

A Narrative Critical Study of Mark 6:30-34 in the Context of Teaching as Nation Building in Nigeria

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Abstract

Mark 6:30-34 is a summary report providing a transition to a larger unit of the feeding miracle in 6:35-44, which is a reminiscent of several OT passages such as the miraculous feeding of the people in the wilderness (see Exod 16; Pss 78:18-30; 105:40) and the feeding miracles of Elijah and Elisha (1 Kgs 17:8-16; 2 Kgs 4:1-7, 42-44). But this designation places too much structural weight on Jesus' teaching (6:34) as the concluding element in tandem with the disciples' report of their teaching in 6:30 rather than recognizing the former as an integral part of 6:35-44. This division also fails materially to correspond to the change in subjects from the disciples in 6:30 to Jesus in 6:34 where it is stated, "He began to teach them." Jesus' teaching then becomes a superscript for a miracle (see 1:21-27; 6:2) indicating the didactic force of Jesus' miracles for Mark (see 6:52). His teachings focus on situations that distort the divine image which every human being bears. Jesus' compassion towards the crowds who were like sheep without a shepherd and his move to give them the right 'food' by teaching them brings out his being a teacher *par excellence*. Some argue that the most influential people in any society are its teachers. By the principles they teach and by the patterns they set, they shape society. This presupposes the fact that Nigeria, also, cannot grow without a determined effort by citizens to "build" it. This article studies the teaching ministry of Jesus in Mark 6:30-34 in the Nigerian context. To do this, the work employs the literary critical and contextual methods of biblical exegesis.

Key words: Jesus, Teacher, Context, Nation, Building

Introduction

Mark 6:30-34 provides an interpretive lens for Jesus as Teacher in this earliest of the Gospels. Jesus teaches the Reign of God by how he lives his ministry. His teachings focus on situations that distort the divine image which every human being bears. Jesus' compassion towards the crowds who were like sheep without a shepherd and his move to give them the right 'food' by beginning to teach them brings out his title of being a teacher *par excellence*. Some have argued as already stated that the most influential people in any society are its

teachers. By the principles they teach and by the patterns they set, teachers shape society. This holds water because, there is no nation that can attain its proper goal of political, economic and social functionality without a determined effort by its citizens to “build” their own nation. For a nation to be built, it must have the right foundation. Such can take various dimensions depending on what such a nation sees as its priority. Since nations are primarily built on values acquired through the process of teaching and learning at their different levels, teaching and the subject matter of what is being taught become a major component in nation building. It is on the basis of this premise that this article studies the teaching ministry of Jesus in the overall vision of the human and societal development within the Nigerian context.

For this work to achieve its aim, the method to be used becomes vital. While historical-critical methods look behind the gospel texts and search for sources and traditions, literary criticism treats each gospel as final unified texts and interprets them as they are heard by their audiences. Literary critical method analyzes and evaluates the gospels as cohesive stories with a beginning, middle, climax, and an end, replete with literary devices like allusion, conflict, irony, plot, themes, and so forth. It counters the excesses of historical investigations and helps to highlight the author's main interest (Brown 26) by focusing on the narrative perspectives (literary elements) of the text, such as the implied author, the implied audience, the narrator, the point of view, the setting, plot, and characterization.

In his book, *Story and Discourse*, Seymour Chatman contends that a narrative is essentially a communication. He writes that —what is communicated is story, the formal content element of narrative; and it is communicated by discourse, the formal expression element (Chatman 31).

Provisional Translation of the Text (NRS)

³⁰The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught.³¹ He 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.³² And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them.³⁴ As 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.

Delimitation of the Text

The unit under our consideration is Mark 6:30-34. Applying the dramatic criterion to our pericope we observe the change of character, of place and of time. The previous section, Mark 6:12-29 is the story of John the Baptist. Mark 6:30-34 is a summary report providing a transition to the feeding miracle in 6:35-

44. But from the point of his view, he considers Jesus' teaching (6:34) as the concluding element in relation with the disciples' report of their teaching in 6:30 rather than recognizing the former as an integral part of 6:35-44. Although these two elements seem to be related in teaching, the subjects are different. The disciples are the subjects in 6:30 whereas in 6:34, Jesus is the subject. There is a primary action at the heart of 6:32-34, that is, the futile attempt to evade the crowds. This does not correspond to his division.

