

All right. Good morning church. It's good to see you all. Pastor Josh and Pastor Wes are out. They are at a conference right now. I pray they're having a good time, but I will be stepping in to preach today in their place. And we will actually be continuing in Mark. I'll go ahead and have you all turn there. We'll be in Mark chapter 6. I hope you're getting a little bit of feedback there. It'll be in Mark chapter 6. And I would say at the outset that I'm very blessed to have been able to spend the time I have been in this passage. I have learned much through it. There actually was a lot of back and forth between me and Josh my upcoming day where I was gonna preach, because we as a body had encountered so much sickness that as we kept canceling service, the text that I would preach kept getting shifted up and shifted up. And originally I had a text much later in Mark chapter six, and then I had the, miracle event of Jesus walking on water, which I was very excited for, and then the sickness hit again, and I was very disappointed. But then I saw that I was also covering the feeding of the 5,000, and my excitement was rekindled. The reason I'm particularly excited about this text is because there are many miracles and words and works of Jesus that aren't recorded in every single gospel. You'll find some in John, some in Luke, some in Mark and Matthew, The feeding of the 5,000 is an event that is covered in all four Gospels. It is that significant of a text. And I'm blessed to be able to bring the Word to you all today to go through this text together. I'll invite you all to stand again for the reading of God's Word. We'll be in Mark chapter 6, starting in verse 30. 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 a boat to a desolate place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognizing them, and they ran there, recognizing them, 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. And when it grew late, When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, this is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat. But he answered them, you give them something to eat. And they said to him, my apologies for the feedback, guys. And they said to him, shall we go and buy 200 denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat? And he said to them, how many loaves do you have? Go and see. And when they had found out, they said, five and two fish. Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat

down in groups by hundreds and by fifties and taking the five loaves and the two fish. He looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples. no you're fine and gave him to the disciples to set before the people he divided the two fish among them all and they all ate and were satisfied and they took up 12 baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish and those who ate the loaves were 5,000 men this is the reading of God's Word you may be seated let's pray together Dear Heavenly Father, Gracious Father, we thank you, Lord, for this day. We thank you, Lord, for the body and the ability to gather together to hear your word, to give you praise and honor. We pray this day, Lord, that you would be glorified in the preaching, that you'd be glorified in the hearts of the flock here today. We pray, Lord, that you would clear away any distractions or nerves. We pray, Lord, that your word would be faithfully taught and by your spirit you would help me to do that. Ultimately, Lord, we look to you for this. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. I'm actually gonna try to back this pulpit up and just see if maybe distance from the speaker will cut that feedback out. I apologize for that, everybody. All right. Well, so first thing you might've noticed is that we actually picked up two verses from the sermon last week. Josh ended last week's sermon with the account of John the Baptist with the apostles returning from their missionary trip. And Josh did a phenomenal job of teaching about the rest in the wilderness. And we're not gonna repeat what he said today. I'm just taking up those two verses again, just so we can establish some important context to our passage today. But what we're going to do for our text today, how we're going to approach this, is I'm gonna walk through this text, keeping primarily in Mark, but since Mark is part of the Gospels that are meant to be seen together, with Matthew and Luke. I'm actually blanking on the name for that. Synoptic Gospels. That's it. The Synoptic Gospels. They are the Gospels that are meant to be seen together. Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And each of these Gospels actually adds their own commentary and adds an extra layer to this text. And so we're going to be making our home and mark for this passage, but we're going to be visiting other Gospels briefly as we go along. And what we're gonna do after we walk through the text is we're going to actually highlight the Old Testament background to this text and apply it. And the reason we're gonna approach that today is because with all of Jesus' miracles, there is always an anchor for them in the Old Testament. They all have an Old Testament significance with a heavenly implication. And so what we're gonna do as we apply this text is we're gonna look at the Old Testament background and see how it's being taught to the disciples. So that is our roadmap, that's how we are going to approach

