

Have you ever wondered if Jesus cares for you? We know from the Bible that Jesus demonstrated compassion for many people, but sometimes, when life's trials assail us, we may begin to doubt whether Jesus truly cares. Some of you are there now, wondering if Jesus sees you and your situation.

But the Bible assures us that Jesus has never lost his heart of compassion. We read about a display of his compassion in Matthew 14 from verse 13. It was also a time when Jesus was dealing with his own pain; John the Baptist, his relative, had just been beheaded. Jesus was grieving and needed some time alone (see Matthew 14:13). He told everyone to go away, so that he could go and absorb his grief and contemplate his personal loss.

But the crowd followed him and found where he was. I am sure Jesus could be forgiven for being a bit frustrated; he was human, after all. However, we read in verse 14, "*As he got out he saw the large crowd, **and he had compassion on them** and healed their sick.*"

The Greeks thought that one's stomach or inner core was the place where pity and love originated. The Greek word used here for compassion conveys the meaning that Jesus was moved to the pit of his stomach with compassion. This is the nature of Jesus.

Compassion and Wrath

But is Jesus all compassion? Is he a pushover who just overlooks our sin because we are too weak to resist temptation? No, he is also the God of justice, the mighty king who will one day destroy his enemies. We can fall into the danger of seeing Jesus as all compassion and no justice, but he is fully both. Something we need to always bear in mind, the mercy and compassion of Jesus is not at odds with the wrath of Jesus as judge.

Dane Ortlund writes, "*The more robust one's felt understanding of the just wrath of Christ against all that is evil both around us and in us, the more robust our felt understanding of his mercy.*"

Compassion and Sin

With that in mind, we must never be tempted to abuse the mercy and compassion of Jesus. When we are tired, having worked hard or simply staying up too late, we are weakened to withstand temptation. Maybe someone has hurt us, and we are angry and offended. It is in these moments of weakness that we can be tempted to justify our actions and excuse our sin. We lean into the compassion of Jesus and rationalize our sin.

When we do that, we fail to remember, or we choose to ignore, what it cost Jesus to be our Savior. Jesus suffered more than any human in history, taking on the wrath of God for our sins. Jesus bore the weight of our sins on the cross so that we could know his presence and be restored in our relationship with the Father (see Romans 6:1-2).

But what about when we do sin? How does Jesus respond to sinners?

With compassion.

In the Bible, Jesus moved towards sinners. He went to the prostitutes and the tax collectors. He is moved with compassion towards those who are bound by sin, because he knows the pain that sin causes. Jesus moves and opens his arms towards sinners, to bring the invitation to repentance and grace through the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Compassion and the Church

We read in Matthew 14 that a large crowd had gathered, it was getting late, and the disciples informed Jesus of the building problem. Jesus responds in an unusual way in verse 16, *“But he replied, ‘They don’t need to go. You give them something to eat.’”*

Jesus is discipling his disciples! He is about to perform an amazing miracle, but he puts the pressure back on the disciples. He wasn’t simply adding stress to their lives; rather, I believe that he was introducing them to their position in Christ. We know that at this time, they had not received the Holy Spirit, and they were unaware of the power of the Spirit. But within a short time, they were doing amazing miracles like Jesus, after the coming of the Holy Spirit and the formation of the church at Pentecost.

Jesus was preparing them for when he would ascend into heaven. He was preparing them to be the church, to be the Body of Christ. When Jesus saw the broken and hurting, he was moved with compassion, if we are the Body of Christ, we will reflect that compassion. The church must be the most compassionate place on earth. The church must reflect the nature of Jesus. How compassionate are we as the church?

Compassion for You.

You may agree that Jesus had compassion, but you need to feel his compassion for you in your situation. You might feel that Jesus doesn’t see or care about your situation.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 6 that if you are a follower of Jesus, his Spirit is within you, you are united with Christ, and our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Not only does that encourage us not to give in to temptation, but it also means that what we experience, he experiences.

Dane Ortlund writes, *“Through his Spirit, Christ’s own heart envelopes his people with an embrace nearer and tighter than any physical embrace could ever achieve. His actions on earth in a body reflected his heart; the same heart now acts in the same way towards us, for we are not his body.”*

Jesus knows and feels your pain; he is with you in your suffering, and he promises never to leave you.