

SERMON  
MARK 6:30-34  
“DEFYING NORMS: DISCONNECT AND HEAL”

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH – WINSTON-SALEM, NC

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Sermon Title: "Defying Norms: Disconnect and Heal"

Sermon Reference: Mark 6:30-34; 53-56

Today I invite you to remember this: You have to disconnect to connect. You have to disconnect to connect.

I love playing games, board games, card games - you name it! Especially ones where there is a timer or you are racing someone. There are pictures of me when I was little playing games and I would be gritting my teeth, fighting with all my mental abilities, to beat the person I was playing against. But the game that produced the most anxiety in me was the game called Operation. Anyone else ever play that game? It's a game where you are pretending to do surgery on someone and you have these metal tweezers to use. Whomever can pull out the most pieces without touching the metal sides, wins the game. Nowhere does it say you have to rush and be in a hurry, but y'all - I'm competitive, so I added rules like "let's see who can get the most pieces AND who can do it the fastest!" :-). That way of playing it reminds me of trying to read the book of Mark. The way the gospel of Mark is written is everything is rushed, in a hurry, a sense of urgency. And yet, there are really interesting pieces of information that we want to pull out carefully - and not rush it - because rushing by some of these little details feels like our metal tweezers hitting the sides of the metal and a buzzer goes off that we tried to rush the small details, so we are going to take our time and look at today's passage.

In our passage today, the apostles have just returned from being sent out two by two. Last week, we heard from Pastor Kyle that this appointing of the twelve and

sending them out on mission enraged King Herod, which we know led to a brutal murder of John the Baptist. You've also heard every one of us who has preached Mark before name that everything is really urgent, sudden, and fast in the book of Mark. There is a sense of urgency among the people about the work of Jesus. Which is why our passages today are so interesting. Woven into the urgency of this gospel is this moment where Jesus is inviting people to disconnect - to rest - but perhaps in a way that is different than we might imagine. To not be in such a hurry. Even though a fast-paced, anxiety-filled environment is what Mark illustrates all throughout his gospel, he thought it important enough to include things like these two pericopes/passages in his gospel. But why? Mark illuminates for us what I would say is this underlying theme of you need to disconnect....to connect. Let's explore that.

The disciples have just disconnected from their mission and traveling - to connect back with one another and with Jesus as they surround him. Jesus invites them to truly disconnect from their current environment by going *\*together\** to a deserted place. They likely had expectations for what that disconnection looked like and probably looked forward to a little rest and relaxation. Because let's be honest, we all need times to take a break, to take a time-out, re-center, and re-form ourselves as the body of Christ. But let's keep exploring that maybe this disconnection is more than just that in this passage. What they imagined connection to be at that moment was a connection back to one another and to Jesus - but guess what happens? Mark says that many saw them and *\*hurried\** to meet them. Obviously they were in a hurry - because we are reading Mark! And instead of the

plan the disciples had in their minds - the plan of going to rest! - Jesus has compassion on the people who have shown up and began to teach them.

Let's take a moment and look at the full picture of these two passages as they connect. The lectionary readings skip right over the feeding of the 5,000, but keep in mind that has happened after the disciples tried to take a break. They had all kinds of emotions from that experience. They went from feeling pretty frustrated with Jesus because they were tired from the crowds hurrying to be with Jesus and then Jesus somehow had the energy to teach them...as Mark said...until it was very late. When it was late, the disciples had to be totally exhausted and begged Jesus to let the people go so they and the disciples could go eat. And just when they thought they had no more energy, I imagine Jesus giving a slight smile and saying "well, you feed them." I bet the disciples were like "Are you serious?!" That's a different sermon for a different day, but there they fed alllll those people. The time \*finally\* came for the disciples to take a break, to disconnect, and heal their bodies, minds, and souls. Again, the lectionary skips over this passage when they got on the boat to cross the water to Bethsaida and struggled against the wind (keeping in mind they were totally exhausted!) And Jesus shows up by walking on the water to them and getting in their boat and calming the winds. They didn't understand how all the people were fed and they didn't understand how Jesus calmed the water, and the text says their hearts were hardened. The meaning behind this hardening is "one's inability to see, in these dramatic events, signs of God's redemptive activity - or even an opposition to God's redeeming work." Yikes. Again - another sermon for another day. BUT then, our passage for today picks back up - they finally reached the