this, and we can begin. For our first point, we have a shepherdless flock, looking at verses 33 and 34. So the 12 disciples had just returned from their missionary journey. They were sent by Christ to carry the message of Christ, the gospel of the kingdom of God. They were given the authority to do the miracles that authenticated that message, and they were sent throughout the nation of Israel. They were given the authority to raise the dead, to heal the sick, to cast out demons. And we're not given as detail of a commentary on this sending out as we have in Matthew, for example. We know right away that this journey was a very hard and difficult journey for the disciples. Jesus had sent them out with no extra food, no money, no clothes, and they had to rely upon the provision from people who would receive them. And Jesus had told them that not every single one would receive them. And though in the Matthew account Jesus gives some extra commentary and he speaks about the persecution they will endure, it's hard to actually give a comment if that is actually speaking of this specific trip or if Jesus is referring to future times where they will be persecuted. Jesus brings up the future coming of the judgment of Jerusalem. And that's why it makes it difficult to say what all transpired in this missionary journey. We know the disciples had come back and they had done great and mighty works. But clearly here the disciples were spent and they needed rest. The disciples had gotten a good strong dose of what it is to bear the toils and the burdens of Christ's ministry. They performed the same miracles that he did. They carried the same message. And like Jesus, they went from town to town by foot, relying solely on the provision of God to provide for them. So what Jesus does is he invites them to rest. He invites them to come away to a desolate place and rest a while. See, Jesus is a very faithful and kind high priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses. And Jesus of all people understands the burden and the weight they carry from the ministry they just engaged in. So the disciples needed rest. And we actually get a bit of a comical event happened here in verse 33. See, back in Mark chapter one, Jesus likewise had gone to rest in a desolate place, and because of the crowd, he was interrupted. And now we see the disciples, who had just gotten a good taste of Jesus' ministry, are now getting the same treatment. They were invited to go rest in a desolate place, and the crowd interrupted them. See, ever since Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit at the synagogue in Capernaum, His earthly ministry has been shadowed by a great multitude with a host of needs. And though Jesus has intentionally made his ministry public, he has made it known, doing that has come with a cost. In Mark 1, we saw the entire crowd. At nighttime, the entire crowd

was gathered outside the door of Simon and Andrew's house. Jesus spent a whole day doing ministry, doing miracles, and when he goes into the house to rest, the entire city is outside their door. And after cleansing a leper and imploring the leper not to speak of it, the leper, of course, does go and speak of it. And from that point on, Jesus couldn't even enter towns publicly because of the multitude that was following him. And in Mark 3, we also get another picture of the crowd, a crowd almost in complete hysteria. See, Jesus had actually instructed his disciples to keep a boat ready so he could make a quick exit, lest the crowd crush him. So this crowd has shadowed Jesus' ministry from the beginning. As his fame grew, the crowd grew, and as the disciples followed Jesus, so their fame grew. They got swept up in the fame with Jesus. And most likely, the disciples' missionary trip where they did all these great works like Jesus, this was probably also the source of this great crowd. Their name possibly got made known even more through this journey. See, with the intention of the disciples from the beginning, what Jesus invited them to was to rest. They didn't have time to eat. They had just gotten back. They had no time to eat because people were coming in from every side. And this crowd was just so desperate to draw near to the disciples, to draw near to Jesus, to receive healings, to have their demons cast out. They were so desperate that they actually beat the disciples on foot where they were going by boat. They actually beat them there when the disciples arrived at the desolate place, there the crowd was waiting on them. And in verse 34, we see Jesus' response to the crowd. Rather than despising the crowd or treating the crowd as a annoying obstacle, a frequently annoying obstacle to his ministry, Mark tells us that Jesus had compassion on them. I think it's important to note that the Greek word for compassion, I don't typically like to bring in the Greek, but I think in this instance, it's important. The Greek word for compassion carries with it this significance. It means literally in the Greek to be moved in one's bowels or inward parts. The word itself carries this connotation of guts with it, of bowels. So to have compassion in this sense is to be deeply inwardly moved with pity and sympathy. The Hebrew word actually carries the same connotation, by the way. The Hebrew word for compassion is rahum, which actually has the root word of womb, like a mother's womb, indicating compassion, the same as what a mother would have for their child. And this is the compassion that Jesus has for the crowd. Despite the crowd's frequent

nuisance that they've caused to his ministry so far, Jesus has compassion on this crowd. And compassion we see is one of the many things that actually motivates Jesus in his ministry. Many times we see that before Jesus does a miracle, it is always preceded by the feeling of compassion towards the person receiving the miracle. See, Jesus' long suffering and kindness, just in this passage alone, would teach us much about the character of the Lord. God has always revealed himself from the beginning to be gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. We actually read that just today. And Jesus showing that he is actually the very God of the Old Testament, likewise is compassionate. And he says, and aside, let this inform the mind of any person, any sinner who would seek to draw near to God that our mediator, Jesus Christ, is a compassionate mediator. He has compassion on sinful people. And then we see what the reason Jesus's compassion was directed for in the second part of verse 34. In the second part of verse 34, it says that Jesus had compassion on the crowd because they were like sheep without a shepherd. The imagery is actually very fitting. You see this crowd just wandering in the wilderness, no one to guide them, no one to provide for them or care for them, no one to protect them in the night as sheep flocks usually have. There's usually an overseer who's in charge of actually keeping guard and watch over the flock. This crowd has none. They have no one to lead them, no one to care for them. But there's actually a deeper layer to this picture. This picture carries with it a strong Old Testament background. And it's important to the bigger picture of this passage. In the Old Testament, a shepherd was a common recurring theme. Every significant character in the Old Testament was a shepherd. Abel was a shepherd. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the patriarchs, they were shepherds. Moses, after he fled from Egypt, spent 40 years as a shepherd. Interestingly enough, leading his father's flock through the wilderness to Mount Horeb, the mountain of God, which he will also do for the nation of Israel at their exodus, leading them to the mountain of God through the wilderness. And we have King David as well. King David, before he was a king, was a shepherd. Before he was taken from the sheepfold to shepherd God's people, he would watch over his father's flock. And actually the Lord's deliverances for David, that he worked out for him, delivering him from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, was actually the event that motivated the episode of David and Goliath. Just as the Lord delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, so too will he deliver me from this Philistine. Also important to note that the

