

### Compassion 05

We are now in week 5 of our teaching series on compassion, and I hope you are enjoying this as much as I am. I am loving the preparation and the writing, and enjoying the Thursday night discussions and feedback.

Last week we started looking at Jesus and His acts of compassion. We spoke of the leper being cleansed, the only time we see a Jew ever cured of leprosy. This never happened under the Law, only with Jesus and through grace. This was a picture of man's sin nature being dealt with by Jesus; all mankind are born into sin, and no man is able to help themselves out of that. Only thru Jesus and grace can a man be cleansed, purged, saved and made righteous.

I intend to carry on with the same theme this week, and see what more we can learn from Jesus. Remember, eventually we will get to the crux of this series, that we are called to be compassionate. So we need understand this, learning more about Jesus to renew our minds, so that we can be more compassionate.

Let's now look at a very well know piece of Scripture.

#### **Luke 10 v 29 to 37**

**But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?**

**And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.**

**And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.**

**And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.**

**But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,**

**And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.**

**And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.**

**Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?**

**And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.**

So, what is going on here? A man is beaten and robbed, left to die, and we see a priest ignore him and not go to his aid, and we also see a Levite avoid him. In light of what we are studying, we can say that both the priest and Levite decide not to be compassionate and show compassion. They do not love or care, and do not meet the obvious needs of the man.

They both make a conscious decision to not help; they look and then pass by on other side, moving away from a fellow human being in obvious need.

Then we see a Samaritan come by who was moved by compassion. He helped him there in his current situation and then took him to an inn and paid for his stay. He even offered to come back and pay more if that was required.

Jesus was speaking to Jews in this instance, and we see the man talking traveling from one Jewish town to another. We also see Jesus talking about a priest and a Levite. Everything in this account is in a Jewish context. So I believe that it is pretty safe to assume that the man beaten and left to die in the road was also a Jew. Now, I know this is not explicit, but I believe that it is implied. And this is very important and symbolic, and would not have been missed by the first who heard or read this Gospel.

A Jewish man was left to die by two of his fellow Jews, and not just any Jews; they were a priest and a Levite, Jewish people who should have known better. He was saved and helped by a Samaritan.

This is another instance in the Word when we need to know the context and culture that this was written in, we need to know what kind of society this was written in. This is a picture of compassion but it is also speaking out against racial and religious prejudice.

The Jews and Samaritans were enemies, they had issues with both race and religion. The Samaritans were almost worse than Gentiles, as they were a kind of bastardised Jews. I see it a bit like the hatred that we see today between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. Also unfortunately, it is what we see sometimes between some Christian denominations and churches.

This is important in this account, where we see people of the same race and religion actively moving away and not help a person the 'same' as them. Someone from another race, from another religion, was moved with compassion and came in and helped instead. It is even more telling that the compassionate person was from race and religion that those listening to this initially would have hated and despised.

Let's go back a step, and have a look at the priest and Levite. You could that Jesus is just telling people now that they should love thy neighbour. Maybe we are being a bit hard on priest and Levite, maybe they have not heard Jesus talking about this commandment yet.

No, that is not the case here, we can be hard on the priest and Levite. These guys would have known the Torah, that's why they are used in this account. These people were deliberately chosen by Jesus, respected Jews, as they would have known the Torah.

#### ***Leviticus 19 v 18***

***Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.***

Leviticus 19 v 18 says, love thy neighbour; this is not a new commandment under grace, under the New Covenant. They had let racial and religious bias override the Scripture that they would have known. They let their racial and religious prejudice get in the way of compassion.

I'm going to repeat that lasty phrase to let it sink in, as it is vital when get to thinking about our call to compassion.

They let their racial and religious prejudice get in the way of the compassion they were called to do.

And this type of bias and prejudice can be very subtle. We think that we are not like that, but I would ask are we really?

I was thinking about this on Saturday morning during my time of preparation, and I was thinking that even the traditional name we have for this encounter is biased and prejudiced. Traditionally we have

called this passage the story of “The Good Samaritan”. Now, what does that say about all the other Samaritans?

There is a question we need ask ourselves after reading this account. Are we prejudiced against anyone, any group, race, religion, sexual persuasion, political persuasion? And we do need to ask this question, and be honest, we need be aware of the issue. The rise of social media is polarising debate, and polarising society along many lines, and is breeding prejudice and bias among people, even over seemingly trivial matters.

What is the point in this you may be thinking? Jesus instructing people on who their neighbours are, so what has that to do with regards to our current context, our teaching series on compassion?

As well as telling us who our neighbours are, that the same time Jesus is telling us who we are called to be compassionate to? We are called to show compassion to our neighbours. And who are they? They are everyone, including our enemies.

In this context this includes people we could have racial and religious prejudice against. I think however that it can be widened, if it means everyone is our neighbour. It also says we are to be compassionate to anyone and everyone, including anyone we could be prejudiced against.

But this was not Jesus in action Vic, you may be saying. This was just a story. But what about this account?

**Luke 17 v 11 to 16**

**And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.**

**And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:**

**And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.**

**And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.**

**And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,**

**And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.**

Here we have Jesus going through a village, and 10 lepers were waiting for him. They shouted, have mercy on us; a better translation would have been, have compassion on us. That is what the Greek means here, to have compassion on by word or deed.

