***Mark 6:33-34*** ***But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him. 34And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.***

Last week, we talked about the compassion of Jesus. As I admitted, I couldn’t help but be convicted of my lack of compassion, when Jesus has shown such compassion for me. Any good deed I have done, no matter how wonderful, is like a filthy rag before the purity of God, yet God takes my feeble efforts and multiplies them, much like loaves and fishes in the Bible.

Leading up to our scripture this morning, we know that Jesus had been performing miracles, healing a woman, raising a young girl from the dead. He sent out the 12 apostles and they returned, excitedly recounting to Him about preaching the Word and healing the sick. Seemingly, while they were testifying, word arrives that John the Baptist has been beheaded. Jesus looks upon His apostles and sees their exhaustion, that they are taking no time for themselves, not even for an uninterrupted meal, and He said, “Come aside and rest.” So, they departed by boat to a deserted place that the book of Luke says is near a city called Bethsaida. Imagine what the apostles and Jesus are feeling – people are receiving the Gospel, healings are occurring, the Kingdom of God is being demonstrated before their eyes. Yet, John the Baptist, Jesus beloved cousin, has been killed. And Jesus says come and rest.

Verse 33 says - *But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him.*Jesus and the apostles depart by boat and the multitudes see, know Him, and run on foot, arriving before the boat arrived. Now, let’s notice that there were multitudes running through cities. People are people and they’re bound to wonder where these folks are running and why they’re running. Questions are asked, stories of healings and signs are shared. This shows eagerness for Jesus.

Do we have eagerness to encounter Jesus today? Do we wake each morning eager to meet Him, running to our prayer rooms, desiring nothing more than to encounter Him again? As we run breathlessly through our day, are we sharing what God has done in our life, the healing, the signs and wonders, the mercies He shows each new morning? Is there an excitement that draws others to His precious presence? These people outran the boat! These people shared, as they ran to meet Jesus! Do we run to our next meeting with Jesus?

Verse 34 *And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd.* The boat arrives. Jesus emerges. He sees not just a multitude, but a GREAT multitude. Those excited, running, sharing people have brought more! Our excitement brings more! We know from later verses that there are 5000 men, plus women and children. And what does it say – He was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. Matthew 9:36 from last week said - *But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.* He looks upon these lost, wandering souls, having run because they have excitement for what they might find – a changed life, a spiritual family, a transformed heart, an upward calling, an Eternal Savior - eagerly seeking that next encounter with Jesus, and He is moved with compassion.

Are we moved with compassion, as we see the lost and the wandering of this world? Do our hearts yearn over the multitudes so much so that we will witness and share, even as we race along through life? Are we pointing others to the Eternal Savior who can transform lives? It’s something we must ask ourselves.

Verse 34 finishes - *So He began to teach them many things****.*** Jesus doesn’t start with healing the body. He doesn’t start with feeding the body. He doesn’t start with the body at all. He starts by feeding the spirit with the Word of God. John 6:35 – *And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.* Matthew 4:4 *But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*’ Luke 9:11 tells us Jesus *received them and* ***spoke to them about the kingdom of God****, and healed those who had need of healing.*Jesus first focus is always the Kingdom of God. Likewise, we must seek first The Kingdom of God. In Jesus’ compassion, in His providing a shepherd to those that had been left wandering in a spiritually deserted place by the Pharisees and Sadducees, Jesus leads with the Word. He doesn’t neglect to heal and feed the body, but His priority is the Spirit.

This week, as we are running, are we sharing? Are we first feeding the Spirit? Are we so excited about our Jesus that we run to our prayer rooms to eagerly greet Him each day? God had compassion and used someone to speak the words of healing into our lives, so we’d no longer be sheep without a shepherd, but sheep of THE Shepherd. As we look around, as we run from place to place, as we pass among the multitudes, are we teaching others about the kingdom of God? My friends, introducing others to Christ’s Kingdom is truly the greatest Compassion we can ever show.