**Mark 6:30-44 July 18, 2021**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes from our Gospel lesson, Mark chapter 6 here re-reading these words. “The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while. For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.”

This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

There I was, sitting down to eat what I consider to be the best mushroom and swiss burger in the world at Nelson’s Landing in Leonardville, Kansas. Leonardville is a very small town that you would drive through on the way to Manhattan, Kansas the home of the Kansas State Wildcats, the larger hub of the North Central Kansas area. But Leonardville is, to be frank with you, a nothing town. There is nothing there but a gas station basically, and it’s not some big travel plaza, it’s nothing special. There was nothing there that is, until the town got their claim to fame, which was the fact that Jordy Nelson, the NFL wide receiver who won a Super Bowl with the Green Bay Packers came from that town. And his family owned and operated Nelson’s Landing, a restaurant, in tiny, desolate Leonardville, Kansas. So again, there I was, sitting down to enjoy a meal at Nelson’s Landing, and I look across the room and there he is, Jordy Nelson himself! It had finally happened! I’d eaten at Nelson’s landing before with my family, my wife’s family, with members of the church that I was serving, but Jordy was never there. Other times we had been there it was during the season and I assume he was playing in a game somewhere across the United States. But there he was, with his family, their food was there and he was eating a meal. This famous wide receiver in the NFL was in a small town, finally getting some rest from the cameras and the fans, and this was my chance to get his autograph or tell him how great of a football player he was. And I didn’t do anything. I didn’t even want to stare over at him, I just looked a few times to make sure it was really him, and I left him alone. I knew who he was, I knew he was a famous player, I knew that this was his family’s restaurant, I knew that he would host autograph signings to raise money and food for the community in the summer when he was home, but that’s not what he was doing that day, he didn’t come to be bothered, he came to rest and eat with his family. And I left him alone.

So is this story simply a means of me dropping Jordy Nelson’s name to make sure that you know that I experienced a celebrity sighting in my life? No, that’s not why I tell you about my experience seeing Jordy Nelson. I bring it up because of how amazing this miracle of Jesus is here in Mark chapter 6, and how we brush right past it and get to the “good stuff”: The feeding of the 5000. We spent extra time re-reading the words of the first part of this particular section of Scripture because it could be a standalone section and miracle in itself. You could take away the loaves and the fish and the collection afterwards of the twelve baskets. We focus on that part of the story because it’s exciting, we put ourselves in their position and wonder what it would be like to witness such a miracle of food multiplying before our very eyes and we see the omnipotent power of God showcased in such a famous way. But for today, I want to focus on another miracle, one that is completely foreign to us in our lives, and yet still speaks to why Jesus multiplied the loaves and the fish, and why Jesus was there in that desolate place at all.

I didn’t want to approach and talk to Jordy Nelson that day because he was resting, he didn’t go there to sign autographs or meet some guy who was a Pastor in a town about 30 min. away. If there’s one thing that I’ve learned when it comes to talking to famous people, it’s that you do it on their terms. They want to talk to you and meet you at autograph signings, meet and greet events at conventions or promotional events for upcoming projects. They are happy to sign autographs outside of the studio or the ballpark or the stadium, places you would expect to find them. They will even in our day and age, for a price of course, make personal videos for you or a loved one on a site called cameo. But it’s all under their control. They will talk to you or give you what you want on their terms. What they don’t want is for you to show up outside their house, or their hotel, or the worst place, the most desolate place I can think of, walking through an airport. They don’t want to be bothered at 2:00 a.m. as they are making their way through an airport, and they are tired, and they are angry, and now they have to deal with people who want things from them.

Well, think about Jesus and the apostles at this point in His ministry. They were coming back after being sent out and had amazing stories of what God had done through them. Jesus knew these men needed to rest, so they were heading for a place where they wouldn’t run into anyone. It’s the same reason someone would go swimming at 7:00 a.m. on a Monday. You pick a place and a time when no one else would be there. They were trying to get away because they were so busy they couldn’t even sit down and eat. They get in the boat and go somewhere desolate, meaning no place to buy food, and no reason anyone else would be there. And when they arrive, they see a crowd of more than 5000 people. Now put yourselves in their shoes. What would be your response to this crowd thinking that after all that they had been doing for them over these past few months that now would be the best time for Jesus and the apostles to continue to teach them, heal them, help them and do more things for them? How was the miracle not Jesus magically teleporting them all back to their homes and putting up some kind of barrier around them so that they could finally rest? Give these guys a break! Let them have just a few days to get their batteries recharged before they head back out.