We find the verse 30 as a summary statement (see, 6:7b). It clearly connects the report by the disciples to the Mission of 6:7-13. Jesus' suggestion (6:31) that they get alone to find some rest, arises from this report and provides the transition to the scene in 6:32 which begins the extended introduction of the feeding miracle (Guelich 336). At the end of the miracle story, we find the number of men that had eaten (6:44). But we get the impression that the narration ends in 6:53-56, because they reached Gennesaret after the two times of boat travel (6:32, 45). Thus, we may say that this narrative style does not have a good finish. We also find again the failed attempt of Jesus to be alone in 6:53ff. The same situation is portrayed in 6:30-34 where Jesus shows himself that he is pressurized by the people. The people searched Jesus to be healed from their infirmities. The intention of Jesus to be alone with the disciples also fails to be realized.

Location Information

As it is usual with Mark, the location information here in this narrative has a structuralizing function. Mark did not give any details concerning where Jesus is staying and from where the disciples come to meet him. Thus, we assume that their exit point is the last location of Jesus where he waited for them to return from their mission. There again the disciples meet Jesus together. As the context suggests (6:32), that location is somewhere by the side of the Sea of Galilee which was the centre of the ministry of Jesus. From there they are leaving by boat to a lonely place (6:32).

Time Information

The exact time and duration of the event in this narrative is unclear. Mark uses the word *polus* to indicate that it was very (much) late. Verse 30 begins with a new section in Mark's Gospel, which is connected to the situation in 6:7-13. But the connection is not immediate. The preceding passage deals with the story of John the Baptist. What Jesus was doing while his disciples were on mission, is not mentioned. We presume that Jesus could have spent the time meaningfully along the Sea of Galilee while waiting for the disciples to return. We have only little information from which the duration of the narrative events can be derived. Most consistently, the first transition (6:30-34; 35-52) is timely framed. We do not know on which day the disciples returned and met Jesus and we do not know whether it is the day; however, the narrative time portrays "evening".

Persons Involved

This narrative involves three types of people: Jesus, the Disciples and the Crowd. In the first part of the section, we learned that Jesus wants to give his attention to the disciples after their mission and wants to spend time with them that's why he seeks an unpopulated place where there is no pressure of the crowd. But in the planned area, where Jesus wanted to spend a quiet time with the disciples, became occupied and crowded (6:33). It is naturally expected that in spite of his desire for a restful time in solitude with his disciples, we see Jesus acting otherwise by turning his attention towards the crowd. He had compassion on them and taught them many things. By asking the disciples to feed the crowd also, he demands them to fulfill the need of the crowd. Mark's motive for the meals emerge from the fruitless retreat in the narrative context. Jesus' unsuccessful withdrawal from the crowd and peoples' eagerness brings Jesus' compassion to them and he must caringly act firstly by teaching them instead of sending them away.

Mark 6:30-34 and its Literary Context

Mark's gospel opens with a summary of the mission of John the Baptist (1:1-13) as a preface to the narratives of the baptism and the temptation of Jesus. And it ends with the graphic depiction of his arrest, trial, crucifixion and burial (14:1-15, 47) and three women's arrival at the empty tomb (16:1-8). Apart from this, it has two large sections which consist of the Galilean ministry (1:14-9, and 50) and the Judean ministry (chs. 10-13). Our pericope, Mark 6:30-34 is part of the Galilean ministry. Therefore, let us see how our pericope is interwoven into the context of the gospel.

Our text is carefully integrated into the literary context of the gospel. We find in it many situations and scenes which are similar to the Markan narrative. They are also typical that we could know them again and relate them with one another (Collins 316).

