

# WEEKLY SERMON

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## Adrift, with our Shepherd

It's hard to read *Mark 6.30-34* without feeling real empathy for the disciples, who are all over the place. They're returning from their great commission, and are completely exhausted. Imagine the setbacks, the moments on the road of 'I can't believe he's told us to do this' after nights of vulnerability and hunger, with days to go before reaching their destinations. The desperate attempts to remain faithful, in the middle of danger and hardship; trusting, in the centre of confusion and exhaustion.

We know those feelings well. Any excitement we might feel for the coming months is sewn through with worries for our vulnerable loved ones (or even ourselves), the grief, fear and rage of the last 18 months, the tensions and complications that have crept into every area of life - even anxieties for the future of the Church and our places in it. No leisure, even to eat – even to find nourishment. We wait, along with the disciples on the boat, the promise of respite looming bright, only to see the crowds of people waiting on the shore. Hope looms, only to be snatched away weeks, days, hours later. We are all so, so tired.

What follows in the Gospel is assuring, calming. Jesus notes that they – the crowd? The disciples? Both, surely? – are like 'sheep without a shepherd'. He has compassion on everyone he can see - the shattered, the weeping, the terrified, the aching, the desperate. They have nothing left. They have come to throw that nothing at his feet, hoping somehow that He can take that nothing and transform it into something. And He can. The Christ who dies on the cross, in the trough of human depravity, elevates that void of life into the infinity of new creation, the new heaven and new earth to come. He lifts the burden of those before him and carries it while they rest, heal, cling to him.

It's alright if, right now, that's all we can do as well; if all we have is our nothing. Our total emptiness forces us to lay down what weighs us and really, truly, cast ourselves on the mercy of the only one that can carry such weight. He is still at work, even here, even now. He makes great good come out of the deepest dark. Whatever it looks like, let yourself be shepherded a while.

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