

**W@W061**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 5:35-36** *While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?" Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe." (NIV)*

What had Jesus been saying as the men came with bad news? Verse 34 is explicit: "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." (NIV) As these words were ringing into the crowd, Jairus was told: Your daughter is dead ... it's too late ... let Jesus off your case so He can help the helpable. "Daughter" - the same word was used, of both the healed woman and for the teenage corpse. One was a child in Jairus' household; the other had just become a child of God through faith in Jesus.

Now, the challenge to Jairus was, would he also believe in Jesus; despite the apparently hopeless situation. Jesus does not console the grieving father, nor offer helpful advice. Instead, He commands the man to turn his back on fear and simply believe. Although such a strong word may be at odds with our sentimental ways of dealing with death - Jesus was on a mission. He came to call people to trust Him with all their heart, and therefore He is right to command people to believe (cf Acts 17v30). It is the only way to eternal life.

Faith in Christ is never presented as one of many consumer options for the religious. It is a royal command - which is always met - either by obedience or disobedience. Those who resist the divine instruction to trust Jesus are not just misguided or independent-minded ... they are disobedient! They are not the wise free-thinkers of this age, but sad puppets dancing to a worldly and satanic tune (cf Eph. 2v1-2). Their only hope is Jesus, and yet He is the object of their disobedience. That is why the gospel in your hand and mouth has such urgency (cf Rom 1v5) - commanding people to believe in Jesus before it really is too late.

**Prayer:** *King of Heaven, I thank you for giving me the grace to respond in obedience to Your call to believe in Jesus. Keep me obedient to my calling, as an agent of heaven, clearly to urge others to obey the gospel call. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*

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**W@W062**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 5:37-40** *He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. (NIV)*

There were enough faithless people around! Family friends, the religious crowd and even the disciples were unbelieving - yet Jairus still had the courage (fuelled by his faith in Jesus) to invite the Master to his home. How often, close friends can be disastrous distractions from the gospel. They may ridicule or laugh for seemingly logical reasons, proving their unwillingness to trust Jesus - and resistance to the idea that anybody else should too. That mockery certainly discourages embryo faith; but strangely gives a fresh spur to those whose faith is growing.

So, Jesus excluded all except the inner circles of family and disciples (the trio of Peter, James and John also would grow in faith and later, lead the church), and teaches them that death turns to sleep when Jesus says so ... and Jesus has the power to wake the dead. Hopeless wailing has no place when Jesus is in charge.

True faith is confident that Jesus is in command. Cultural frenzy, personal grief or the domination of darkness will cling on to the last moment, even when the power and authority of God is about to be released. It was He who was setting the agenda, but the faith of Jairus gave the space for God to act. Letting Jesus take the helm is an early and essential sign of faith - without which it is impossible to know His transforming power. Lessons here for the believer too!

**Prayer:** *Father God, help me to be willing to submit my will to yours - as my rule of life - so that I may please you and demonstrate to others that it is safe to give you space to do Your transforming work. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

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**W@W063**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 5:41-43** *He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat. (NIV)*

Despite having all the authority of the Godhead in his body (Col.2v9), Jesus was amazingly gentle. The strong words of command which rebuked evil spirits or commanded faith, were not necessary as He took the girl by the hand: and new life flowed into her. The kindness of God is a Biblical and practical reality - the poor and the meek depend on it!

There was no delay - she got up immediately, walked around and had a bite to eat. Whatever Jairus may have expected, I don't think this was it! But then, he had trusted in the person of Jesus - not trusted Jesus for an expected result. The synagogue ruler had come to Jesus and placed his life into Divine hands. That was all that was needed. There was nothing more that faith could do. There was no 'name it and claim it' theology here, just a simple giving over to Jesus the decisions about where to go, what to do and who to be with ... and then to go with whatever Jesus said. This was real faith.

Although the 'resurrection' miracle comes as a climax to the story, don't forget that it was the straightforward, non-arguing, non-demanding (and patient) faith of her father that sets the scene. Allowing Jesus to work despite logical objections is the hallmark of real faith. Jesus commanded it of Jairus, and he was obedient.