- i. We find the situation in v. 31ff which is typical of Mark: The rush of the crowd is too much that Jesus and the disciples could not rest, not even been able to eat. Therefore, Jesus and the disciples are leaving to a lonely place. To go to that place, he uses the boat. But wherever he goes, people from all the surrounding regions are gathered there. This scenario is very much common in the gospel of Mark.
- ii. The situation in v. 6:31ff is repeated later in 6:53-56. Other than in 6:31-34 where the people as the sheep without shepherd crave for the teachings of Jesus, here the stress falls on the healing power and the activity for the sick and the infirmed.

The original introduction to the miracle story lies in v. 34 with the note of Jesus' looking at a large crowd with compassion (see 8:2). Thus, using the familiar

theme of Jesus crossing “in a boat” “to the other side” to evade the crowds, the collector introduces the crowd drawn from “all of the cities”, a hyperbole similar to the broad generalizations in the summaries of 3:7 and 6:53-56. Mark's contribution appears limited by adapting vv. 31-32 and the additional note in v. 34, “and he began to teach them.”

Structural Analysis of Mark 6:30-34

The plot contains a series of episodes, even though they are loosely linked with each other. Generally speaking, each episode (or event) in the whole plot may be connected by *kai* (and), even though diverse conjunctive particles may be used within the episode (Rhoads 75). More specifically, the episode as the literary unit would be analyzed is based on the narrative elements in the verses thus,

Verse 30: The apostles returned to Jesus and reported to him

Verse 31: The Disciples' Mission

Verse 32: The Specification of the Place

Verse 33: The Encounter between Jesus and the Crowd

Verse 34: The Shepherd and Teacher Motif

The fulcrum of the unit is in v. 34, it provides the audience conveniently with a title of “the shepherd and teacher” which reveals the mission of Jesus.

Exposition of the Text

As already stated above, the exegesis of the text would be done based on the narrative elements in the verses.

Verse 30: The apostles returned to Jesus and reported to him

The Evangelist, Mark as he narrates the feeding story also conveys his theological messages to the reader. Therefore, the literary analysis tool will be more useful to study the vocabulary, theme and the style and to bring out the deeper meaning behind the text. R. Pesch takes this unit as the beginning of the next major section in Mark (6:30-8:26) developed around the idea of eating (Pesch 349-50). The report of the Twelve resumes and concludes the mission of 6:7-13. By intercalating John the Baptist's death (vv. 14-29) into the summaries in 6:12-13, 30, the evangelist has created an extended time span in which the activities reported in 6:30 have filled. It is also a message to Herod that the response of the crowd and Jesus' popularity among the people would not create an easy situation for him to do to Jesus as he had done to John the Baptist (6:14, 31-34) (Guelich 338).

Verse 30 is transitional and has a coherence and connection with the stories in 6:35-56 which in turn is connected with the account of the mission of the disciples. The vocabulary used in this part suggests that it is a Markan

construction, since all the words, except *hoi apostoloi* are common elsewhere in the gospel. The description of the report given by the Twelve has the vagueness which characterizes Mark's account of the mission; he merely relates that the missionaries reported to Jesus all that they had done and taught. For the conjunction of *poiō* and *didaskō* (see Acts 1:1.) (Taylor 318).

Mark uses the word *hoi apostoloi* only here in 6:30. He also uses that in 3:14 which is disputed by the scholars (they suggest that the phrase here is probably due to assimilation) (Black 79). One should understand that here, this word is used with the meaning that points to their role rather than to their official title or status. This is the only occasion in which they return from their apostolic work and that is why they are suitably called Apostles. Besides this, there could probably also be another ground for naming the disciples as apostles. Since the preceding verse (v. 29) deals with the disciples of John the Baptist, Mark in order to differentiate Jesus' disciples from them, calls them *hoi apostoloi*. It also indicates the time of its usage and the primitive character of Mark. Presumably, Mark might try to suggest the definition of the apostleship in the nearby context of Mark 6:30, which is linked with the commission (6:7-13), suffering (6:14-29), and miracle (6:30-44). Indeed, these three factors are closely related to the essence of apostles' ministry.

