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*What it means for us to follow the Good Shepherd*

– Mark 6: 30-46; Jeremiah 23:1-6

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- In OT, leaders religious or political were often described as *shepherds* of God’s people. All were far from perfect & disappointed but Jesus, *the Lord, our righteous Saviour*, when He did come, described himself as *the Good Shepherd, who calls all of their flock by name and willing to give His life for us*. For past 30 years, I’ve been called “Rev. ”, “Minister”, “priest”, “padre”, “vicar”, “pastor” - and other names too! Personally, I’m not to be revered but am happy to be “*minister*” – literally someone who serves, a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ & of other people in His name, a *priest* or go-between who prays for others and seeks to bring them to our Lord; *pastor or shepherd* who seeks to share truth and love of Jesus, to rescue the lost, to feed & teach them with God’s Word in the Bible, and to care for them. An “*under-shepherd of God’s flock that is under my care*” serving the Lord Jesus Christ, *until the Chief Shepherd appears*. (1 Peter 5: 1-11)
- As disciples / apprentices, learners of the Master, what can we learn from our Gospel reading - from the example of Jesus?
- **Making time for rest, refreshment & renewal:** Jesus said to His disciples, *Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest*. . & note in v. 46 – after a full days teaching and then His miraculous feeding of the large crowd – 5000 men plus..., *He went up on a mountainside – not because it He wanted to climb & more exercise but because He wanted to be alone with God the Father to pray*. Jesus sees rest and prayer and food as vital for Himself and for His disciples, then and now.
- When Jesus saw a large crowd, v. 34 - *He had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things*.  
**Compassion:** a great words that means **not** *pity* or *looking down on* those in need but *suffering with/alongside*
  - a) –**Compassion so teaching** – sharing truth and love of God.  
.... Do we hold back on passing on the good news of Jesus?
  - b) **But compassion also for material needs**—& told disciples *You give them something to eat Let Jesus use & bless the resources we can bring cf. also Mark 8:1-3 I have compassion for these people for they have been with me 3 days and have had nothing to eat*. And Jesus’ response, don’t send them away but—*you - not someone else- give them something to eat. How? You see what resources you do have & bring it to me*. Blueprint for approaching practical needs & problems in our own community today.
- **Jesus had taken a risk with His disciples sending them out to preach. Maybe it had back-fired but He still helped them learn by doing so.**  
Let me explain:..

- When they had returned from their first training mission, the apostles were so excited & thought it had been a great success (Luke 10:17-18) but it had had an undesired effect: suddenly, all over Galilee, there was such a buzz of activity that Herod got quite worried.

Jesus wanted to take his apostles away for a rest & for some peace & quiet, .....but they were met by an army of 5000 – & that was the last thing He wanted! If the 12 had caused all this, what had they been doing?

Perhaps, they took his message as He directed but had preached their own unchanged ideas – His text, their sermon: the Kingdom of God is at hand and *and we have found the Messiah.*

All Jews had been taught that Messiah would lead an army.

If they did proclaim their ideas and not His, .....their dreams not His, their kingdom not His, no wonder the crowds came flocking!

This is just guesswork but over the years, too many of His heralds have used Jesus' words as peg on which to hang their own unchanged ideas.

Perhaps then, at that stage the apostles hadn't really listened to Him but jumped to their own conclusions. I've done it myself; & suffered it in others too often also.

- It is so easy to be called by Christ's name
  - . but not really listen to what He says, or think through the implications
  - .....and still cling to our old unchanged ideas.

Why may we have been so reluctant to give responsibilities to younger or new people ..or to consider new ways of being church and reaching out with an unchanging Gospel?

May words of John Bell's song be our prayer also:

**Take, oh take me as I am;**

Take, oh take me as I am;

Summon out what I shall be;

Set your seal upon my heart

And live in me.