other side at Gennesaret. PAUSE RIGHT HERE! They went where? They landed at Gennesaret?!? Even though we didn't read these verses today, verse 45 says they were supposed to go to Bethsaida. Keep in mind, it's late and they are cranky and tired. Have you ever just felt like things didn't go as you expected them to go?

I'm sure none of you have ever had to take a detour of any kind - especially if you are in a hurry to get home from a trip. Back in 2022, just after we were married, Karen and I decided to take a beach trip, bringing along our 3 dogs (1 of those being our dachshund who was 16 at the time), Karen's mom, and her 2 dogs. We made it to the beach fine. Within 24 hours, Karen started feeling bad and tested positive for covid. Within 2 days, her mom tested positive for Covid. For me, I spent a lot of time isolated, and making trips to CVS for tests and medicine. We stayed the whole week and both of them were still feeling puny on our ride back. Our car filled to the brim with dogs, stuff, and covid. Once we dropped her mom off, we crammed into our small SUV at the time, with our old dog riding in Karen's lap. Karen was exhausted, our old dog Dusty would not stop barking, the two labs in the back were restless and ready to be home, and we had a 45 minute drive back home from Kathy's house. We were almost back home and guess what happened? We didn't need our GPS because the route was familiar - The route we had taken many many many times... was closed. The detour? Backtrack 20 minutes, get on a new road, and take the long way home - dog barking non-stop, Karen exhausted, my nerves were shot. All of the emotions we felt are probably a sliver of what the disciples felt as they were forced to take a detour to their destination after alllll that had happened. Where nothing was going as they expected it go. So this is where the second part of what

we read today picks up - they landed. Great! And then what happens? People were again rushing to them yet again.

[When Jesus rolls up, it's like an ice cream truck rolling up in the neighborhood. Kids flock to it and every kid is served.]

## Disciples

With each step of the journey, the disciples had a plan in their mind. And with each step of the journey, they were frustrated and increasingly annoyed, to the point they shut down - their hearts were hardened. Nothing was going how they expected or imagined it go. It makes me wonder what it would have been like for them to disconnect from their plan ....in order to connect with something greater happening - the divine in their very presence. What would it have been like to disconnect from expectations and instead connect with the movement of Love and relationships happening among them? There is a saying that says the greatest source of conflict and disappointment is unmet expectations. [repeat that]. Their expectations were one thing that they were hanging on to - and something else kept happening. Most of you know about a personality tool called the Enneagram. If you aren't as familiar with it, it's a tool designed to illuminate your core values - what motivates you and how you lead with your life. Those traits are assigned a number 1-9. Each number is awesome and each number has the vulnerable and not so pretty parts. My number is a 1 - the perfectionist. Generally speaking, 1's like things to be in order, to go well, to be guided with a sense of excellence, and we think we know the very best way of how things should happen. We want them to be right and we

have high expectations of ourselves and others. The motivation is because we truly want the world to be good and right. The down side is that we often think we have the perfect way and it becomes difficult and frustrating when things don't go as planned and it feels like things are now messed up. You can see how this is really valuable - and how it can also lead to levels of frustration. [insert passport story of schedule and kids giggling about dad jokes] I imagine if I was a disciple, I would actually be right in alignment with how they were feeling because it would \*feel\* like things were not going the way they were supposed to go.

But what if disconnecting from expectations is the way to connect with a better and more life-giving way. What might it look like to disconnect from what others think you should do with your life, and instead connect with the movement of God in your life - a movement that might be leading you differently than what your family thinks, or your friends are encouraging? What might it look like to disconnect from the expectations you or others have placed on your life so that you can connect and truly thrive? What might it look like to disconnect from the expectation that you need a certain amount in your retirement account and instead connect with the idea that your money may have a great impact now that will extend well beyond your time in this world? What might it look like to disconnect from the idea that you are supposed to marry someone, have children, and live the American dream - and instead connect with the idea that God's dream extends beyond what we could ever imagine possible? You have to disconnect from expectations...to connect and see God more clearly.