Panta hasa epoiēsan kai hosa edidazan (All they did and taught) summarizes their mission endeavors. Here it is not explicit what they really did as a mission. What they "did" (*epoiēsan*) obviously included the exorcisms and healings mentioned in 6:13 and perhaps even the preaching of 6:12. Typical of Mark, however, the Twelve also reported their ministry of "teaching" in keeping with the evangelist's accent on Jesus' ministry of "teaching".

The third-person narrator radically changes the scene from John the Baptist to the twelve apostles. This swift transition and a brief description of the apostles' return seem to make an overlapped image that combines John the Baptist's tragic destiny with the present ministry. Hence, v. 30 can describe the official emergence of the apostles, who are the authorized representatives of Jesus' saving ministry.

Verse 31: Disciples Mission

In v. 31, Jesus gently suggests to the disciples that they move to an isolated place to rest. *Deute*, translated as "come," is not an imperative verb, but usually used as a hortatory particle (adverb) in the Gospels (Arndt, et. al. 200). The mood of Jesus' utterance is not strong but soft to the readers. The Greek word, *erēmos* in *erēmon topon* does not always mean the "desert" or "wilderness" as the noun. *Erēmos* also has meanings as the adjective such as "isolated," "desolate," "deserted," and "empty." Although in other places of the Gospel of Mark, we find Jesus going to a lonely or uninhabited place to pray, here it is used with a

significance of spending time with the disciples after their mission. *Erēmos topos* (deserted place) occurs in 1:35, 45 where Jesus attempts to move out of the towns and villages away from the people.

Anapausathe (to rest for a while) implies the necessity of the disciples finding some time to recuperate after their mission. Unlike the references to Jesus' desire to be alone for prayer (See Mark 1:35; 6:45-46.), this is a call for the disciples to rest and it stands out in Mark's Gospel. It may well reflect the same attitude as the following reference to Jesus' compassionate response to "the sheep without a shepherd" (v. 34), and it expresses his concern for his disciples who have been so preoccupied with the comings and goings of the people that they could not even find time to eat. Jesus' proposal *eis erēmon topōn* (go to an unpopulated place) and rest a while recalls the scene in 1:35, when Jesus rose early in the morning, while it was still dark, went out to an unpopulated place and began to pray there. The similarity suggests that here Jesus proposes a time of rest and perhaps prayer so that the disciples can renew themselves after the intense activity of their itinerant preaching, exorcising, and healing (vv.12-13) (Collins/Attridge318). The people knowing their intention gathered there to listen to Jesus and to get healed of their diseases. The strong wind could have slowed the speed of the boat that the people reached that place before them and the place became "populated", the same situation depicted in 6:47a, 48a where the strong wind blocked their travel that they remained in the midst of the sea.

Verse 32: Specification of the Place

Jesus and the disciples privately moved to a quiet site to rest and eat. This scene enters into the resolution stage of the conflict that has been developed in the previous scene, despite the lack of description of the conversation between them. The narrator does not clarify the specific name of the place where they are going to, but it repeated: *eis erēmon topōn kat' idian* (privately to an isolated place) that was already mentioned in the preceding verse. This simple description seems to change the scene's mood from busyness and tiredness to a calm and peaceful atmosphere.

For the disciples, the boat as a means of living before meeting Jesus became a means of ministry after meeting Jesus. In particular, Jesus often used it as a way of distancing from the crowd as well as a transportation tool. Jesus and the disciples used a boat when they wanted to leave the crowd (see 3:9; 4:36; 5:18; 6:32, 45; 8:10), and they met the crowd again when they got out of the boat (see 5:2, 21; 6:54). Physical distancing is necessary for spiritual refreshment. The disciples could enjoy the communication with Jesus in a boat without any disturbance.

