

Reaching the Hurting and Lost Compassion and Mercy • Message 6

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Prayer Points for Prayer Time

- Thank God for the example of Jesus, who entered into our brokenness.
- Pray for courage to step into uncomfortable situations to help others.
- Ask God to help you carry His love into your workplace, home, and community.

Scripture Reading:

While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." But the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons." Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Matthew 9:32-38 (NIV)

A. Introduction

I must say, when I got this particular subject for my talk, I was not necessarily thrilled. For as long as I have been a follower of Jesus and have taken spiritual gifts tests, I have not scored well on these. In fact, I do not believe that I have ever scored above a zero on any of the spiritual gifts tests I've ever taken.

I'd like to start today with a scenario.

Have you ever seen a situation and thought to yourself,
Someone should really do something about that.

Maybe you're driving down the road and you see a car pulled over on the shoulder with the hood up, and you think, *Man... someone should probably stop and help them.*

Or maybe you see someone struggling to carry way too many grocery bags into their house, and the thought crosses your mind, *Somebody should give them a hand.*

Or maybe you walk past someone who is clearly having a hard day, maybe they're overwhelmed, hurting, or just carrying something heavy in life. And the thought pops up in your mind: *Someone should really check on them.*

And then sometimes... about five or ten seconds later... it hits you.

Wait. I'm someone.

Now, I don't think most of us ignore needs because we're bad people.

Life is busy. We've got places to go, things to do, people of our own. And sometimes, the needs around us become almost invisible.

But when you read the Gospels, there is something very noticeable about Jesus: Jesus never rushed past people. Crowds didn't blur together for Him. Interruptions didn't annoy Him.

When Jesus looked at people, He noticed them.

Matthew tells us something powerful about one of those moments...

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them...

And that one sentence tells us something incredibly important about the heart of Jesus... and the kind of heart His church is meant to have. Because compassion begins with something very simple: Seeing the broken.

B. To exercise compassion and mercy, we must:

1. SEE the BROKEN.

(Matthew 9:36a. C/R: Psalm 145:8-9; Luke 10:25-37)

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them...

Matthew 9:36a (NIV)

Jesus saw people. He didn't see problems, inconveniences or adverse circumstances. His sight focused on people.

Jesus did not shut His eyes towards needs.

Splagchnizomai (σπλαγχνίζομαι) - to feel compassion from the bowels or guts.

The Greek word here means to feel something in the deepest level. It describes a gut-level emotional response that demands action.

Biblical compassion does not just mean feeling something; it also means doing something. In Scripture, compassion is never meant to stop with a feeling. If compassion is real, it moves us toward action.

This isn't just an action to take... this is literally the character of God.

The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.

Psalms 145:8-9 (NIV)

One of the issues that we have is not seeing. I just want to point out three reasons why I think people in churches today have trouble seeing.

Many people are hurting around us:

- Loneliness
- Financial stress
- Addiction
- Grief
- Spiritual lostness

But suffering often becomes invisible because:

- **Desensitization** – we see so much suffering we stop noticing.
- **Deflection** – we assume someone else will help.
- **Self-focus** – we become consumed with our own needs.

The priest and Levite in the Good Samaritan story saw the wounded man but chose distance.

“A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.”

Luke 10:31-33 (NIV)

Jesus calls His followers to see differently than the world.

Who in your world is hurting? Compassion starts with paying attention to the needs around you.

2. **FEEL the HEART of Christ.**

(Matthew 9:36b. C/R: Romans 5:8)

*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, **because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.***

Matthew 9:36 (NIV)

The Greek word **eleos (mercy)** means: **showing kindness to someone who cannot help themselves or who deserves judgment.**

Mercy is: **compassion expressed toward someone in need.**

What need did these people have? Harassed and helpless. Those words in Greek simply mean torn apart and thrown down.

He saw a group of people beaten down and without a shepherd.

The gospel itself is the greatest example of mercy.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8 (NIV)

We did not deserve rescue. God moved toward us anyway.

I think some of us experience what some call compassion fatigue. There are so many needs in the world that it just feels overwhelming.

You see:

- Global poverty
- Lack of access to clean drinking water
- Natural Disasters
- Wars and rumors of wars
- People struggling around us

It can feel like there is no way to fix every problem. In truth, there isn't. But I don't believe God called you to fix every problem. Just like I don't believe that Brookwood is called to fix every problem.

But I do believe that God calls you to do something. There are needs where God places you. In fact, I would say that God placed you where you are to be His representative and offer kindness to someone who deserves judgment.

Compassion is not about solving the world's problems; it's about faithfully loving the person God puts next to you.

3. MOVE towards NEED.

(Matthew 9:37-38. C/R: James 2:15-17)

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Matthew 9:37-38 (NIV)

Jesus never stopped with only feeling something toward people. He always acted on that feeling.

He healed the sick. He feeds the hungry. He casts out demonic spirits. He touched the unclean. He restores those who are broken.

Compassion and Mercy always move towards others.

Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

James 2:15-17 (NIV)

James is clear here: If you feel something but do nothing, that type of faith is dead. Real, authentic faith results in action.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan man saw the wounded, stopped to check on him, bandaged him up, and paid the cost to recover for the man.

Compassion and Mercy always cost us something. It costs:

- Time
- Energy
- Inconvenience
- Comfort

The thing that I hear often is, *What if someone takes advantage of my kindness?*

Be wise, but generosity over suspicion should be our lean. Which of those, generosity or suspicion, seems to reflect the character of God?

I say this often, *If we fall, we fall towards Christlikeness.* We fall pursuing God, not running away from Him.

I think it is crucial to say this, even though you have heard it during multiple sermons in this series: We share mercy and compassion because it is the pathway of the Gospel. We want more people in heaven. We meet needs to share the gospel.

All of heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents. That is our aim. That was also the aim of Christ.

*Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, **to send out workers** into his harvest field."*

Matthew 9:37-38 (NIV)

Notice what Jesus asks us to pray: *Send out workers.* That's why we are doing this series. That's what our prayer has been. *Lord, capture someone's heart and send them out into the world like an arrow from your bow towards those in need.*

This is what the Lord did for us. It is what we remember when we participate in the Lord's Supper.

COMMUNION MOMENT

God saw our brokenness. He felt compassion for us even though we were His enemies. He moved towards us in Christ.

Communion is the reminder that God did not stay distant from our need.

He didn't just see us. He didn't just feel something for us. He came to us.

The bread reminds us that Jesus took on flesh. He stepped into our world. Into our suffering. Into our brokenness.

The cup reminds us that His mercy was costly. Not cheap. Not convenient.

It cost Him His body. It cost Him His blood.

The same compassion we are called to show others...is the compassion that has already been shown to us.

We don't move toward the hurting to earn God's love. We move because we have already received it.

So, before we take communion, I want to give you just a moment to reflect.

- Where has God shown you mercy?
- Where has He met you in your brokenness?
- Where has He moved toward you when you didn't deserve it?

Take a moment... and thank Him.

And as you hold the bread and the cup, I want you to remember this:

This is not just a symbol of forgiveness.

It is a symbol of the compassion of God on full display.

Jesus saw you.

Jesus loved you.

Jesus came for you.

Let's take the bread together.

(pause / take bread)

Let's take the cup together.

(pause / take cup)

Let's be the hands and feet of Jesus to the world this week. Let's pray.