



Why Church?

Sunday July 7, 2023
Why Compassion?
Luke 10:25:37
Pastor Athol Barnes

Compassion and the Gospel must go together. It is a pillar of the church, and true compassion will always cost us something.

Compassion can also overwhelm us. The world is full of hurting people, how do we avoid becoming cynical and doing nothing to help?

In Luke 10, Jesus tells the parable of the good Samaritan.

Jesus responds to a question by an expert of the Mosaic Law, "*Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" Luke 10:25. Jesus asks him, "...*what is written in the law?*".

The scribe answers Jesus' question by quoting Deuteronomy chapter 6, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself*" Luke 10:27.

Jesus commends him, but the learned man is not satisfied. He knows that that he is not perfectly loving towards his fellow man, so he is looking for a way out, a lower bar. And asked the question "*who is my neighbor?*"

Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan to correct the lawyers understanding of the law (see Luke 10:30-37).

Jesus tells of a man who fell into the hands of robbers who left him for dead. Along the path a priest and a Levite both looked the other way and refused to help him.

Possibly, both of these men were returning from serving in the temple, and they could have used the excuse that they didn't want to become ceremonially unclean by touching a dead body.

Maybe they had other excuses, the same excuses that we use today; I don't have time, it will cost me too much, or it will be an interruption to my plans.

The next person to come by is the Samaritan, the one least likely to have shown compassion for the man because of their racial standing.

The Samaritan did not consider the injured man's race or religion. He was only a person in need of assistance, and he goes above and beyond. He dresses the man's wounds. He puts the man on his animal and takes him to an inn. He then goes beyond any expectation and tells the innkeeper that he would pay for any extra expenses on his return trip. He essentially gave the innkeeper a blank check.

The Samaritan generously gave of his time and resources. The Samaritan knew where his supply came from; he knew that everything he had come from God, and that God would pay the bill.

When you give to help someone in need, God is paying the bill (See Proverbs 19:17).

God's kingdom is a kingdom of excessive abundance and extravagant generosity.

The Samaritan saw his neighbor as anyone who was in need, and Jesus now asks the lawyer if he can apply the lesson to his own life with the question, "*Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?*" ([Luke 10:36](#)).

The lawyer grudgingly answers correctly, and Jesus tells him, "*Go and do likewise,*" meaning that he should start living as the law tells him to live.

Compassion is not an optional extra for the believer, it's a command. We are to show compassion and love for those we encounter in our everyday activities, regardless of their race, sex, religion, or political affiliation. The criterion is need. If someone has a need and we have the supply, then we are to give generously and freely, without expectation of return.

However, there is no person on earth who can meet this standard because Jesus sets the bar so high, and it challenges our selfish nature. We see the person in need and justify why we don't need to help them. The truth is that we often look like the priest and the Levite in this parable.

But the story is about a bigger picture. When we realize that no amount of good works will ever meet the standard set by Jesus, we will never be able to do enough good things to inherit eternal life. The question of this legal expert is the question of the ages, "*what must I do...to inherit eternal life?*"

To inherit eternal life, we must put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ, the risen Lord. Only then, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will we be able to love our neighbor as Jesus does.

Compassion has always been the hallmark of the church, but it does not stand alone. There must be a strong connection between compassion and mission, between compassion and worship, and between compassion and the Bible.

Compassion without mission is simply making the road to hell more comfortable.

Compassion without worship is doing good deeds in order to bring glory to our own name.

The compassion of the church must always bring glory to the name of Jesus. Acts of compassion done for the glory of God are in themselves acts of worship.

Compassion without the foundation of the word of God lacks true empathy and the power to change lives. Only the word of God coupled with the revelation of the Holy Spirit has the power to change lives.

Obviously, we will never be able to eradicate all the pain and suffering in the world, only Jesus is coming back to do that. But what we are called to do is to listen to the Holy Spirit and let him lead us to show compassion. We can so easily miss opportunities for blessing because we are simply too busy or focused on too many things.

I challenge you to pray every morning, asking the Lord to show you who He wants you to show compassion to today. Someone who needs a miracle today.

Jesus stepped down from his throne in glory and became as one of us in order to provide a way for us to be saved. The Gospel is a message of divine compassion.

May the church proclaim the Gospel by intentionally helping those in need with an eternal perspective.