Verse 33: The Encounter between Jesus and the Crowd

The narrator's focus was on Jesus and the disciples in previous scenes, but now

it is on the crowd who explicitly appears in this scene. The public setting begins again with the encounter between Jesus and the crowd. People who were near the sea saw them going and recognized them as Jesus and the disciples. Some scholars say that the attempt to avoid the crowds seems to have failed (Strauss 273). However, when considering the time that Jesus has been with the disciples in a boat without disturbance, it might be plausible to interpret that the original intention of Jesus was achieved in a boat. If it is true, the genuinely isolated place is the boat.

The disciples might have the spiritual renewal and the physical rest there. In this verse, the private setting ends, and the public setting begins again. The narrator uses a hyperbolic expression, "They ran on foot from all the towns." It seems to reflect the number of people, the five thousand men (Stein 312). Presumably, people near the seaside might see them first, and then the news might be spread quickly in the surrounding villages. Geographical data shows that there are numerous coves along the seaside (Guelich 340). Thus, it might not be difficult for people to recognize them and run to the anchorage ahead of them. As to the wording of the latter part of verse 33, there are three different manuscript readings, *proēlthon autous* (got there ahead of them), *sunēlthon pros auton* (gathered at it), *proēlthon autous kai sunēlthon prosauton* (got ahead of them and gathered at it) (Aland *et al.* 141). People's quick responses must be accurate because the major reading is the first one, and the third one also includes the early arrival. The description that people ran and arrived in advance shows how they were eagerly expecting Jesus. John 6:2 gives the reason why they so desired to see Jesus, "They saw the signs which Jesus was performing on those who were sick." The crowd needed the divine power of Jesus since they could not help heal themselves. Therefore, they hurried to Jesus, the only healer.

Verse 34: Shepherd and Teacher Motif

Mark has the motive to present Jesus as the shepherd who cares for Israel. A sheep without a shepherd is a proverbial metaphor used to indicate the leaderless Israel. We should note that in this narrative, Jesus' compassionate activity is teaching. In the Israelite tradition, the Torah was considered as the guidance during the historical times when there were no leaders in Israel. Verse 34 most likely contains remnants of an earlier tradition of feeding miracles. Jesus reacts with "compassion" when he sees the crowd rather than with agitation at not being able to get away from the public (vv. 30-31). But His compassion here does not grow out of the urgency of this situation (8:2), but out of his concern for them as "sheep without a shepherd".

Mark's presentation of Jesus' role as a teacher particularly within the context of his healing and exorcism ministry (see 1:21-27); 6:2-3), points to Mark's perception of the didactical role of Jesus' total ministry. Thus, we may assume this sentence, "and he began to teach them" as Mark's redactional work

(Guelich 352). To say that Mark changes the thrust of Jesus' compassionate response from feeding to teaching draws too great a contrast between the evangelist's emphasis on Jesus' teaching and his "mighty works" (Gnilka 259). One could assume that the crowds had come to see and hear Jesus and that he had fulfilled their wishes (Guelich 340).

Summary

This analysis has shown that Mark's narrative converges on the image of Jesus, the Shepherd naturally in his first feeding story and at the same time provides the audience conveniently with a title "the shepherd and teacher" as emphasized in v. 34. Although Mark does not develop explicitly a Shepherd Christology in the traditional titular sense, the analysis of Mark's narrative of Jesus' deeds suggests that he is the *de facto* shepherd king and teacher who cares for his people. As the true shepherd teacher, Jesus stands in contrast to the religious leaders and Herod (2:16; 2:23-3:6; 6:14-28). Thus, Mark's first feeding story recapitulates Jesus' teaching and deeds to show that he is the God-sent compassionate shepherd who seeks, gathers, and tends for his sheep.

Mark 6:30-34: Theological Considerations

Christology

In the Christological aspect, Mark has three unique portrayals such as Jesus' concern of rest (v. 31), shepherd motif (v. 34), and the dialogue between Jesus and the disciples to find out what they had (v.38). These descriptions present how Mark uniquely understands the feeding miracle of Jesus. According to Mark, Jesus had compassion for the disciples as well as the crowd. Furthermore, Jesus' motive of compassion is more strengthened through shepherd imagery which is the frequently used motif in the Old Testament. In addition, Mark describes the interaction between Jesus and the disciples' right before the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. Jesus let them find out, and they obeyed it and found out the food. Compared to other Gospels, Mark only added the portrayal of Jesus' kind instruction for the disciples who must have been confused. In Mark 6:31, when they returned from the mission, Mark only described Jesus' concern about the fatigue of the disciples, suggesting moving to an isolated place.