But that’s where the miracle comes in that we completely brush over when we read this text. Because the heading is always the feeding of the 5000, but the context of this miracle is that Jesus and his apostles have gone to a completely desolate place, and over 5000 people are there, and Jesus sees them, desperate, clingy, needy, they have followed them to their place of rest! He should be livid and angry and tired and lash out at them, and yet, he miraculously sees them, and has compassion on them, for they are as sheep without a shepherd, and he starts to teach them **many** things. Not a few lessons, a few healings, a few exorcisms, enough to placate them and drive them away. He teaches them **many** things. He moves out of rest mode and goes right back into teacher mode, like being called into work right after working a double shift. He’s back on the job.

And that’s God’s love for us His people, His children, His flock. But the challenge that I see in this particular section of Holy Scripture is illustrated in two ways, and two traps that we fall into as God’s people. On the one hand, we in our lives today are in the same state as the crowd who travel to the desolate place to see Jesus and his apostles. We are in such great need of forgiveness, of teaching, of the peace that only God can give through His Son Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts that makes sense of what Christ is teaching us through His Word. But the traps we fall into are that we don’t seek out His teaching at all. We stay away. We don’t seek him in the desolate places, we don’t seek him in the well known places! It’s not like Jesus is hiding in our world today He’s everywhere! He’s at your house, He’s on your phone, He’s got a house of worship in just about every town you may travel to in and around the State of Michigan! He’s set up a house of worship right here where you know you will find him, it’s not like you have to wonder if God is here at Church this morning, this is the very place we come to worship Him, hear from His Word, and receive His Sacraments. He isn’t hiding, He isn’t gone, we don’t have to travel around hoping to find him somewhere. But we don’t seek him at all. We’re too busy, too distracted, too caught up seeking after something else, going to the ends of the earth and the desolate places for others, but not even willing to go to the very house of God that exists right in our own town.

Our neglect is one trap, but the other is what I was trying to speak about at the very beginning of our message this morning. What we see here in our Gospel lesson is that Jesus Christ has compassion and love to all those who call upon him in their trouble. He isn’t like us, who when we are tired, and worn down, and faced with those who want something from us lash out in anger and drive them away. But when we assume that something we are facing or going through isn’t worth praying about, or talking to me, your pastor about, or seeking help for from others in your life, that’s when we fall into the other trap. These people went into this desolate place seeking help, seeking teaching, but we shy away from finding help for the things that plague us because we don’t want to bother anyone. Like seeing a celebrity out in public and not wanting to bother them because it’s not an autograph signing, or a scheduled event, we neglect the care that God gives. We don’t want to bother anyone with the fact that we are hurting, and worn down, and need someone to pray with us, and talk to us, and help us. We don’t want to appear weak, we don’t want to bring someone else down with our problems, we are afraid someone won’t care or they will lash out at us in anger for inconveniencing them. And so we silently suffer.

Jesus sees them, and has compassion on them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he teaches them many things. There is no too tired for Jesus Christ. There is no too busy for Jesus Christ. There is no lashing out at you in anger or frustration with Jesus Christ. He is there for you when you call upon him in prayer. He has sent me, your pastor, to be there for you in times of need, to pray with you, to sing hymns with you, to take the love of Jesus Christ, that we see in His Word and remind you of that in the good times and the bad. He has given you your brothers and sisters in Christ to uplift you, and help you, and bring you the things you need in your time of trouble, whether it be a cup of coffee and a good conversation, or the bread that we need to survive in the form of a meal when times are tough and it’s hard to find time to make your own food to eat. That’s the real miracle of this lesson, not just the multiplication of food, but that God’s love doesn’t end. His compassion overflows for us who are in need and He continues to teach us many things when we need him the most, no matter what.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.