leaders of Israel were also considered shepherds. The roles of priest, prophet, teacher, and king were shepherding roles in the nation of Israel. But it's important that you know that whenever this image is used to describe the leaders in Israel, it's never actually a good thing. When the leaders in Israel are likened in the Old Testament to shepherds, it's always in the form of a rebuke. I invite you to turn to Ezekiel 34, and we can read this for ourselves. Looking at verse 1, The word of the Lord came to me. Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, even to the shepherds, thus says the Lord God, our shepherds of Israel, who have been feeding yourselves, should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back. The lost you have not sought, and with the force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered, they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth with none to search or seek for them. And the prophet Jeremiah actually will pick up similar language to this as well. The prophet Jeremiah will pick up the shepherding rebuke, speaking the same thing, and he actually later on will give a commentary on the condition of the land because of the shepherds. Jeremiah in chapter 24 says, you don't have to turn there, I'm just gonna read it. For the land is full of adulterers because of the curse of the land, because of the curse the land mourns, and the pastures of the wilderness are dried up. Jeremiah's picking up this land imagery just to highlight how desolate, spiritually desolate the nation of Israel is because of their shepherds. See, so historically, Israel has always had a problem. they've had many problems but they've always chiefly had one and that is wicked leaders it was the same in the Old Testament it's the same in Jesus's day they had wicked rulers over them unfaithful shepherds unjust shepherds shepherds who would not lead them and is picking up on this in the Gospel of Matthew Jesus gives this long and scathing rebuke to the scribes and Pharisees. I'm just gonna read some sections of it. It's too long of a passage to read here. But what Jesus does in his rebuke to the scribes and Pharisees, he picks up the same language that Jeremiah and Ezekiel use, and then adds even more harsh language to it. Jesus likens the current leaders of Israel in his day to broods of vipers and whitewashed tombs. The leaders of Israel tie up heavy burdens on the people that they were too hard to bear, laying on the people what they themselves would not even lift with a finger. Jesus says they shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. They did not enter in themselves,

and they refused to allow those who want to go in to enter. See, to tie this together with our passage today, What Jesus saw that moved him with compassion was just not simply because of the felt needs of the crowd. It had nothing to do with just simply their hunger, or their wandering, or their exhaustion. What Jesus saw, and what Mark is anchoring this to, is the current spiritual state of Israel, having no shepherds, no just or faithful shepherds over them to lead them. So Jesus steps in to provide for their deepest need. He is going to provide for their hunger. But Jesus is sensing that there is more going on than just the need for food. They would perish without food, yes, but the perishing that comes from lack of knowledge of God's Word is even more, more terrible. So Jesus in verse, sorry, I didn't write that down correctly. So Jesus says, after he had compassion on the sheep, because they were like a sheep without a shepherd, he began to teach them many things. That's actually in verse 34. So we have a shepherdless flock. We have the flock that's following the disciples, the crowd that has been treading their heels from the beginning, They followed him out into the wilderness. They interrupted the rest of the disciples that Jesus had invited them to. And Jesus identifies this flock as a shepherdless flock. Highlighting their spirit, the desperation of their spiritual state. In our second point today, we have the hard-hearted sheep. So we had the shepherdless sheep. We also have the hard-hearted sheep. So as Jesus's teaching went on, we're looking at verses 35 and 36. As his teaching went on and the day grew later and later, Jesus was eventually approached by his disciples. And you could just really could just almost sense the frustration that's coming from them. They were exhausted, they needed rest, they came here to rest. The whole point of them going to the desolate place was to get away from the crowd. And when they get there, the crowd is actually there before them, and Jesus actually just starts teaching them and ministering to them. And they came to Jesus to remind him what time it was and what place they were in, as if the God who created the sun and the moon and the earth needed a reminder of what time it was. But as daylight waned, the opportunity to rest went away with it. So naturally, With them being in the wilderness, Jesus, the disciples actually would identify what was probably a need for the crowd. They need to eat. They'd been there all day, the hour's late. They actually asked Jesus to send them away so they can go get food for themselves, which sounds very kind of them. This also would present to them the opportunity to rest, which is what they, the whole purpose they came there for to begin with. But Jesus' response to the disciples, instead of sending them away, was to have them feed the crowd instead. I'm gonna get a drink of water