Discipleship

When it comes to discipleship, the pericope also shows the disciples' ministry as the extension of Jesus' ministry. The disciples performed healing and exorcism when they were sent to the crowd as Jesus did, and they also acted as the extension of Jesus when they gave the loaves and fish to the crowd. When considering the essence of discipleship in Mark 8:34, the disciples should follow behind Jesus with the same heart.

Mark seems to hint at how the disciples should behave through the immediate context, which is the death of John the Baptist. The miracle occurred when the disciples gave up their initiative and followed Jesus' commandment. Indeed, true discipleship includes self-denial and cross-bearing, following Jesus Christ, not going ahead of Him. At last, it might lead to martyrdom like John the Baptist. Despite their lack of faith, Jesus did not give up loving them and using them as the disciples. The compassion of Jesus covers even the blindness and ignorance of the disciples.

Jesus as Teacher in Mark 6:30-34 and Nation Building

The image of the teacher in any given society depends on the importance that the society gives to its educational system, which itself determines to a large extent the level of the nation's sustainable development. In other words, the educational system, involving teaching and learning, is intimately connected with nation building. In most societies of the world, there are both the informal as well as the formal systems of teaching and learning. Whereas the socio-cultural environments of the various cultural areas determine to a greater extent who teaches its citizens its socio-cultural norms and values informally, the formal educational system is organized through some standardized teaching systems at different levels depending on the age and type of educational goals envisaged by the society. In most instances, informal teachings are carried out by cultural agents like parents, family members, peer groups, elders of the village and clan, etc. In as much as these agents impart knowledge usually of the affected traditions, cultural values and norms, they could rightly be called teachers. Within the socio-cultural set up, there are also teachers of traditional professions and trades. These, in their different ways contribute to the development of the given society.

Within the formal educational system, the teacher is professionally trained to impart knowledge to citizens for the purpose of liberating them from ignorance and equipping them with the requisite information for the transformation of the society. Consequently, even though the society may decide what type of knowledge it wants for its citizens, which eventually will lead to the building up of the community, it is the teacher who forms the link in the process of the transmission of such knowledge by imparting the required information and techniques through formal teaching. In the process of nation building therefore, the teacher is indispensable. For his/her work to be credible, the teacher must guard the content of his/her teaching against those elements that are capable of misleading the citizens or misinformation that may produce negative results, thereby frustrating the very goals of his/her teaching, namely, the liberation of the individual and the development of the community. Such elements can be as a result of deliberate policy on the part of the policy formulators or out of negligence of the ethics of the teaching profession on the part of the individual

teacher. In order to forestall this, both policy makers on teaching and learning as well as the teachers must be guided by some basic principles that are informed by core values without which proper human and socio-political developments become unrealizable.

For the Christian community, such values take their root in the teachings of Jesus himself. Since most of the gospel values like honesty, justice, love etc. are universal, they still form the basic guiding principles for teaching and learning in a multi-cultural and religiously pluralistic community like Nigeria. Whenever those guiding principles are neglected in the process of teaching and learning, the desired goals of human and societal development cannot be achieved. Proper development cannot neglect human development, and there is no human development without development of character, and character is formed on values that go beyond material considerations. That is why the teacher and the society must insist on those values as integral component of the teaching profession.

Building the Nation: The Nigerian Teacher's Experience

The teaching profession in Nigeria has gone through long process of transformation in the course of Nigeria's history and development. There was a time when the teacher was the leader and model in most Nigerian communities. He/she was trusted and respected because he/she was seen as the custodian of morality. That was the time when teaching at all levels was a coveted profession even when it was not financially lucrative; certain 'historical and social circumstances could have contributed to this perception of the teaching profession. With his/her minimal educational qualification, even the elementary school teacher, belonged to the elite group in the society of the time, who felt obliged to provide the needed intellectual and moral leadership for the building up of the community they found themselves.