Today, many so called 'intellectual' objections are used to justify lack of faith. They get their reward - the absence of God's intervening power. This is as much a problem for the disciples as with the crowd. Perhaps it is time to reassess our own willingness to make way for Jesus, and to follow His logic rather than demanding that He should copy ours. The life of faith soon becomes visible (which was why Jesus did not them to talk about the miracle - lest this episode should force the timing of the cross). For the watching non-Christian, our willing obedience may spur their consciences to do the same.

**Prayer:** *Father God, give me a fresh insight into my own life - if it is being lived in faith or not. Help me to consciously let you work in my life so that I may know your blessing, and that others can be challenged to obey your call also. For Christ's sake, Amen.*

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**W@W064**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:1-3** *Jesus left there and went to his home town, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offence at him. (NIV)*

Familiarity breeds contempt? But that is not normally true for the local-boy-come-good; or the town that glows in the reflected glory of one of its sporting sons. However, in this passage it is astonishing to see how quickly the narrative moves from 'amazing teaching' to 'offence'. Why? Offence is certainly not a natural sequel to amazement. Something else is going on here.

They did not deny the miracles or the wisdom; but to accept that such a man could come from an ordinary local family was a problem. It was not the goodness, truth or miracles that got Jesus into trouble: the problem was that He was in a different moral league, and it was all a bit too close to home. He has an authority that they did not. God, at close quarters, can present a real problem to those who want Him to be no better than them.

Most non-Christians are content for believers to do worship and fellowship in private - away from public view. Out of sight, is out of mind ... nothing to trouble the disobedient conscience. But a public appearance of faith in Christ will always get its unfair share of derision - whether that be for admitting church attendance, reading the Bible, or going to the office Christian group. Not everybody will be agitated, of course - most show a sympathetically patronising reaction. But the offence is there, if the presence of Jesus is genuinely expressed. Don't dodge it. The good news is that the moral disturbance is often the first stirring of conscience. You live out your Christian life transparently (and explain why), and God will move some of your friends and colleagues from fear to faith.

**Prayer:** *Father God. I do not like being mocked or sensing that I upset colleagues - but please be my helper. I must keep on being transparently Christian otherwise they may never see how much a person can be changed by You. Please help me. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

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**W@W065**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:4-6a** *Jesus said to them, "Only in his home town, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honour." He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith. (NIV)*

Jesus did not cause offence because He was good. People were disturbed because it was clear that He was speaking the words of God. As his life showed the goodness of God (a light that revealed what was in dark places); skeletons jangled in the cupboards. And this was most uncomfortable in His own family home. Millions of Christians in unbelieving households have felt the same tension, yet are painfully aware of their shortcomings. The difference with Jesus was that everything about Him was always right - there was nothing wrong to criticise. But, His holiness was so unnerving that even His relatives wanted to dumb Him down.

God's power is unlimited and His love is unconditional ... but! The big 'but', is that where there is no faith, God's blessings cannot be recognised and received with gratitude. It is not that God is reluctant to pour out his mercy; but unbelieving people refuse to accept it - or thank Him. Such openness to His divine authority would make Him their master: and the benefits of the Kingdom only come to those who submit themselves to the King. And few of the family/friends at Nazareth had any intention of doing that.

Perhaps it has become a sad sickness that also seeps its way into churches. It is almost as though we own Jesus, rather than the other way round. We are glad to have Jesus at our beck and call, but are surprised when He fails to perform to our word of command. That kind of religion is poor advertising to a sick world. However, true faith (an expectancy that Jesus will act in power to glorify His name) is often the prelude to an outpouring of blessing that even the sceptics cannot ignore.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, please help me to trust You that You will speak with authority and act with power where I live and work - so that You can pour out Your blessing to those who are hungry for Your love. In Jesus Name, Amen.*

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**W@W066**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:6b-7** *Then Jesus went round teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. (NIV)*

The ministry of Jesus is often reviewed as a constant round of miracles and nice stories. Mark says that His core ministry task was, teaching the truth about the kingdom of God - and that He was the appointed King. But He did not teach alone, the presence of the disciples was not just that of a film set production entourage, or even as supporting cast. The disciples were there to learn, indeed strategically, they were the principal audience. Village after village heard similar stories, and bit by bit, heavenly values sank into the hearts of these down-to-earth men.

