

LEAD WITH LOVE

Generosity in Extending Compassion



Throughout the Gospel we are told of Jesus' compassion. Compassion for the sick, the poor, the widow, the lame, etc. What is so important about compassion is that it moves us beyond sympathy. We can feel sorry for people and situations. We can feel empathy, which is to share in a feeling with another. Compassion however moves us to action. When the Gospel tells us about Jesus' compassion, it is immediately followed by some action of Jesus' that heals and transforms the individuals.

There has been a long history of debate over works and faith. What we know is they are inseparable. James tells us that just as a body without spirit is dead, so is a faith without works. Of course, our founder, John Wesley tells us:

"Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can."

For each day this week begin your devotional time with prayer:

Merciful and gracious God your love is ever present and seeking to write your grace upon our hearts. You have shown us love incarnate as Jesus walked among us, the broken, the unclean, the hurting. You heal and transform a world that is desperate to know your goodness. Equip us Lord, to be your hands and feet. To show compassion, love and kindness in our words, actions and thoughts. Give us courage to respond when it is easier to ignore. Give us humility to see others as your children no

matter our differences. Help us to be generous in our compassion.

Day 1

Scripture: Mark 10:17 – 22

"As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. You shall not defraud. Honor your father and mother.'" He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions."

Reflection:

The first thing most people think to themselves is whether Jesus is telling them they have to give away all their money to enter heaven. There is no doubt this is a challenging piece of scripture. Why would Jesus ask the man to do this? In verse 22 we are told the man is shocked but more than that, the man grieves over such an ask from Jesus because he has many possessions. It is not the issue that the man has wealth. The issue stems from how wealth has manifested in his life. For the rich man, possessions, or those things that money can buy have become the objects of attachment. His reliance and focus has shifted from a life of piety and generosity through God to accumulation and ownership.

Money is a hard subject for most of us. It is a necessity in life, and

everyone wants to live and provide a comfortable life for our families and ourselves. The slippery slope is when money leads to the acquisition of things and experiences that provide momentary impact vs. lasting treasure that Jesus talks about. Jesus talks about money and the impacts it can have on separating us from God's desire for us to be generous and charitable with our resources.

How do you and/or your family view money? Looking at our spending, habits can give insight to where we may see attachment forming in our lives. How might considering giving move your heart more toward the compassionate God we serve? Why do we have the tendency to consider money ours and not God's?

Day 2

Scripture: 1 John 3:16 – 17

"We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers and sisters. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?"

Reflection:

Ouch! That is a direct question. We may be tempted to shy away from such introspection but for those who claim to follow God, John makes it clear that action to help alleviate need in the world is an integral part of abiding in God. The Greek word translated as abide means to live, reside, stay or conform to. So, if God's love is truly resident, or conforming your heart, compassion and generosity are the natural outpourings. Notice too that John is not talking about sharing that abiding love as an intangible but rather John specifically points to those who have "the world's goods" as the means in which God's abiding love can be shown. Our desire to grow closer to God and understand God's will and

presence in our lives requires us to adopt the spiritual practices that align our actions with God's heart.

How am I aligned with God's expectations of my saying yes to those in need? In what areas of generosity and compassion can I grow in 2026?

Day 3

Scripture: Luke 10:33 – 35

"But a Samaritan while traveling came upon him, and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, treating them with oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him, and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'"

Reflection:

The parable of the Good Samaritan is a ubiquitous tale of generosity for most people even outside of the church. Like the question of the rich man from Mark on Day 1, Jesus is pressed by a teacher of the Torah to define what a neighbor is when Jesus says to love your neighbor as yourself. What is shocking in this parable is that the man who is so desperately in need of help is passed by those that are his own. A Samaritan, an outsider who was reviled by Jews and considered to be unclean, unscrupulous and not of God's people is the hero. It is the Samaritan that heals the wounds and goes further by taking the injured Jew to a place to be cared for. Not only does he pay for the room and board but will return to see how the injured man is faring and will settle any more charges the innkeeper may incur. Incredible.

Who was the neighbor Jesus asks and the teacher says the one who showed mercy and Jesus says – "Go and do likewise." Is the generosity of the Samaritan shown in money he puts up? Surely. But even more is

the compassion that he feels for the injured man. An enemy of the Jews who is moved by mercy, kindness and compassion. Who not only gets the man to the inn but will return and continue to be generous.

Who are our neighbors? Who needs compassion that is different than me? How might I invite God to change my heart to take compassionate action for those I might consider enemies?

Day 4

Scripture: Matthew 25:35 – 40

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.’”

Reflection:

This is such a well-known passage of scripture that resides within the judgement sequence in Matthew and leads into the passion narrative. It is tempting to see this as only a check list of things Jesus expects his followers to do. One that will be held up as a measure at the time of judgement. Certainly, there is an implication that God expects us as followers of Christ to act or show our compassion to those in need.

What is interesting about the examples that Jesus uses as acts of mercy is the holistic nature of them. From basic human needs – food, to human dignity – clothing the naked, and companionship during hardship – care

of the sick or visitation in prison, Jesus expects us to care for whatever is needed. As we minister to our brothers and sisters, we minister to Christ. The church is the body that helps achieve this directive. It isn't an option to consider participating in or not – it is an expectation that has such lasting importance that Jesus links it to eternity. Perhaps God is asking you how you can participate with the church in the world. How can you share the resources given to you as gifts with those in need, to Christ himself?

Day 5

Scripture: Colossians 3:12

"Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience."

Reflection:

Like the fruit of the Spirit that Paul shares with the Galatians, Paul sets this passage in a part of the letter to the Colossians frequently titled "The New Life in Christ." As was the case in nearly every Christian community that Paul helped to establish, there was an issue of integration, inclusion of many different ethnicities, social standings, etc. What was unique about Jesus and the community that Paul was building was that Christ was to be the unifying catalyst. As pagans began to enter the community and become followers of Jesus, there were radical changes that most needed to adopt. Here we see the instruction that God's people are different from the world. Different not simply because of what they shouldn't do, but by who they become in Christ.

We are called to be transformed inside and out. Compassion – that acting out for the benefit of others is the first principle to be clothed in. To be clothed in these attributes is to live a life in service to others. The self is minimized so that we can allow the Spirit to direct the love that God gives through Jesus to others. This is for all of those we encounter,

those closest to us, our families and friends. It is inclusive of all of God's creation. Of the attributes listed by Paul, which do you find the hardest to put on? How does each of these relate to your idea of generosity? In 2026, what are the next steps you can take to help you clothe yourself in these aspects of Christian living?