Today, the times have changed and the image of the teacher and the teaching profession has also changed with it. The societal emphasis has shifted from inculcating values through education of the citizens to their immediate material satisfaction. Consequently, the emphasis is no longer on character formation which is achieved through education, but on the acquisition of wealth within the shortest possible time. The consequence is the violation of the basic moral principle of the end justifies the means. In this process, the teacher is hardly considered an important agent of human and national transformation. Thus, policy makers neglect the teacher's function in the quest for national transformation. They tend to pay attention to short-term programmes of material development that only satisfy the greed of a few individuals.

The neglect of the teacher's function in the society has led to the near collapse of the entire educational system in Nigeria. Citizens do not value education as a

means of self-development. It is only necessary in as much as it is a means to achieving wealth. But since wealth can be achieved through other means like stealing, kidnapping, money laundering, prostitution, armed-robbery, political manipulations, yahoo etc., many prefer such means than the difficult process of teaching and learning. The result of this approach is what the Nigerian nation has witnessed in the immediate past and in the present. In place of national development, the nation is confronted with massive illiteracy, poverty, ignorance, frustration, structural and instigated violence, political disorientation and deception, selfish economic policies and decisions, and of course, religious exploitation and interdenominational bigotry.

As long as the function of the teacher is neglected, and the teaching profession remains unattractive and the content of what is taught is deficient of the core moral values, there can never be a sustained development of the Nigerian nation. Nation building is not a matter of legislation alone. Legislation that neglects the development of the citizen does harm to national integrity. Legislation must recognize the indispensable function of the teacher in the process of nation building. There must be a way of rediscovering this function as a matter of urgent national policy. Unless the teaching profession becomes once again attractive and credible, the national orientation will continue to be confused and chaotic. Teaching must be rescued from the hands of opportunists and frustrated gold diggers who have neither the moral credibility nor the professional competence to be entrusted with the future of the Nigerian citizenry and the nation at large.

The good of the nation is more important than the selfish desires of individuals. It is for this reason therefore that this article proposes the principles of Jesus the teacher to the Nigerian teacher and policy makers. Even though he was a peripatetic teacher, his major aim was to transform individuals and his immediate community by liberating them from ignorance rather than for the purposes of immediate material gains. In his teaching, he chooses the core values of the kingdom of God as the best means of effecting individual and community transformation. He was conscious of the fact that once people have the right attitudes to life, informed by the core values of the kingdom, community transformation was only a matter of time. To achieve any meaningful national development, the Nigerian teacher must possess and be in a position to transmit these core values while the citizens on their part must be ready to accept and internalize them.

Conclusion

This article sets out to examine the role of the teacher in nation building. As our starting point, we carried out an exegesis of Mark 6:30-34; we encountered Jesus exercising his function as a teacher to satisfy the needs of the desperate crowd which most probably was looking for food from him. Jesus preferred teaching

to feeding, because he knew that the development of the society begins from the liberation of the individual from ignorance. This text was then read in the context of the Nigerian educational policy on teachers and the Nigerian teacher's experience. The article established that there is an intimate relationship between nation building and the functions of the teacher. This is based on the premise that the teacher is the link between transmission and human transformation. Nigeria suffers from proper national development because attention is not paid to the teaching and learning process especially as it affects the teacher. It discovered that the image of the Nigerian teacher has undergone much transformation from the colonial and missionary school era when teachers were leaders and the custodian of morality in the community, to the present when both the teaching profession and the character of the teacher are in the danger of total collapse. This work therefore recommended that the ongoing reform in the Nigerian educational system should include a reestablishment of the bond between the teacher and nation building through a deliberate policy. It further proposed that the teacher should reclaim the lost glory of being truly the custodian and transmitter of the core gospel values without which the community cannot truly experience a sustained human and national development.

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