real fast, my mouth is a little dry. My apologies, that's better. So Jesus' response to them is to have them feed themselves. And what he gives them is actually an impossible task. We don't actually see it in the Gospel of Mark, but in the other Gospels it actually highlights very clearly the feeding of the 5,000 was 5,000 men. That number did not count the women and children. So you had 5,000 men and their families. So likely this number was upwards probably close to 20,000 people that needed to be fed. This was a physically impossible task, the hour was late, and impossible tasks are not very conducive to rest. Their response to them, it almost sounds sarcastic, shall we go and buy 200 denarii worth of bread to feed them with? Now, again, other Gospels give much more commentary on this passage in the conversations that took place between Jesus and the disciples. 200 denarii is a number that comes up every time. So it's likely reasonable to assume that what 200 denarii meant to the disciples was all the money they had. It was all that they had was 200 denarii. And the disciples rightly recognized that that much to feed 15, 20,000 people, that's not enough for even them to get a little bit, which is literally what they say. It's not even enough for each person to get a little. So what Jesus actually does is he asked them, go find out how much food we have. He asked him, how many loaves do you have? Go and see. See, just to make this more complicated, five loaves and two fish, 200 denarii would buy a lot more food than five loaves and two fish. So this situation just continues to get more and more impossible. It just continues to get more and more, you can just sense the incredulity from the disciples, like how is this going to actually work? But after telling Jesus what they have, he tells them to have the people sit down. He sits them down in the green grass. They group up in hundreds and fifties. That's what we're looking at verses 37 to 39. My apologies. I'm trying to make sure we're staying with the verses here. So he has them sit down, of course, identifying that all they had was five loaves and two fish. Not enough to feed five, not even enough to feed 12 disciples, let alone 5,000 men, let alone 5,000 men and their families. But look, what I'm wanting to point out is that there's a deeper thing going on with the disciples here that might not actually be very clear from this text we can kind of sense it in the disciples response to Jesus and how they interact with him about this task and where they are at but I actually want to point out something I'm not gonna ruin next week's lesson but I do want to just because it's relevant



in Mark 6 jump forward to verse 52 Just take a look at verse 52. This is after Jesus walks on water and the disciples were astonished at it. And Mark tells us why they were astonished. For they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. Their hearts were hardened. The disciples did not understand about the loaves. Speaking of the feeding of the 5,000. See, what we see frequently in the ministry of Christ is that the disciples in Jesus are oftentimes on two completely different wavelengths. They have repeatedly demonstrated an ignorance of the purposes of Christ during his earthly ministry. In the Gospel of Mark alone, we've already went through these passages. In the Gospel of Mark alone, we already have two times where Jesus reproves the disciples. Once for their inability to understand the parables, and the second time for when they were going through the storm, just going crazy with fear, Jesus had to rebuke them for their lack of faith. In the other Gospel accounts, we see it over and over and over again. We see it all the way up to the end of Jesus earthly ministry right before he ascended. He just raised from the dead. He just gave him the great commission. And right before he ascends, the question they ask him is, are you now at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel? He's speaking of course about the Roman rule, wanting the Roman occupiers to be vacated out of Israel so Israel can be free. Once again, demonstrating that the entire time of Jesus earthly ministry, they didn't understand. We had the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Jesus had to rebuke them for being slow of heart to believe. It's a frequent thing with his disciples. They don't understand what he's doing. They don't understand what he says. They hear but don't hear because they have hardened hearts. And just as in our passage today, you can just sense the unbelief and frustration that is happening in the disciples, not getting the rest, being given an impossible task. But look, the thing that disciples were missing here is that though this task no human being could achieve, they weren't just around any human being, were they? They've seen Jesus raise the dead. They've seen Jesus rebuke a storm. They've seen him cast out demons. They've seen him heal leprosy. And still at this time, they've yet to grasp that what is impossible for man is not impossible for God. Failing to grasp this. But what Jesus has been doing, Jesus has been intentionally bringing them to this moment. He has been intentionally setting a stage for a much grander lesson for the disciples, and a much grander revealing of who he is. So for our third point, looking in verses 41 and 43, we have bread in the wilderness. So we've had the

