a time of teaching, a time of sharing, a time of corporate worship. We need take these roles that God has given to us, understand their proper functions, what they include and where the boundaries are.

## **Contra Procrastination**

Jesus did things right away. When people came to him for healing, he healed right away. When Jairus came asking for help with his daughter, Jesus left right away. There are times that Jesus will delay, specifically when he wants to make a more important point such as in the death of Lazarus. But his normal pattern is to act immediately.

If I may be so honest and serve as an example of this point, this is a big struggle of mine. I tend to procrastinate. I am always busy mind you. My procrastination is not combined with slothfulness. My time is definitely filled. The problem is that there are many things that would not take a long time which I put off until I have completed my more daunting tasks. However, these more daunting tasks usually take up the entire week so that at the end of it the week I have not accomplished the many small things because I put them off.

Perhaps this is a good point on which to draw the distinction between something that is urgent and something that is important. There are times when one thing may be the more important of two tasks but the less urgent. I may be having a good conversation with my wife when one of our kids drops a gallon of milk on the floor. My relationship with my wife is far more important to me than milk and messes, but at that point in time the milk is the more time-sensitive item, it is more urgent.

So structure your tasks in a way that can balance the important tasks with the urgent. Also structure your tasks so as to avoid procrastination. Again, this is where I fall too often. Those tasks that are neither weighty nor urgent are left undone week after week. Probably a area which most people fail on this point is on prayer. How often have you said that you will pray for someone and you never got around to it? Procrastination is not our friend.

It is because of this kind of ministry that Jesus becomes so well known. Obviously the miracles are a major factor here, don't misunderstand me. But the point remains that if Jesus only did it sporadically that would not have near the effect as an active, constant kind of ministry. Misplacing our priority so that certain ministries simply do not happen will be less effective than a well prioritized prayer-filled ministry.

## A Rapid Response

*55 and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was. 56 And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment.*

What did they do when they recognized him? They run about the region to find the sick and they bring them to Jesus. Notice that although Jesus is the focus of this text he is largely passive. The people are the ones coming to him. It is the people who find all the sick and bring them to Christ. It is the people that try to find him, keep up with him, and devise ways to touch him. As Jesus moved from place to place, so the people would move. With their sick ones on a bed people would come to a town where they heard Jesus was. Not finding him there they would search out where he went next so as to catch him.

As Jesus made his way into cities or towns the people would set the sick in the marketplace. The word for marketplace is *agorais* which is where we get the term agoraphobia, a fear of open places. Literally they would place the sick in the open places. This very often does mean market place, but it can be any open area. The ill would be set in the open places where they felt Jesus may walk.

This in no way takes away from everything that we have previously said. Jesus definitely did not take on a wait and see kind of ministry. He did not have a God-will-bring-them kind of approach. He was actively teaching and calling. All that said, part of the result of that kind of ministry is a self-growing kind of effect.

Once you have made yourself available people will start to avail themselves to you. Once you consistently demonstrate a genuine love and interest in a person, the more likely they will be to open up themselves.

## The Compassionate Result

*And as many as touched it were made well.*

What result came from this action? The people are made well. As wrong-headed as these people may have been, Jesus was still compassionate on them. As much as they continued to miss the point, still Jesus tended to these people. Even though they didn't get the point of all his teaching, still Jesus healed them.

I was just thinking about the role of science in the lives of the masses the other day. I was thinking specifically about global warming and the debate on whether it was caused by natural or man-made means. Is it still warming or is it now cooling? The scientific community was fairly together that it was warming and that it was a man-made phenomena. But more recently that opinion has begun to shift. An American Physical Society article slams the global warming fears

and especially the anthropogenic causes pretty hard. The supposed consensus is anything but a consensus.

I am going somewhere with this, I am not soapboxing. The point is that this and countless other discoveries have been overturned and will continue to be overturned, that is how science works. But people have been up in arms and tried to enact policies all on what may prove to be bunk science. Why are we so tolerant of a discipline that often gets things wrong? Why do we put so much weight in a discipline that often misleads us? The answer I came up with was that for all its failures, it does make advances. It learns from its mistakes and improves on them. The result is that mankind has benefited in very real ways on account of this discipline.

Let me now connect this with our text. Jesus was pleased to heal all of these people. He did not have to. There was nothing magical about touching him. But Jesus was pleased to heal people as they touched him with faith. People benefited in very real ways from Christ.

Christianity used to be like this. It is on account of Christianity that orphanages and hospitals were begun. We cannot perform miracles, but we can meet the very real needs of people. We can look out for the poor, for the widows, for the orphans. I am not talking about the felt needs that church wrongly pursue. I am talking about legitimate needs that people have in addition to the gospel. Jesus always taught gospel truths, but even in the face of a people that didn't truly believe, still Jesus helped.

There are a few exceptions obviously, but for the most part churches have long since abandoned this kind of compassion. Our ministry to others consists of concerts or plays or movies or some other form of entertainment. But that is not what God gave the church to the earth for. Real needs are of a different kind.

There are some serious limitations to what a small body can do. We cannot fund a hospital of course, but we can listen to problems. We can provide compassionate grace-filled biblical advice to those problems. We can take meals to those who need it. We can provide some clothing to those who need it. It may not be a lot but we can start somewhere. We may be able to open our home to those in need.

Let us go to our Lord to discover how he did ministry and try to emulate him. Let us be moldable in our practices.