Often, the best way of learning is to teach. So Jesus sent them off (v12 tells us that they were commissioned to call people to repentance). The power to exorcise demons validated this teaching - showing that in the Name of Jesus every spirit must submit - and so should the human hearers. But they were not to go alone, lest their spiritual enemy should get the advantage. Trainees can easily become either inflated with pride in their success, or discouraged to be point of desertion. So, Jesus sent them out two by two.

Today, there are too many go-it-alone Christians. Good ideas and passion can never substitute for a shared conviction of God's call, mutual support and accountability. Without these, heresy breeds quietly and charismatic leaders can divert hoards of honest hearted believers away from living with a gospel agenda. Without praying together, even the best plans will be more flesh than spirit. So, who are your prayer partners at work and church? Involved in a ministry - do it together!

**Prayer:** *Gracious God. Thank You for all I have learned from You, and for wanting to involve me in the work of Your Kingdom. Please team me up with others so that we can learn, pray and work together to Your praise and Glory. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:8-11** *These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff--no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them." (NIV)*

However prepared you think you are, every episode of ministry is a journey into the unknown. The provision comes as we go. It may be nice to think that we are self-sufficient, but that is against the ethos of the gospel. When Jesus comes into our hearts, He does freely by His grace - because we have nothing to offer Him. When we go with the gospel of Jesus, we have no resource except the faith which trusts He will provide.

Jesus was teaching the embryo church leaders - that He supplies everything. And when the supply runs out in one place, move on to another. When the Gospel message is rejected ... they have had their opportunity. The mission of the Kingdom, as taught by Jesus, has a dynamic and urgency that is unfamiliar to many British churches - where 'building bridges to the community' can become an end in itself; instead of taking the gospel across the bridges that open to us, here or elsewhere.

Christians in the workplace relate socially across a wide range of personal interests (family, health, holidays, leisure, hobbies, home decoration ...) so why not share the gospel? Inadequate, we may certainly feel, many believers structure their lives so that 'sharing Jesus' is the last thought, instead of the controlling principle. Food for thought; out of which a plan for gospel action can be set in motion!

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father. Thank you for giving me a Saviour-to-share. Please help me to have the gospel-to-go ready wherever I go. I know that you will provide for me in this, and so I want to trust you to stir me up in zeal and urgency. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*

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## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:12-13** *They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them. (NIV)*

Unlike the moralistic preaching of religious sects, Jesus set His disciples a tougher challenge: to preach repentance. The self-help culture of religion advises that we must add some more good to outweigh the bad. Not Jesus! He taught that, first, sin must be repudiated. Sin, and not just sins. It is easy to find a few faults that we know that we should renounce - but to admit that sin has taken a hold of my nature and that I am incapable of shaking it off without Jesus - that is another matter.

Jesus is the Saviour from both, the punishment of sins, and the slavery to sin. But without a recognition that I am a slave and need to be ransomed from its power by Jesus - I cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven. That is why it is essential to explain the desperateness of the human condition. Advertising good news where there is no bad news ... is a recipe for indifference. Perhaps that is why our friends see no urgency to consider the gospel - they are fine as they are.

If we were fine, there would have been no need for that blooded cross. No, the gospel (good news) is no news at all unless we explain that before God we are far from fine - and under His wrath. That is why repentance is essential. It is as radical a change as driving out demons.

**Prayer:** *Father God. Please keep reminding me of the dangerous spiritual condition of my friends who refuse to repent before you. Help me not to be naïve about their lostness; and help me to call them to repent: in Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**W@W069**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:14-16** *King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." Others said, "He is Elijah." And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago." But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!" (NIV)*

Jesus was getting well known, liked, respected and feared. But who was He? The opinions were a 'prophet', Elijah or John the Baptist. Now, King Herod (the son of Herod the Great who killed all the baby boys in Bethlehem), had recently killed John the Baptist: his guilty conscience opted for John, who had come back to haunt him.

"Who is Jesus?" This is a different question to, "Who is Jesus like?" All God's servants have some of the characteristics of Jesus - they have God's same Holy Spirit in them. But Jesus had all the fullness of God (Col 1v19). So, He spoke with wisdom like the prophets, he did miracles like Elijah, and he confronted consciences like John the Baptist. But even John the Baptist had his own conscience tested by Jesus (Mark 1v7).