shepherdless

sheep, the hard-hearted sheep, and now we have bread in the wilderness. So Jesus, after taking the meager amount of fish and loaves, looks up to heaven and blesses the food. Commentator William Lane on this passage, he notes that it's actually a strict custom in Judaism that with every meal there is supposed to be a blessing and thanksgiving before and after eating. And if we were actually to take all the gospel records of this event, we'll see how Jesus is actually laying the groundwork of the institution of the New Covenant meal, communion. It is actually this miracle, the multiplication of the loaves, that leads to a conversation in John 6 that actually becomes kind of the launching point for what Jesus uses as the imagery for the New Covenant. The bread as his body, his blood as the wine. But more significant to Mark's purpose, we have to highlight a difference between typical Jewish practice and what Jesus was doing here. Mark is specific to note that Jesus looks to heaven to bless the bread. And this will be important as we unpack it later. So then we had the blessing of bread, we had the multiplication of the loaves. We read that after Jesus blesses and breaks the bread, that all ate and were satisfied, all 5,000 men and their families. In verse 42 is where we're at. This miracle demonstrates yet again Jesus' sovereign control over his creation. Jesus takes a meager amount of food and turns it into a banquet for a multitude, something that only the God who spoke the universe into being could accomplish. To really drive this home, like common cities back in those times, like Capernaum and Bethsaida, their population was only about 2,000 to 3,000 people. Jesus just fed upwards of four to five cities worth of people with five loaves and two fish. I think sometimes we can become, we read so many miracles of Jesus, we kind of become jaded to the significance of them and just how glorious it is. Maybe because they're just not there in person, we're just reading it on text, but really this is a public miracle that Jesus did before the eyes of thousands of people. Like if there was ever any doubt in God's ability to provide for our needs, this account should erase those doubts entirely. See, not only was the flock provided for to their satisfaction, in verses 43 to 44, we see that there was an abundance of food left over, an abundance of food. What this reminds me of is Paul's prayer in Ephesians, that God is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think. We should learn from this section that God is not only willing to provide, but he is also able to provide. He is able to provide. And look, as beautiful as these truths are, there is much more. There's a deeper significance to these accounts. And this is what I want to unpack, because as I stated before, all of Jesus's miracles have an Old

Testament significance with a heavenly implication. So I want to start taking a look at those. Now that we've kind of walked through the text, it was kind of a short exposition, but I didn't get to actually unpack what is the Old Testament background. I debated a lot how I was going to approach this this passage is just rich with Old Testament imagery and it's almost a lot it's almost like a banquet that you have to decide how you are actually going to prepare it but so I decided to keep that as a separate section and I want to look at this I want to take the Old Testament significance and apply this miracle to us after I have another drink of water okay So the first thing I want to highlight, I actually just learned this as I was approaching this passage, so this was mind-blowing for me, is what Jesus does in this miracle is he draws a very clear connection to Moses and Elijah. See, this application of this, the application of this is very much specific to the disciples who were present, and really only by extension is it relevant to us, but it is relevant to us. But this miracle had a lesson for the disciples. See, as we see the passage play out in the exchange from the disciples, what is interesting to note about John's account of this passage that is not present in Mark, is that after the public sees the miracle that Jesus does, actually, if you wanna just turn there, be looking at John 6, John 6, we'll look at verse 14, I just want to draw your eyes to this. Actually, I'll start in verse 13, my mistake. John chapter six, verse 13. So that after the feeding of the 5,000, they gathered them up and filled 12 baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, this is indeed the prophet who has come into the world. Now that's interesting. It really is. Of all the things that they could call Jesus after this miracle, why the prophet? Not even a prophet, the prophet. It seems like it's happening there, is the crowd actually gets something the disciples don't get. See, throughout the Gospel of Mark, we have actually seen very strong parallels between the ministry of Christ and the ministry of the prophet Elijah. Both Jesus and Elijah, for example, they showed a miraculous control over the weather during their ministry. They both raised the dead and they both multiplied food. In fact, we could really be up here for an entire sermon and listen to the parallels between Jesus and Elijah. Elijah is a very significant character in the Old Testament. He's like the first prophet to arrive on the scene in the Old Testament. And he's kind of viewed as kind of the chief prophet of all of them. If you think about on the transfiguration of the mount for those who are familiar with that account, both Moses and Elijah appear with Christ, both representing the law and the prophets, which is

the chief division of the Old Testament. So Elijah was a significant figure. And we've also spoke about this last week, how the people, because of a prophecy in Isaiah, they've grown to expect the coming of Elijah. John the Baptist was actually asked when he first came on the scene, are you Elijah? And Jesus actually says that he was Elijah if they were able to receive it. So the coming of Elijah was actually fulfilled by John the Baptist, but we see here what Jesus does is he actually anchors his ministry in the narrative of Elijah. And more importantly, Jesus anchors his ministry to Elijah's successor, Elisha. This is going to be tricky. They both have two very similar sounding names. It might be confusing which one I'm talking about. So I'll try to emphasize the sha in Elisha. Just for an important note there in case it gets confusing. See, if you're unfamiliar with the story of Elijah, After Elijah has this great deliverance of Israel from the prophets of Baal, he has this great demonstration of God's power restoring the hearts of Israel back to their God, Elijah has a moment of despairing and the Lord actually calls him home. But not by physical death. Elijah actually ascends into heaven in a flaming chariot. But before he ascended, the Lord called him to name a successor, Elisha. And Elisha was to have a double portion of his ministry, a double portion of his spirit. And what we see with Elisha is Elisha actually goes on to do the same exact miracles as Elisha does. And one in particular, I want to actually have you all look at, turn with me if you will to second Kings chapter four. That could be a tricky one to find. So 2 Kings 4, I'll give you all a minute to turn there. It's actually right after the Samuels. Looking in verses 42, I just want you to pay attention to this. A man came from Baal Shalisha bringing the man of God, bread of the first fruits, 20 loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in a sack. And Elisha said, give it to the men that they may eat. But his servant said, how can I set this before a hundred men? So he repeated, give them to the men that they may eat. For thus says the Lord, they shall eat and have some left. So he said it before them and they ate and had some left according to the word of the Lord. Jesus' multiplication of the barley loaves, the same loaves that were used back in Elijah's miracle, what Jesus is actually doing is he is actually demonstrating the Old Testament significance of his ministry by showing that he is actually a true and greater Elijah. And what the disciples are actually missing here, see, just as Elijah passed on his mantle to the prophet Elisha, where Elisha did the same miracles, notice something here. Jesus had just sent the 12 out on a missionary journey where they did the exact same miracles as he did. And now we have the disciples who are doing the same exact America that Elisha did, feeding

