**Mark 6:30-34 30The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and taught. 31He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.” For there were so many people coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat. 32They went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. 33But many people saw them leave and knew where they were going. They ran there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. 34When Jesus stepped out of the boat, he saw a large crowd. His heart went out to them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He began to teach them many things.**

Compassion is unusual. Kicking people when they are down is more acceptable. It’s why taunting and showboating right after an accomplishment is important. Its why people will seek praise for what they have done. No one wants to come off as weak or show where they need help. For this reason, people hide their sins and don’t want to talk about them. Rather than being helpful when another has a need, we view them as something to hold over them or at least bring up at another time. Where do we learn about compassion?

Compassion is unusual and a Godlike attribute. We all have heard about compassion but let’s look at what compassion is. It is more than a feeling sorry for someone, more than caring for someone. It is much more than trying empathize and sympathize with someone’s need. Compassion is actually taking in and carrying the hurt/pain of what someone else experiences or lives. Compassion is sitting with a friend, having his pain in you.

Compassion is what Jesus had for the crowds at the Sea of Galilee. The disciples had come back from one of their earliest mission trips. They were full of excitement and eagerly informed Jesus of what God accomplished through them. Fulfilling work but also exhausting work. Their work of proclaiming Jesus with the witness as they also were able to drive out demons and heal the sick meant people were now also coming to the disciples. So many needy people meant no time for prayer, no time to relax and listen just to Jesus, no time to relax, no time even to eat. They knew the rat race. The speed and pressure of live made compassion a lesson the disciples needed to learn. And Jesus shows his first peek when **He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.”** So, the disciples and Jesus set out for a much need rest.

Launching their boat, they sought to leave the crowds behind to be alone. It was designed to slow down their life and give them a break from needing to help all those people. It would have worked. Except the Sea of Galilee isn’t really that big—only 8 by 13 miles. We normally think it’s much bigger. But it’s relatively small. People on the shore can easily track a boat as it sails to a different spot. With quick feet they are able to beat the boat to the next dock.

Imagine getting to that other shore. A great crowd is already there and the numbers are growing. There’s going to be about 10,000 people. 10,000 with eager, expecting, hope-filled, excited faces. They don’t know what is going to happen but they know that each day with Jesus around something happens: teaching, healing, free food. Jesus, tired Jesus, mourning Jesus, worn-out Jesus, had compassion on those people. He doesn’t say come back another day. He doesn’t push the boat out and set sail for another place. Jesus has compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

Points to consider as an individual or with a small group:

* List three reasons Jesus could have given to avoid the crowd. (You may want to read Mark 6:1-29 to help you come up with reasons.)
* How do those reasons help point out areas where you are able to grow in showing compassion?

Lack of good shepherding had led these people to falling into a need. They didn’t know where to turn and, in their confusion, they had been following and trying out possible sources of guidance and help. They tried such things as resting their hopes on their powerful Roman government and on the endless list of dos and don’ts of the Pharisees. They felt their needs. They lived their needs. There primary need was for compassionate leadership. They needed Jesus to be their leader.

God’s leaderless people were in pain. Think of the pain Jesus saw as he looked into those hearts. The Lord of love felt it in his guts on the mothers who had buried infant children. He was touched by the widows and widowers mourning the loss of a lifetime companion. He felt the sadness of the man whose business was failing, the father whose children had wandered, the teen looking for a place in life, the brokenhearted. The Savior felt the pain of those lives ruined by wagging tongues, of the hearts that just wouldn’t forgive, of those whose days had been misspent and misled. Jesus felt, Jesus had compassion, on them all.

Jesus also has compassion on us. He carries our pain in his heart. God searches for sinners who are have gone astray and those that are still astray. God has compassion because he feels the need. God has compassion not because people deserve it. not because they have earned it. God has compassion because he had their pain in his heart.

Those 10,000 people only serve as a small subset of the people God has compassion for today. How many people aren’t in the world that need Jesus? Jesus didn’t feel only pain for those 10,000. Jesus has compassion for each person, for you. Jesus’ feeling your pain is the reason he lived his life as your substitute. Jesus’ feeling your pain is the reason he took your sins to the cross and died. Jesus showed compassion when he called you by name and made you a member of his family. Jesus showed compassion when he promised to be with, to never forsake you, to listen to your prayers. Jesus shows his compassion each day and he shepherds you. All these things Jesus does for the needy. He sees how totally and absolutely lost you are without him.

What burden do you carry today? I can’t see the pain each of you has within. But we all carry pain because we are sinful. Jesus knows your pain and his heart goes out to you. He knows those hidden hearts, those wounds you keep secret from everyone. He knows and has compassion on you. He wishes to heal all those hurts. They are important to him. Don’t think they are too large for his power to conquer. He who has dealt with death and won eternal life for sinners can conquer your problems as well. Don’t think your problems are too small or things you should be able to handle yourself. Large or small, Jesus has your pain in his heart. Large or small, Jesus has compassion for you.

As Jesus step out of the boat to get back to work rather than rest, he showed the disciples what a large part of their life following him would be—having compassion on others. What an easy thing to say but difficult to do. Compassion is not a quality people admire. If we are to show compassion like the Savior, it will happen only when we are motivated by God’s grace shown to us. Jesus’ Spirit give us the courage to care as he did. Only acting out of faith and trust in Jesus, will wee get rid of our secret stores of indifference and items we hold against others. Our faith leads us to serve when indifference would find an excuse. Like Jesus, we realize that those who deserve compassion the least need it the most.

Compassion is only found where faith is present. The reason compassion is displayed is that a Savior guides that person. Unbelievers are still like sheep without a shepherd. You believers are the ones who can introduce them to that Shepherd. Friends in Christ, we all know people who are sad that the world—without the Shepherd—is going to hell. We all know people who love Jesus. Until sadness for the world and love for Jesus come together in a compassionate individual and a caring church, the world and the lost souls in it are likely to remain the same. I don’t want that. Nor do you. Let’s use Christ’s power and deal compassionately with a world of people who are sheep without a Shepherd. Amen.

Points to consider as an individual or with a small group:

* Define: compassion.
* What makes faith vital when it comes to showing compassion?
* What gets in the way of being compassionate?