When Jesus is present, he challenges the conscience. And the same is true when His representatives (like John the Baptist, or you!) stand for what is right. The light reveals what is hiding in the darkness; and that can be very disturbing. The good news is that a disturbed conscience can be the start of finding a new life in Christ. But don't be surprised if you are not flavour of the month, in the meantime.

**Prayer:** *Gracious God. Thank you for giving me Your Holy Spirit so that I can become more like Jesus. Help me to allow you to work through my life, so that Your light might fall in the dark places around me. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*

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**W@W070**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:17-20** *For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him. (NIV)*

The fascinating thing about truth, is that it won't go away. Herod's marriage had problems - and they just got worse when God's man said what was true. But Herod was fascinated by John's wisdom; it was compelling, although the king could not square it with his bedroom. On the other hand, Herod's wife got one message loud and clear - if John was right then she was wrong. She hated John for speaking the mind of God, and disturbing her personal life and ambitions.

So she manipulated her husband - he thought that John's imprisonment would pacify the woman, and he could still enjoy his 'spiritual chats'. She had murder in mind. And the problem about nursing a grudge, is that you end up giving birth to it. What a different story it would have been, if the man who had been interested in truth, had submitted to it - if Herod had repented and done whatever was necessary to be in the right before God.

There is no shortage of people who are 'interested in spirituality'. Those with some previous Christian encounter: and also those who are puzzled, interested and apparently open to Biblical reason. But a willingness to have truth close at hand, is no substitute for obeying it. Indeed it may be a fatal mistake to confuse familiarity with God's Word, for a personal relationship with Him. This is a good reason to pray for colleagues, as well as to persuade them of the importance of 'doing business with God'.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. Thank you for showing me that it is important to make decisions about the truth I hear. Help me to do that today, at work and in my family. May my example of obedience be the encouragement to others to do the same. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**W@W071**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:21-24** *Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom." She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" "The head of John the Baptist," she answered. (NIV)*

The sinful nature is very cunning. It not only nurtures a desire to do wrong, but it waits for an ideal opportunity to do it. The evil heart-radar of those who ignore God, spots its chance and then blindly seizes it. It does so, because the sinful heart does not want to see anything outside of itself; it operates in the dark and is intensely resistant to the light of truth.

Herod's pompous banquet and the lavish promise to his wife's daughter, set the stage for John's murder. All was apparently innocent, but the underground river of hate caused rapid moral subsidence in the palace. Pride, arrogance, the buying of affection with impossible promises - along with fleshly passion and hatred of God's Word and prophet, were the fruit of demonically inspired, fleshly natures. Any one of them could unleash evil: together they proved lethal. How tragic it is, when people know the truth but refuse to act on it.

Herod had not submitted to the truth John brought to him: instead, he thought he could contain his wife's violent wish. To be interested in the gospel is not enough: God commands everybody to repent! Never underestimate the power of sin in 'nice' people. The gospel is not intended to make people nice, but to save them from their sin. And this passage underlines the need to be saved - however important they think they are. John the Baptist was not afraid to point it out. Are you?

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord God. It has been important for me to see, again, the consequences of not dealing with sin at an early stage. Show me what I need to do, so that I can be 'in the right' with you; and give me the courage to be straight with my colleagues about your call to repentance. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**W@W072**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:25-29** *At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter." The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb. (NIV)*

The proud king could not see any way out. He had invited all the important people so that he could look like the kind ruler (that he was not). The public promise of a gift to his wife's child was as generous as politicians kissing babies - it was a self-serving tactic. Now that the trap had been sprung for John the Baptist, he was helpless. Distressed, yes. But humble to admit his mistake - no! His reputation was at stake, and his need to be everybody's friend overcame his obligation to John and to God.

What a pathetic figure he is now. The text moves Herod off-stage as the camera focuses on John's head being passed between the conspirators; and then the rest of his body is brought out to the sad burial party of faithful believers. What a waste, how awful. But Jesus' disciples were also being prepared for the cruel execution of their Master - and (for many of them) an insight into their own future martyrdom.