the men. What is clearly happening, what Jesus has been preparing them for from the beginning was to pass the mantle off onto the disciples. They were to carry the torch of Jesus's ministry, and they were given that through the Great Commission. This is what the disciples were being prepared for. They missed it. They didn't see the significance of it. These men would have been raised in the synagogue their entire lives, no doubt would have heard the story, but their chief problem was that they were hard-hearted and slow to believe. Jesus has been preparing the disciples for their ministry that we will see in the book of Acts as they establish the church. And their responsibility would be to feed the flock. If you remember when Jesus, when Peter actually denies Jesus three times, when Jesus later on after he raises from the dead, he has a conversation with Peter and just as Peter denies him three times, Jesus asked Peter three times, do you love me? And with each response from Peter, he says, feed my sheep, tend to my flock. as Jesus fed the flock in the wilderness, the disciples too were going to be responsible for God's sheep. And here's where it gets relevant to us, because every minister, every elder, every pastor who is raised up since then, called by the Lord, equipped by the Lord for the ministry of the word, every single one of them in the New Testament are likened to shepherds. In Acts 20, Paul calls the elders at Ephesus, he likens them to overseers of the flock. Peter also exhorts elders not to lord over the flock. The flock has a significance to a shepherd. What does a flock have? It has a shepherd, and a shepherd has a flock. They're two inseparable things. So by extension to the disciples of Jesus, and to all the leadership in the church since, the mantle of shepherd is continuously being passed. Now, we aren't all pastors and elders. Actually, the New Testament encourages that not many of us would become pastors or elders or teachers. But we are the flock. We are God's sheep. And as God's sheep, we can see from this passage the importance of being fed, of the need for a spiritual nourishment that comes from the shepherd, of the need for the care of the shepherd. I guess I'd make the application point very simple. For us as sheep of the flock, our application should be to stay with the flock. To stay under the care of our elders and our pastors. Realizing that the role they have been entrusted is by God to feed us and protect us and care for us spiritually. We are the flock. See, if you are a believer who is isolated away from a church body, you are a sheep without a flock. You are a sheep without a flock. You are cut off and isolated away from the main source of

nourishment that God has provided to you. the feeding from the shepherds, the care of the shepherds. I have had so many conversations with, it is a modern day convenience to us where we had the wide availability

of Bibles and even now we have the wide open access to listen to sermons online or even to attend church remotely. Sometimes I see the necessity of those things and I'm not knocking those things generally speaking. But we had this like kind of diluted luxury of thinking that we can be part of the church and not be with the church. To be part of the flock and not be with the flock. Not under the care of elders and overseers. I mean just let me just highlight this just to really drive this home. Think about it if you were in Rome during the first century church. You're the church in Rome. See, back then there wasn't a wide availability of the Bibles. You couldn't go to the Christian bookstore and buy a Bible. In fact, you probably didn't have the ability to read. That was not a common thing back in the day. That was reserved for educated men, as was paper and pen. The ability to write as well as read, it was not a common thing. So if you were a first century believer and you were at the Church of Rome, but you weren't actually with the church at Rome, would you even know what the book of Romans was you wouldn't you would never even heard of it you may not even ever heard of Paul you see it It's only illusion we have because we have the access to the church in all kinds of ways, but the reality is it is an inseparable reality to the New Testament church that you will be part of a body and you will be with the body. You can't separate the Christian life from the Christian life with the church. So much of the New Testament assumes this reality. It assumes it in its instructions of church discipline. Every single letter Paul writes is addressed to a church body and you would have had to been there to hear it. You have to be part of the flock.

