

On A Mission With Jesus (Matthew 9:35-38)

When you are set out on a mission with Jesus, you quickly learn that he stays on the move. Mark's Gospel says that Jesus traveled "among the cities and villages," devoting himself to teaching, healing, and seeing. With Jesus' daily agenda, one can't help but wonder how he even made time for meals!

Yet the Lord's pace of ministry is never so urgent that he is numb to the beckoning call of **compassion**. Jesus stops, sees the crowds' fullness of hurts and hopes, and knows them as "sheep without a shepherd." With such great need, he encourages his disciples not to do more, but instead to pray that God will call more laborers of love to share in the mission.

Cultivating a compassionate heart requires us to move at the pace of the Lord. When we fill our days with endless tasks and responsibilities, we leave little space for the gentle invitations of the Spirit to

love ourselves and our neighbors. When we convince

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ourselves that we are the only ones able to help others, we quickly experience fatigue and burnout. Running is great for exercise, but love is a slow, steady walk.

In reflecting on your daily life, ask God what task or responsibility you can lay aside to make room for love. Go for a slow walk through your neighborhood and receive every person and situation you note as an opportunity for prayer. Pray for the name of people you believe Jesus is calling into God's mission of boundless compassion. One of the members of my previous church, used to walk past our apartment complex, when I had my cancer, and pray for me.

A speaker once said, "The present-day type of Christianity will never win the world for Christ." This statement leads me to ask, "What is wrong or

lacking in present-day Christianity? Why won't our Christianity meet the test of the times? Among several

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things that could be mentioned as lacking in our present-day Christianity is **compassion**.

Read again the life of Jesus and you'll discover compassion to the secret of the untiring ministry of our Lord. It comes from two Latin words meaning "with" and "suffer." Literally, it means to suffer with another—to put yourself in another's place. Hence it means to suffer with another because of that one's misfortune or calamities. When you have compassion on another, you feel that person's pain and misfortune.

Compassion is more than pity. Pity is feeling for someone in distress; compassion is feeling plus action. For example, in the parable of the good Samaritan, the priest and the Levite both had pity on

the beaten man, but the Samaritan had compassion. Compassion engenders action. Jesus had compassion, and we must have compassion to bring this world to Christ. Compassion is the essential part of any revival.

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Now let's look at some demonstrations of compassion from the Bible. Pharaoh's daughter had compassion on the baby Moses. When she saw the little boy lying in the bulrush basket, we read, "Behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrew's children" (Ex 2:6). Someone had said that God sent an angel to pinch the boy to make him cry. His cry stirred the compassion of the king's daughter. Because of her compassion, she did something about the baby,

God had compassion on the oppressed Israelites. "But Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. And the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them" (2 Kings 13:22-

23). When the children of Israel experienced oppression, God had compassion on them—he suffered with them.

Jesus had compassion on the hungry multitude,
“Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have

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compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way” (Matt 15:32).

Leaving Jericho, two blind men cried out to Jesus to have mercy upon them. “So, Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes; and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him” (Matt 29:34).

In the story of the return of the prodigal son, the father had compassion on the prodigal son and ran to him, hugged his neck, and kissed him.

Compassion led to forgiveness and restoration
(Luke 15:20).

Of all the emotions that surge through our souls,
there is none finer than compassion. It identifies
with a person in need. You get underneath his load
and help him bear it. Do you have compassion for a
person in sin? Do you realize his danger?
Compassion leads to action.

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When our hearts become compassionate, we will do
what our Master has commanded.. We will find time
to do his work. A cold heart will never rescue a baby
who needs a home. A cold heart will not render aid
to wounded travelers on life's highways.

When does compassion come? Go again to the
Bible references to compassion. Each time it is
indicated: when Pharaoh's daughter **saw** the child;
when God **saw** the oppression; when Jesus **saw** the
hungry crowds; when the Samaritan **saw** the

wounded man; when the father **saw** his wayward son.

We must somehow **see** the world's need. We must in some way **see** the world's hungry crowds. We must **see** the people lost in sin. We must in some way have **a vision** of a hurt humanity. No vision—no compassion.

Lack of compassion is the explanation of inactive Christians, unwilling to give aid to young people, unwilling to teach a class, unwilling to give

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themselves in abandon to God's word. When our hearts burn with compassion, we will win a hurt world for our Lord.

Compassion takes away selfishness. It causes us to go out to “seek and to save that which was lost” with our Master. Compassion makes the phrase “until he find it” in the parable of the lost sheep. (Luke 15:4-7) a reality in our own lives. It make us “sweep diligently until we find” as the woman with the lost

coin. When Jesus looked at Jerusalem, he wept because of the sins of its inhabitants and the danger they were in. Compassion drives us to our knees in repentance of our sins and drives us out to talk and pray and plead with people not to commit eternal suicide. Compassion makes us go from inward motives and not from outward show.

Carl Whittles, a missionary to Africa, wrote that he was asked shortly after he arrived in Africa, “Why do they send you missionaries to build schools and

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hospitals. They haven’t seen us. They don’t know us. We’re told that thousands of women forgo things they want at Christmas time in order to give sacrificially to get the gospel to us. Why do they give?” Carl answered, “They haven’t seen you, but they have seen Christ, and he gave his all for you, so they have followed his example.”

So, what are the lessons we can learn from this Scripture reading from Matthew?

The first lesson is that Jesus exemplifies deep *compassion* for the lost and suffering, urging us to care for those in need. Next, we are to acknowledge the spiritual needs around us by recognizing the many who are seeking guidance and hope. We are also encouraged to actively participate in outreach and service to help those who are spiritually lost. And finally, Jesus emphasizes the importance of prayer,

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asking for more laborers to join the mission of spreading the Gospel.

Please bow your heads as I pray.

Compassionate God, form in us a heart that **sees** the needs of others and responds with love. Grant us the courage to move slowly and humbly through our day so that we might be fully present to you, ourselves, and others. Help us to seek wisdom to identify the harvest fields in our community. We pray for the strength to share the Gospel with those who are lost. Pray for us to intercede for more workers to join in spreading hope and healing. And let us thank you for your compassion as we ask to reflect it in our daily lives. We ask this in the name of your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**