Evil had done its work - but so too had John. His task of introducing Jesus to His people, was complete. As John had said (John 3v30), "He must increase, and I must decrease!" Never think that the task of Jesus is to make you great; because the reverse is true. Some lives are indeed cut short but everybody dies, sooner or later. The question is: have you done what the Lord has asked of you? Irrespective of whatever others may think, it is the Lord's verdict that will count! So remember that His task for us today, starts by living and breathing truth into our culture - right where we are.

**Prayer:** *Holy Lord. Thank you for the example of John the Baptist who did not seek his own empire, but Your kingdom. Help me to honour You in my work today so that others will see that You are much greater than I am. For Christ's sake, Amen.*

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**W@W073**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:30-31** *The apostles gathered round Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." (NIV)*

Our passages so far this week (Mark 6v14-29 - a flashback to the beheading of John the Baptist) started when Herod heard that Jesus had sent His disciples to announce the need for repentance (Mark 6v12-13) ... just as John had done! Do you think that the disciples thought they might be next for the chop? They may well have been buoyed up by the extraordinary exorcisms when they used the Name of Jesus to confront demons; but now they were exhausted and needed a rest.

Exhaustion is fertile ground for self-doubt and anxiety. What if Herod should call for them? So Jesus gathers them, listens to their stories, encourages them ... and then invites them to spend time away from ministry - alone with Him. We all need it. Not just a break from the routine or even the genuine thrill of business or career, but a real holiday - a holy day with Jesus. All believers who see their whole lives (home/work/church/leisure) as Christian service, must have their batteries divinely recharged.

At the end of this week, it is worth asking, "When and where can I rest with the Lord?" Without it we may become vulnerable to Satan's tactics, as he wants to disable us from witness next week. If you have the privilege to be 'off' on Sunday, use the opportunity of a day to receive His Word, and to worship. It may take planning and being clear about your priorities to others. But you have to make those decisions for workdays - so you can also choose time with Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, how I need time with You. Especially when I am tired and get things out of Your perspective. Help me to be disciplined to make time to be with You - so that I will not be tricked by temptation; and so I can continue to be useful to You. In Your Name, Amen.*

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**W@W074**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:32-34** *So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognised them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. (NIV)*

The Christian's life often expects one thing, but gets another! For the disciples, the promise of 'quality time' with the Master would have immediately lowered the blood pressure, and the boat trip was a welcome cruise. But not for long! The crowds who were seeking Jesus (for all kinds of reasons) were so keen, that they ran around the lakeside to form a reception committee when the boat landed.

Everybody involved in ministry has experienced the same sinking feeling that the disciples may have experienced. Just when you think that you have a little time to relax, the phone goes, the urgent text arrives, the doorbell rings ... and all of a sudden, R&R is cancelled! Jesus is not grudging nor resentful. He has compassion on them because they have nowhere else to go - to find their Shepherd. His method of feeding hungry hearts is to teach them the truth about the Kingdom of heaven; and about himself as the Shepherd King.

It would be nice to think that God will fit His plan for our lives into our available diary slots. But that is not the way He works. He expects us to be available to serve Him when He calls, and not when we plan to make diary space for Him. Yes, it may be hard and inconvenient, and when we are tired or even not wanting to serve ... but, if the Lord is wanting to bring His truth and love and life to lost sheep - He will give us all the resources we need to work with Him.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. Please forgive me when I don't want to work with You, whatever the reason - particularly when I am tired. Please help me to know that You will give the strength to do whatever You tell me to do ... whenever that is. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**W@W075**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:35-37** *By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." But he answered, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" (NIV)*

The 'Working Hours Directive' was not a part of the ministry of Jesus! The disciples had come to that day, exhausted. They thought that they would have a 'day off' with Jesus ... and they got another day's work! Now the afternoon was getting longer, and the disciples may well have been thinking about their own stomachs: surely it was time to call it a day.

Jesus came back with a response they could not have anticipated, and clearly did not want to hear: "You give them something to eat"! They had already reminded Jesus that the location was remote, the time was late and that feeding the people was not their responsibility. Now, they added, that the cost would be prohibitive - a waste of the humanitarian funds, for people who could buy their own food.