The shepherds that God has appointed over each church body is the primary means that God has provided to nourish you. We need to be fed as sheep of God. The second thing I want to highlight here, just to drive home the fact that the disciples were also being prepared for their new mantle, their new role. You may have noticed the obscure reference as Jesus was having the group sit down. They sat down in groups of fifties and hundreds. I'm not going to spend the time to actually go there, but there was also a clear connection there to Moses. When Moses was overseeing Israel and the burden was too great, he was actually commanded to appoint overseers over groups of hundreds and fifties, over groups of hundreds and fifties, just as the disciples were when they were feeding the flock. So there's a connection to Elijah. There's a connection to Moses. And I also want to point out the connection in this passage to the wilderness narrative of Israel. recognizing the significance

of the provision of bread in the wilderness. See, in the story of this miracle,

Jesus repeated the miracles of Elijah, but he has also very clearly recapitulated the wilderness wanderings, specifically in

Numbers

chapter 11 through 13. And what's interesting about that, you had these interesting parallels in both accounts. You had a hungry people in the wilderness needing to be fed. And it's also bookended by sending out of 12 men. In Numbers, the sending out of the 12 came after the feeding in the wilderness. In this account, the sending out of the 12 came before it. So I just wanted to highlight the parallels there. But in Numbers 11,

looking at

verse four, we have the people grumbling in the wilderness, the people grumbling in the desert. Verse 11 tells us that they actually

had the craving and they wept. And why did they weep? Listen to what they say. Oh, that we had meat to eat.

We remember the fish. We remember the cucumbers and the melons and the onions and the garlic. Speaking of the food they got in Egypt while they were in slavery, many times Israel wanted to just go right back into slavery when as soon as they hit the wilderness and hunger hit them, they wanted to go back to Egypt. They wanted to go back into bondage. And frequently over and over again, they grumbled against Moses. And because they grumbled against Moses, Moses would grumble against the Lord.

And this, of course, ends with neither Moses or that entire generation of Israelites being able to enter the promised land. They were condemned to wander the wilderness until the last member of that generation dropped dead. First Corinthians 10 tells us that their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Paul actually said they're still there to that day, scattered in the wilderness. They were condemned to never enter the promised land because of their frequent unbelief, their frequent grumbling against the Lord. So what God does in response

to the Israelites need for food, he provides this thing called manna. Now what manna is, we don't know what it is. It's a new thing, you've never seen it before. They called it manna because they asked the question, what is it? It was a bread like substance that came down from heaven. It would coat the ground every morning and it would disappear during the day. And what God does is he provides an explanation of this miracle later on in Deuteronomy.

He explains the purpose of the manna was to humble them. So that he might teach them that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Now look, I don't mean to step

toes with, somebody toes with this, but I very often hear this passage used to really encourage the body to be getting in your Bible daily. I'm not opposed to that. I actually

recommend that. This is not the passage to defend that. This passage has a massive significance to the person of Christ later on to be revealed. See, in the Old Testament, there was this frequent figure that would appear called the Lord, or sometimes one sent from the Lord, sometimes the angel of the Lord, and sometimes this figure was the word of the Lord, one coming as God and sent by God simultaneously. And it's this interesting tension we had throughout the entire Old Testament. Who is this figure? The figure is the Lord and was sent by the Lord. He appears over and over again.

If you've actually with us in our Abraham study for Sunday school, we see him appear all the time. And sometimes at his appearance, he is called the word of the Lord. And this tension that we see in the Old Testament finally breaks when Jesus and John one is introduced as the word made flesh, the word with God, the word, the word that was God. He was both with God and he was God. And so what's my point with this?

I want to actually draw your eyes back to John chapter 6, because I want to point out that what Jesus does in John chapter 6, he is speaking to the same crowd that he fed, and he gives a deeper explanation of that miracle and its significance to who he is. I lost my marker there. I had a one right for John six and I lost it. So John chapter six, looking at verses 25, this is actually a longer section. We're not gonna read the whole thing. We're just gonna start at verse 25. When they found him on the other

side of the sea, this is the crowd that Jesus had fed in the feeding of the 5,000. They said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here? Jesus answered them saying, truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to internal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him, God the Father sets his seal. Then they said to him, what must we do to be doing the works of God? Jesus answered them, this is the work of God that you believe in him who he has sent. So they said to him, then what sign do you do that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. Jesus then said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. And they said to him, Sir, give us this bread always. And Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not

hunger. Whoever believes in me shall never thirst. See, when the wandering of the wilderness, just as with the flock and the disciples, the hunger wasn't the only problem. It was unbelief. The believing



that the arm of the Lord had become shortened, that he wasn't able to actually provide for them in the wilderness. Not believing that the Lord would actually bring to pass what he promised to them in the wilderness. See, this account and the account in the wilderness with Israel show us of our deeper need, a deeper hunger and a deeper thirst that is only satisfied by the true bread from heaven. This is what Jesus has been preparing the disciples for, is what he's been preparing the crowd for, to reveal that he is the actual fulfillment of what God said, man should not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from God. Jesus is that word from God. He is that word made flesh, and

he is that word who lays down his life, he breaks his body and sheds his blood so that the world may have eternal life.