Jesus says go shew self to the priests, they went on their way and were cleansed. One saw that he was healed; the Greek word is healed, cured. He comes back and thanks Jesus.

And it says He was a Samaritan.

Jesus, as a Jewish man, had compassion on, had met the need of an enemy in the eyes of the world of the day.

Now, there is so much going in in this account, and I have just started working through this, asking myself many questions. For the lesson today we can see that He had compassion on an enemy of His race and religion.

But why did He just tell them to go to show self to the priest? Why not touch and heal them like the other leper we heard about last week? Were they all Samaritans? Were the nine that didn't come back different, were they Jewish? This man that came back could not have gone to show himself to the priest anyway, as He was not Jewish? Lots to ponder there, but for today, Jesus had compassion on someone seen in that day as an enemy.

And that is obviously a picture for us today.

We cannot pick and choose who our neighbours are, we cannot pick and choose who to show compassion to. We are called to compassion; it is that simple. In same way as we are called to love our neighbour, we are called to be compassionate. We are called to be compassionate to our immigrant, homosexual, alcoholic, wife beating, dog kicking neighbour that I have told you about in past. We are to show compassion to our neighbour who doesn't vote same way as us, who doesn't hold same values as we do, who is not of the same religion.

This was not the only time that Jesus went against convention and the society rules of day.

***John 4 v 1 to 7***

***When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,***

***(Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)***

***He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.***

***And he must needs go through Samaria.***

***Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.***

***Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.***

***There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.***

Jesus should not have gone through Samaria, and he should not have met the Samaritan woman let alone on his own; He was a good Jewish man after all. And He goes there for an encounter with the lowest of the low.

I've preached on this before, this encounter is Jesus showing us He came for everyone, even the lowest. First, she was a woman, and had no bearing in society, was of no importance. Secondly, she was a Samaritan, hated by Jews as we have already seen. And thirdly, she was a fornicator, a clear sinner.

This dear lady, out in heat of day to avoid persecution from the other women was the lowest of the low. Highlight this with His previous encounter with Nicodemus, wo can be seen as one of highest of the high.

Jesus loved and cared for, had compassion, and met the needs of all mankind from the lowest to highest. According to 1 John 2 v 2, He was the propitiation not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world. He came for the whole world. No one was missed out; no sin was forgotten.

And we are called to that kind of love, to that kind of compassion. And through mind renewal from the Word and the indwelling Holy Spirit, I believe we are able and not just called. We are equipped and able to be loving and compassionate.

As I was reading my Bible yesterday this scripture in John jumped out to my attention. Here we see Jesus in discussion with some Jews.

**John 8 v 48 to 51**

***Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?***

***Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.***

***And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.***

***Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.***

This made me laugh out loud when I read it. I know Jesus really offended some of the Jews, probably not deliberately, but sometimes I wonder if He did.

The Jews were annoyed at Jesus, and they accused Him of being a Samaritan and of being possessed by a devil. Jesus says, "I don't have a devil". But He says nothing about the accusation of being a Samaritan. Have you any idea why He did this?

It is because that meant nothing to Him, and didn't even merit a response. Differences in race, gender, and class meant nothing to Him. He responded to the spiritual accusation, but the race accusation He ignored, and that would have really ticked off the Jews, knowing what we know about their opinion of the Samaritans. I just love that response or rather lack of it, he just ignored it, and it made me think of another verse.

**Galatians 3 v 28**

***There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.***

There are now no boundaries according to race, gender or class; that is New Covenant grace in operation, and was completely counterculture. And this is the way Jesus operated.

John 1 v 17 says grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; Jesus operated in grace and truth, He had love for all, and compassion for all. Made no distinction for race, gender, or class, and that is a picture for us.

As I was writing my sermon a song came on my Spotify list, Call it Grace. There was a line in it, "It's nothing less than scandalous, call it grace".

In the society of the day grace was scandalous, and Jesus was grace, so Jesus was scandalous. His interactions with Samaritans, with fornicators, with lepers, with the unclean were scandalous. Galatians 3 v 28 was scandalous.

Jesus loved the unlovable.

Jesus had compassion on those that society said were not worthy of compassion. We see that time after time after time in the Gospels. For example when He had compassion on the woman taken in adultery, in the very act we are told.

As I have said often, it takes two to tango, and it is interesting that no man was thrown in front Jesus at same time. Woman taken in adultery however is clearly guilty, and clearly a stoning is in order, according to the Law. But that is not what we see.

**John 8 v 10 to 11**

***When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?***

***She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.***

Remember the order of things is important in Word. First Jesus extends compassion and forgiveness, by saying, "I don't condemn you either". Then He gave advice and council and recommendations, when He said, "go and sin no more".

This was scandalous, He was letting her off in the eyes of the Jews. But He was showing love and care and compassion, forgiveness then advice. And this He did for an adulterer, to the clear sinner. Here we see another human being looked at in disgust by society, and I may point out, also by the religious leaders. A human being given no dignity or hope, but Jesus dealt with her with compassion. Another person not worthy of compassion, receiving compassion from Jesus.

What is the big lesson from today?

Jesus had compassion for the religious outcasts, the people of different race, the adulterers, the fornicators, those on the end of prejudice and bigotry and hate, those excluded from society, the dregs of society, the despised, the lost, the people very clearly and openly living in sin.

I leave you with the big question from all of that, something to ponder on until next week.

Who should we have compassion for?

AMEN