When Jesus calls us to serve - it is to be done in the place He chooses, when He says, and it may seem to be a waste of sources. But we think like that, because we cannot see what He is doing. It only becomes clear after He has involved our faith and shown His power. Like Peter's infamous, "Surely not, Lord!" (of Acts 10:14), we are inclined to dismiss God's call to service ... if it does not fit our wisdom. But that really isn't very wise, is it? Better to follow Mary's instruction (John 2:5), "Do whatever He tells you"! That is the route of blessing for everybody.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, please forgive me for thinking that I can pick and choose which of your instructions I want to do. If you have a task for me to do for you today, at work, please show me and help me to obey. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

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**W@W076**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:38-44** *"How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five--and two fish." Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand. (NIV)*

When we don't know how to do something, the most difficult step is the first one. So Jesus sends His disciples off to find out how much food there is in the crowd. The response hardly represented a banquet! It was a pitifully small amount, but that is how God often works - indeed if it was possible with our own resources we would not need Him ... or worse ... we might think that we were as good as Him.

So, in the face of this derisory supply, the disciples demonstrated some faith in Jesus by obediently getting the crowd to sit down in orderly groups - yet they probably had no idea what He was about to do. But that is the nature of faith, you move in obedience to God, and then He moves in Sovereign power. The result was astonishing. Not only did five thousand men (plus women and children) have something to eat (v36) but they were satisfied (v42). And, the hard working disciples had a whole basket of leftovers each for themselves!

When God wants to demonstrate His power, there is nothing He cannot do! So why do we limit Him? There are times when our logical minds and seasoned experience is not what God is looking for. When He wants us to learn lessons of faith, He calls us to step outside what we can control. That way we realise how small we are, and how great He is. Then He acts powerfully to glorify Himself (and stir our praise) so that we can grow in faith. Perhaps He is doing that with you this week ... don't be frightened that you cannot control what you cannot understand - He can!

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, Thank you that you understand everything and have all power and authority to do whatever is best. Help me to trust you in my circumstances today and seek to obey You, so that Your glory shines through. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

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**W@W077**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:45-46** *Immediately, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray. (NIV)*

The 5000 had been fed, the disciples were refreshed; but Jesus had another appointment. He needed time with His Father, and that needed to be alone. There was no protracted celebration of the miraculous feast; instead, the disciples were dispatched across the lake in a boat - immediately! Jesus did not trouble with a lap of honour - he had not come to wow the crowd but to please his Father ... and so the pressing priority was to pray.

We know only a little about the prayer life of Jesus, from those prayers that were overheard and recorded; but we do know that He gave the top priority to being with His Father. When he taught about prayer, Jesus advised his disciples to get alone with Father God - nobody else in the room, and the door closed. But that night the mountainside became the secret rendezvous between the Father and Son of God - before the next faith-training session for the disciples.

If Jesus needed his secret prayer time, why do we sometimes think that we don't? Of all the priceless privileges of a child, free access to a loving Father must surely be top of the list. Without that intimacy we cannot live as loved ones, engage with our Father's heart, or have the confidence that everything about us is known. It should be obvious that no service for God can be attempted without being with Him; and no victory is complete without giving Him the praise. Obvious? Does that put a new perspective on living today as a Christian?

**Prayer:** *Father God, how wonderful that you should want me to spend time with you. Forgive me for treating this privilege so lightly and for thinking that I can serve you at work and home - without discussing it all with you. I want to follow the example of Your Son who made His relationship with You, a special priority. Teach me how to work with you, today. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

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**W@W078**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:47-50a** *When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, because they all saw him and were terrified. (NIV)*

Jesus was by Himself on the mountainside, praying, while the disciples were getting into heavy weather on the lake. The sails had come down and they manned the oars to keep the boat's head into the wind: lest the waves should come sideways, to swamp their vessel and sink them. But Jesus knew all about it ... whatever they felt about having to save themselves ... He was planning to do that job for them.

We do not know how Jesus 'saw' them (either physically by the moonlight, or by the same astonishing knowledge with which He knows all the details of our troubles), but He did. When Jesus arrived, wading on the water, it was the worst time (4th watch was from 3.00am) for tired seamen: it always seems darkest before the dawn. They had no thought that it could be Jesus, so they screamed in terror. Despite the feeding of 5000, they thought that their security was in their own hands, and had forgotten about Jesus.