He is that bread. He is the true bread from heaven. And the application for us, specifically,

is that we see Jesus as the source of eternal life. And that we see Jesus constantly as our only source, our only true source of nourishment in this current wilderness, in this sojourning in a fallen world. Jesus is that provision from

God. Though we have true, real, physical hunger and thirst, our ultimate spiritual hungering and thirsting is only answered by Christ, the bread that was sent from heaven. It is only in him that it is found. Our deeper longings are the result of the fall in the garden where we were exiled from God, sent away from his presence, and the longings we feel are the result of that, that we were meant to be created, And we were meant to be always in the presence of God in full-faced fellowship with him. And Jesus is the one who restores

that fellowship. He's the one who restores that life. And we're actually given a weekly

reminder of this in our gathering, where we take the bread and the wine that Jesus likens to his body broken, his blood shed.

This miracle is kind of the launching point that Jesus used to establish

the new covenant meal. I've said that once before, but

I just want to emphasize that. And lastly, we see that the Lord is our true shepherd. Jesus steps in, recognizing the need for the sheep to have a shepherd. He steps in to fulfill that need,

teaching them many things. We also see, interestingly enough, when the disciples had the groups sit down, they sat down in green grass. These small details seem insignificant,

but when you consider the broader passage, what your mind should go to is Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd, the

one who lays me down by greener pastures. See, despite the fact that Israel has had many shepherds, many failing shepherds, Israel has ultimately only ever had one shepherd, and that is the Lord. The Lord has always been Israel's shepherd. The Lord has always been the

one to guide Israel. Even in their exile, the Lord likens himself to a shepherd who will return the scattered flocks back home. And we likewise, though we have shepherds, we ultimately have one shepherd, and our shepherds only have one shepherd, and that is Jesus. In John 10, Jesus calls himself the good shepherd. I am the good shepherd. Picking up on this frequent Old Testament imagery, showing that he is the one who guides and cares and protects us. this should come as a great encouragement

to us as we actually do sojourn in this fallen world in this place that are not is not our home because while it may feel like we have no we don't see Jesus we don't hear him we feel like we may not have any direction or any care or comfort or protection

Jesus has promised us he is our shepherd and he will not lose a single one of his sheep not a single one He is the shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep, and in laying down his life, he secured eternal life for his sheep, for all eternity. Life eternal. And I frankly just, I love the parable of the lost sheep. One sheep leaves the flock, the shepherd leaves the 99 and goes after the lost sheep and brings him back home. See, just like sheep, we are likewise prone to wander. We actually sang that this very day. And I actually love the author who wrote that hymn, because the author who wrote that hymn suffered greatly. He had frequent suicide attempts. He was under the care of John Newton, the author of Amazing Grace. His name was William Cowper. He wrote Come Thou Fount. He

also wrote There is a Fountain, filled with blood. It's a wonderful hymn. But William Cowper identified his own proneness to wander, how prone he was to leave the God he loves. And despite the fact that we as sheep may still have this tendency, this constant tendency, and we will have that until the day of the Lord calls us home or he returns, the Lord remains our shepherd who goes after us in the wilderness, who guides us in the wilderness, who protects us. Jesus is revealing himself to be the shepherd here, the shepherd of the Old Testament who brings his people home. As God brought the nation of Israel back home from exile, that was only a small picture of what Jesus, our shepherd, will do when he returns, bringing the lost, bringing the flock of God back to the New Jerusalem. I want to have you turn to one more passage here, just to stoke our hopes for that day. Turning to Revelation 7, Revelation chapter 7. I'll be starting in verse 15. Speaking of the martyrs in this passage that John sees. Wait, no, I'm sorry, not the martyrs, the elders. They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple. And he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst no more. The sun shall not strike them,

nor any scorching heat. For the lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water. And God will wipe every tear from their eyes. The Lord is our shepherd from beginning to end, and he will be faithful to bring us home. So in conclusion, showing us that the Lord is a true and better Moses and Elijah. Just as Elijah and Moses appointed successors to their ministry, so the Lord delegated the task of feeding the flock to his disciples. And this commission extends to every elder and pastor everywhere. They are shepherds responsible for the flock of God's sheep. And we as sheep depend upon the nourishment and care from our shepherds. The Lord is also our true bread from heaven. He is the one who provided for our deepest hungering and thirsting. He is the one sent from heaven who gives us eternal life. And lastly, the Lord is our true shepherd, the one who cares for the sheep during their wandering in the wilderness. He lays down his life for his sheep, and he will not lose a single one of them, but he will bring them to greener pastures. Let's pray together. Gracious Father, we thank you for how you revealed yourself, for what you reveal yourself to be to us, your children. Lord, we pray, Lord, that we would continue to look to you, our shepherd. knowing that you are the source, that you are the wellspring of life, that you are the one who satisfies our deepest hungerings and thirstings, and you are the one who protects and guides us. I pray, Lord, we would continue to look to you, that you would help us to persevere, even as we partake of your food that you have given us. I pray that you'd be glorified in our hearts and minds and on this day. I ask this in Jesus' name, amen.