

“the depth of desperation”

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

23 July, 2006

the Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor
Zion West Walworth United Methodist

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

³⁰The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³²And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. ³³Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. ³⁴As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

⁵³When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. ⁵⁴When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, ⁵⁵and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

Prayer.

At Doctor McCoy's fingertips
was a medical marvel device.
The script writers called it a triquarter;
a hand-held monolith of polished alu-
minum
that contained all the secrets of medic-
al science
known in the year 3732.
(Interesting name, this triquarter:
tri, meaning three, plus quarter, mean-
ing four.
Just were did it get its name?)

With a wave of this mysterious brick

a complete assessment and treatment
plan
would be presented for the physician's
review.

With the patient's consent
and a push of a button
treatment would miraculously begin.

Just imagine the primitive alien
stricken with illness or injury
who encounters a McCoy.
The literary opportunities
for the science fiction author
are endless.

Would McCoy be treated like an all
powerful god?

“the depth of desperation”

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

23 July, 2006

© the Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor
Zion West Walworth United Methodist

Attracting crowds of worshipful, prostrated aliens?

Each seeking healing and restoration by this triquarter welding, spandex wearing spaceman?

Personally,
I'm tepid towards science fiction.
But I love science fact.

Consider if Einstein's theory of relativity

could be manipulated to allow a modern day physician and a truck load of antibiotics to be transported back in time to the period of mid-evil plague.

Think of the suffering that could have been ended.

Think of how the universe would change

if selected family lines would have continued.

Think of how that physician would be received.

Would they be venerated as a god with unseen powers

like a "Connecticut Yankee in King Arther's Court"?

Or, would they be killed for being a witch

welding magic laced potions?

Obviously, I'm setting the stage for us to begin to comprehend the crowd drawing appeal of a miracle working, free-healing Jesus in first century Palestine.

Not only was Jesus working miracles and casting out demons

so, too, had the six pairs of his disciples

who had been working the smaller villages and towns across the countryside.

This establishes Jesus

in the people's eye

as not only the great physician,

but also as the lead physician of many others,

from whom comes

all knowledge and power.

Sick people are desperate people.

Disease sends even the most academic

into a frenzy

where emotion trumps intelligence

to avoid the inevitable

outcome of death seeking pathologies.

Out of Galilee's woodwork

comes all of the region's most sick, vulnerable, diseased and lost.

Out of the homes

comes nearly everybody else

driven by curiosity

hoping to witness a good show.

Certainly, out of the highest councils

come the religious authorities

with an eye for surveillance

and a desire to squash;

a smile on their face

but with a knife concealed behind the back.

"If only I touch his garments,"

everybody thought,

"then certainly I will be healed."

And so they were ...

with such common regularity

that our Gospel's author

"the depth of desperation"

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

23 July, 2006

© the Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor
Zion West Walworth United Methodist

fails to record the specifics of
each life changing event.

It is amazing to consider
the depth of desperation
that drives one to run after
one who does not want to be followed
who purposefully makes every attempt
to slip quietly to the sidelines
to get in a boat and quietly float away
for some much need
rest and restoration.

They keep him in sight,
following the contours of the
water's edge
tracing the trajectory of
the Lead Physician's boat,
frantically running to keep pace
so that where He landed
they would be there to greet Him.

If you can't feel the desperation
you'll never get the point.

Had it been you or me,
we'd wade ashore like McArthur
clenching his pipe
commanding our subordinates to
clear the way.
"It's vacation time, son.
You'll have to take a number.
Wait until I return.
Then my staff will schedule you an ap-
pointment
when we can sit down and chat."

If you can't feel the desperation
you'll never get the point.

Thank God, neither you are

or I am the Savior!
"He went ashore,
He saw a great crowd;
and He had compassion for them,
Because they were like sheep without
a shepherd."

Ah, yes.
There we have it.
Did you hear it?
The key to unlocking today's Gospel:
The Savior's compassion
is the answer to
the world's desperation.

If anyone has had an eye on the news
this past week
you have insider knowledge of the
world's desperation.
Some would have us believe
that three of the four horsemen of the
apocalypse
are gathering in the south of Lebanon
preparing to usher in a new age.
Don't be fooled
by millennial misfits
or clergy hacks
who ax away at scripture with ma-
chetes
(instead of careful, intentional, well
thought out, informed scalpels)
whose purpose is
to raise fear and terror
rain punishment
and manipulation
to achieve their own devious ends.

Instead,
Look through the camera's lens;
Look through and see
indiscriminate missiles of one,

"the depth of desperation"

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

23 July, 2006

© the Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor
Zion West Walworth United Methodist

and the well intentioned bombardment
of another,
that amputates mothers
orphans children
and causes fathers to beat the drums
of enlistment, hatred and war.

Look through the camera's lens;
look through and see
the hatred injustice and intolerance
breeds.
Look into the eyes
into the masked faces of martyrs;
men marching willingly in goose-step
like sheep led to their slaughter.

Look through the camera's lens;
look through and see
a world being smothered
a world frantic with desperation.
Rubble;
piles of rubble
stand in ruin testament
to the world's desperation.

Do not blow me off
discredit or discount
these words as the words of
back-water preacher using this pulpit
for political points;

... less I remind us ...

that at our baptism
a vow was made
either by our lips
or on our behalf
to resist evil, injustice, and oppression
so help us God.

Throwing our hands up

saying "what can I do?"
gives us unfounded permission
to abandon our baptismal vows.
Taking a hands off position
steals the prophetic voice of Christ's
own Church
and leads us down the lane
towards extinction;
Extinction!
The Church will cease to be when it
loses its voice.
The Church will dissolve into history
books
due to a lack of relevance
when we have bound and gagged the
voice of Jesus.

The Savior's compassion
is the answer to
the world's desperation.

We the people,
the Body
of Christ's holy Church must speak up
and speak out.
We must stand up
and reach out.
We must be heard and we must be
seen.
And in everything
we think, say, and do
it must be according to
Christ's own example
of God-given compassion.

It is a compassionate act
to write an appeal for peace and
justice to our elected officials and re-
gional editors.
It is a compassionate act
to contribute to the Red Cross

"the depth of desperation"

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

23 July, 2006

© the Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor
Zion West Walworth United Methodist

that humanitarian aid can begin to flow.
 It is a compassionate act
 to not tolerate injustice and discrimination ...
 to not stand idly by when our Jewish
 and Islamic sisters and brothers become
 the focus of society's ignorant
 and misinformed hatred.

Just as Christ stepped off the boat
 recognized the
 depth of desperation
 and met the people's desperation with
 his compassion,
 so too should we today,
 step out of the safety and security
 of the enclaved boat (called the
 Church)
 and bring the compassion of our Savior
 to the table of justice, freedom, and
 peace
 both globally
 and locally.

You and I don't have the answers to
 the complexities of the world.
 You and I don't have the personal
 clout, power or authority.
 But what we do have;
 what has been given to us
 is the gift
 of the Savior's compassion.
 That is all that is necessary
 to meet the world's deepest desperation.

The Word of the Lord, as it has come
 to me this day. Thanks be to God.
 Amen.