

The Role of Teaching In the Work of Shepherding

Mark 6:34

Introduction:

1. John the Baptist had just been executed.
2. Jesus' apostles gathered together with Him and reported what they had done and taught.
3. They attempted to get away in seclusion by traveling the Sea of Galilee in a boat, but the people saw them and went on ahead on foot.
4. Verse 34 says, "When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things."
5. I want to talk with you for a few minutes about the teaching responsibility of shepherds. Observe that Jesus, described as "the Good Shepherd" in Jn. 10, "Felt compassion for the people because they were like sheep without a shepherd." He responded by "teaching them many things."

Discussion:

I. It is pretty obvious in this context that the people appeared disoriented and unorganized in this circumstance.

- A. Jesus felt compassion for them.
 1. This is an appropriate response.
 2. Compassion is the appropriate response when we see people in desperate circumstances and confused.
 3. It is the response commended in the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30ff).
- B. Most recognize that this is the appropriate response. When tragedy occurs, earthquake, flood, fire, good people respond with compassion. It is neighborly to show mercy. It is godly to respond in compassion. That's what God did in light of our sin.
- C. Looting, taking advantage of people experiencing tragedy is certainly not appropriate. It is devilish in the worst way. Ignoring their circumstances is not much better.

II. The imagery of shepherding is common in Scripture. Bringing it to bear in this situation gives us insight into the nature and responsibility of shepherding.

- A. It is a work of compassion but Israel's shepherds had failed to exercise compassion.
 1. Ezek. 34:1-10 describes their failure.
 2. God would send His shepherd (Ezek. 34:11-31).
 3. Jesus is the shepherd God sent and is the model for us.
- B. Shepherding is a work of giving direction.
 1. Jesus spoke of the blind leading the blind as a tragedy (Matt. 15:14).

2. He spoke of light and direction (Matt. 6:22-23).
 3. He came to bring enlightenment, even describing Himself as the Light of the World (Jn. 8:12-13; 9:39-41).
 4. Paul spoke of those who were not in darkness (1 Thess. 5:4-11).
- C. What we are experiencing from Jesus in Mk. 6:34 is reflective of who He is as the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10). It is reflective of who God is and is to be reflective of who we are as the children of God. Our evangelist efforts should not be designed to gloat over the calamity of others. They should not be characterized by hypocritical or hypercritical judgments (Matt. 7:1-5).

III. When Jesus saw that they were like sheep without a shepherd He began to teach them many things.

- A. Good shepherds know the way.
1. It is not because they are better, or more intelligent. They know the way because it has been revealed to them by God. Like Moses, they are informed by God (Ex. 18:15-23).
 2. Good shepherds are students of the word of God.
 3. Those who would aspire to the office of shepherd in the church must first be students of the word of God.
- B. Good shepherds teach.
1. The Lord's sheep hear His voice (Jn. 10:5, 25-29). There is a sense in which they are both sheep and shepherds.
 2. They are able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2). Sometimes I think we assume that this means "expert in methods of teaching." The account in Titus 1:9 would seem to stress their commitment to the word of God. It says, "Holding fast the faithful word; able to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict." Maybe it is less about effective methodology and more about content.
 3. There is a sense in which all the people of God are both sheep and shepherds (2 Tim. 2:2).
- C. There are many ways to manifest compassion, but none greater than teaching the way of the Lord.
1. It is what we need to give our lives to (2 Tim. 3:10-14; 4:1-5). It is what Jesus gave His life for (Jn. 10).
 2. When we shy away from teaching (our children, our friends, our fellow Christians, others) the devil deals a powerful blow. We need to confront Him with the words of life shared and taught so that the people will no longer be scattered, disoriented and lost.

Conclusion:

1. Will you enhance your efforts in teaching? Do not look around and say, "Another is more effective than me. Look around and say, "They are like sheep without a shepherd, I will teach them."
2. Will you confront your hesitations by studying and being an effective student? Depend less on yourself and more on the Word of God.
3. Will you be more compassionate and step forward rather than away from the responsibility of shepherding?