## **The People**

As the disciples struggle to disconnect from their expectations and fully see the power of Jesus, I think about the people who were flocking to Jesus. Y'all - these people had lives. It's not like thousands of them were just sitting around every day thinking "well, I wonder if something cool is going to happen today? Oh check it out, Isn't that Jesus over there?" These were people with lives and in our passages today, chose to disconnect from their daily routines in order to connect to Jesus. They gave up a lot to sit for hours listening to Jesus teach them.

In vv. 53-56, people were deeply hurting and in pain - both physically and mentally - and longed for connection with Jesus in their desperation. And no doubt, there were still people flocking to Jesus to hear his teaching and to see if he really was who he said he was. Keep in mind there were many religious leaders and teachers and their actions were not matching what they were teaching. This is also a reminder that Jesus is super popular - people are craving to be in the very presence of Jesus. . Their soul longed so deeply for connection and healing that they longed for just a touch of the end of his garmet. Can you imagine traveling from all over - hoping for just a second to connect with something or someone that could radically change your life? Can you imagine this desire in your life for just one thing to happen that could change your life from surviving to thriving?

Maybe you feel stuck in your rhythms and how you are living. You are craving a life that follows more deeply in the way of Jesus. It just takes a second - a brief



encounter. Those small encounters with Jesus might look like.... Taking a second to disconnect from expectations and connect with not always knowing. Disconnect from the idea that when you lose someone you love that you have to have it all together and move on with your life and instead connect with the fact that you are in a deep season of grief and it's okay to feel all that you need to feel - and maybe this is the permission you need to do that. It takes just a second to disconnect from judging someone because of a social media post, and instead connect with them over a cup of coffee. It takes just a second to disconnect from thinking you need to know all the answers or need more information before leaning into hard conversations. It takes just a second to disconnect from our phones and tablets and connect to seeing the beauty of the living God in the faces of those sitting right next to us and in creation all around us. It takes just a second to disconnect from the idea that your life needs to get better before you can step foot in the church to worship. It takes just a second to disconnect from your pride in your marriage and say "I'm sorry." It takes just a second to disconnect from the pressure of being the perfect parent and connect with the grace for yourself that you can love your child well.

What about us - The Church?

I've wondered if we, the church, are like the fringes of the cloak of Jesus. As we are an extension of the love of God, the hands and feet of Jesus who are called to love just as Jesus loved. Perhaps people are longing for just a moment of peace, a moment of calm, a moment of knowing that there has to be something greater than what they are

finding in this world - a moment of healing! And here at First on Fifth, we are a community where those who have been hurt by other faith communities, those who have been shunned by the world, those who look different, those who are differently abled, those who love differently, those who are suffering with grief, those who are struggling daily with mental health, those who are struggling with physical health, those who feel lonely and isolated, those who feel marginalized - perhaps HERE, in THIS place, is where they can connect - even for a moment - and feel even the fringe of the power of Jesus and find healing and comfort and peace as we embrace one another through all of our differences - even when we feel tired - because maybe connecting with each other is the very thing that brings back our energy and focus. This is the place where we say “disconnect from all you think church is and connect with this community of imperfect travelers on the journey who are simply following in the ways of Love - the ways of Jesus.” And guess what - as we leave from here, you are still First on Fifth and the encounters you have with people could take just a second to share the love of Jesus that could radically change their life. Just as Jesus had compassion for the people and for his disciples, so does he have compassion for us. Allow yourself to disconnect from the obstacles that keep us from healthy relationships...and connect with the one whom is with us when we are tired, hurting, frustrated, scared, anxious, longing, and even in a hurry - the one who sees you, values you, and hears you. Disconnect...so you can allow yourself to connect with the work of God all around you. Disconnect so you can connect. Amen.