



Provision of
Rest in the
Wilderness |
6:30-34



1. Before feeding of 5,000 and 4,000, Mark recounts withdraw to the wilderness.
2. It is appropriate for the disciples to report how they had fulfilled their ministries (missionaries in our day do the same. And indeed we will have to).
3. Only in Mark are disciples referred to as “apostles” referencing their function as missionaries (sent ones), not an official title.
4. Their collective activity caught the attention of large numbers of people who pursued after the disciples even as they had previously pursued Christ.

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5. Mark references the same word “desert” in vs. 31, 32 and 35. The promise of rest and provision in the wilderness reminds us of Moses and Joshua where God provided for them “in the wilderness”. The disciples here and the people later constitute a new exodus where the Lord will provide them with bread.
6. The withdrawal of people to the wilderness was in direct response to the ministry of the 12 - “many saw them . . . recognized them . . . followed them”. Mark shows that the provision of rest in the wilderness was ultimate intention behind the disciples’ call by Jesus.

“Sheep not having a shepherd” | 6:34 cf. Num 27:17 and Exek 34:5,



1. Num 27:17 Moses prays the Lord will appoint a leader prior to his death in the wilderness lest the people “be as sheep which have no shepherd”.
2. The shepherd appointed in answer to Moses’ prayer was Joshua, who in the Septuagint is “Jesus”.
3. Ezekiel 34 there is no shepherd for the sheep but God promises the coming of a faithful shepherd “my servant David” who will establish covenant of peace and people will “dwell securely in the wilderness”.
4. Mark paints Jesus onto background of these OT refs.
5. This is indispensable to understanding the coming feeding narratives. The time of rest in the wilderness comes when the Son of God establishes meal-fellowship with his people.

The Provision of Bread in the Wilderness | 6:35-44



1. Particularly significant in Mark (1) Elaborate introduction (30-34); (2) Extended dialogue with the disciples (35-38); (3) Subsequent references (6:52, 8:17-21); and (4) Its sequel in feeding of the 4,000 (8:1-10).
2. Significant because it uniquely reveals the dignity of Jesus as the Messiah.
3. The positioning of the story after the account of “King” Herod beheading John in the middle of a royal feast brings begs for contrast with Jesus, the true King, in the wilderness
 - Herod’s pretends to royalty while the people are as leaderless as sheep without a shepherd.
 - Herod’s drunken debauchery vs. the glory of God unveiled through abundant provision of bread in the wilderness with Jesus as Israel’s faithful Shepherd.

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Jesus orchestrates
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attention to the
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provision



1. The disciples see it immediately, calling attention to the lateness of the hour and the scarcity of food.
2. Yet Jesus insisted the disciples supply the food.
3. The disciples are astonished, even disrespectful, at the question “It would take a year’s wages! Are we to spend that much on bread and give it to them?”
4. The disciples didn’t have that kind of money, that much bread. They knew it, Jesus knew it.
5. Yet Jesus doubles down! “Go count your food reserves” Jesus orders. “Five – and two fish.”
6. Like Moses in the wilderness “Where shall I find meat to give to all these people? . . . Shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to satisfy them?” (Num 11:13, 22)

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Some questions from the passage



- *When have you even been made aware of a need? And you knew, you knew you had no ability to meet that need?*
- *But you were concerned about it so you prayed for God to meet that need?*
- *And then you heard God impress upon you that you were meet that need?*
- *And you argued with God that that need was way too big for you to handle?*
- *Yet your Lord kept saying “You meet that need”?*

Transforming desert into pasture, scarcity into plenty, reveals Jesus as the Messiah



- *Picturing the desert transformed, the sheep gathered and fed by the true Shepherd is anticipated by the prophets (Ezek 34:18-31).*
- *That’s where Jesus brings the disciples - to the end of themselves, face to face with their scarcity, their inability to minister. And then he opens his hands and reveals that he is the true Shepherd.*
- *He uses them (and us) to accomplish his provision.*
- *“Green grass” = wilderness turned into pastures where Christ becomes the true Shepherd.*
- *Jesus causing the people to sit down in groups also invokes this imagery (Psalm 23) just like Moses did when the Israelites first left Egypt (Ex 18:21).*

“They all ate and were satisfied”



- *Devout Jews always gave thanks before and after a meal. So Christ’s prayer here is to be expected.*
- *But the true object of this prayer is not the bread and the fish but the Lord himself.*
- *Jewish host would have looked down but Jesus looks up not only in praise but in reliance on the Father.*
- *The result, though not recounted how, is that man’s need and scarcity is fully satisfied in Christ.*
- *Jesus not only meets the needs of the people through the disciples, he meets the needs of the disciples themselves as they minister.*
- *This miracle recounts for us again the promise the Messiah will feast with men in the wilderness.*

The Lord of the Sea | 6:45-52



1. Second occasion Jesus demonstrates (4:35-41).
2. Some urgency prompts Jesus to dismiss his disciples. He retreats again to the wilderness unwilling to be the warrior-Messiah of popular expectations.
3. By the time Jesus finishes praying, the disciples are well out to sea. He meant to “pass their way” to reveal himself to the disciples as a wonderful expression of his presence.
4. Only Mark records their failure to understand about the loaves and that their hearts were hard. The problem of understanding is not intellectual, it is a matter of faith.
5. At this stage of Jesus’ ministry, the disciples were little better than Jesus’ opponents who also exhibited hardness of heart (3:5, 10:5).
6. This episode at an early date was recounted by martyrs as a pledge of Christ’s aid.