This is a true story but also a parable of how easily faithless people assume that God neither knows nor cares - and so they have to fend for themselves and cope as best they can. But the same Jesus who saw them, sees us. Now, as then, Jesus is teaching His disciples what it means to come to the end of their own resources, so that they might welcome Him. The trouble is that self-centeredness is so blinding, especially when things are against us, that even when Jesus is near we think that His presence is another threat. Today's passage does not reveal the happy ending; but does show how the Lord knows and cares and comes at just the right time. All we have to do is to trust Him to do that today, and over the weekend!

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. How blindly I stagger on to fix my own problems - without believing that you love me, know about my circumstances and will reveal your answer at just the right time. The pressures of work can be as savage as the sea (and often as impersonal) but I need to trust You today. Please help me to expect You to meet my need at the time You know is right. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**W@W079**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:50b-52** *Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened. (NIV)*

Exhausted people don't always make good decisions. The disciples' conclusion that the figure of a man, walking on water, in the middle of the night - must be a ghost - owed more to superstition than reality. As they screamed out in terror, Jesus brought reality a step closer ... as he spoke, and turned to climb into the boat. His "take courage", recognised their immediate need to move from despair to faith. "It is I", identified him as the Master they knew and loved. "Don't be afraid", was a command, not only for that pre-dawn darkness but for every dark moment in the future.

As He moved from the water to the boat, even the howling wind had to admit that it was time to be quiet. The Lord had arrived and was in total control. But the disciples could not work it all out ... because they had not understood the last lesson (feeding the 5000). The lesson was one of identity, "Who is this Jesus?" The mountainside meal should have given them the clue; so should the previous boat-in-a-storm experience (Mark 4:35-41): on that occasion they even verbalised the question, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

The key evangelistic challenge is the always the same, "What do you think of Christ?" (cf. Matthew 22:42). The only way to answer that, is by considering the evidence contained in the Bible. And an essential task for us who are Christians is to tell our friends - where to dig to find the treasure! How about starting a discussion group at work, looking at Jesus' central role in history? You could use BeaconLight's 'CrossCheck' presentation to be found at [www.crosscheck.org.uk](http://www.crosscheck.org.uk) (the Bible verses are even written out for you!). Just try asking a friend to watch it with you!

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. I can see how important it is for my friends to discover who you are by looking at the evidence. Help me to have the courage to encourage my friends to look at the Biblical evidence of who You are - even if I cannot answer all their questions! In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

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**W@W080**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**Read Mark 6:52-56** *They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened. When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognised Jesus. They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went--into villages, towns or countryside--they placed the sick in the market-places. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed. (NIV)*

The last verse from yesterday and the first today reveals the disciples' problem: their hearts were hardened ... like hard skin on a well worn surface, yet incapable of feeling. Hardness of heart was the problem of the Old Testament church - they knew the truth but did not feel that it was really for them. They heard Jesus preaching God's truth but somehow it was not for them to act upon.

By contrast the sick and their carers had no doubt that Jesus could heal as well as telling amazing stories about God's kingdom. The text indicates the urgency of faith "... as soon as ... people recognised Jesus ... they ran ... carried the sick to wherever ... they begged ... all who touched were healed". So why were the disciples so slow to join this outpouring of faith? How easily they became like the hypocritical Pharisees, knowing but failing to act - the sure route to hardness of heart.

Abuse your skin and, after the blister, a callus appears. Abuse your heart and after a while it will fail to respond to the call of God or to delight in the grace of God. Yet how many who acknowledge the cross, are not submitted to it. We may see the gross effects in friends whose persistent rebellions against Gospel, wisdom and conscience has left them with no desire nor ability to trust the truth they know. We may even find it in ourselves, when we know the truth but fail to do it. So we may miss the blessing while others with less knowledge of Jesus are glad to receive it. Tragic! Time to repent!

**Prayer:** *Dear Father. I am sorry for treating my relationship with You so casually. Please forgive me for using You rather than obeying what you say. Please cleanse me and soften my heart to receive and act upon Your Word. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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