

Matthew 15:29-39 “Jesus’ Compassion For People”

5.28.17

Today we’re going to talk about the Compassion of Jesus and the premise for today’s message is going to come from a phrase found in our text we’ll be looking at in a bit where Jesus said to His disciples: “I have compassion on the people.” And it’s from that one phrase that we’ll be building this message that I’ve titled “Jesus’ Compassion For People.”

As I began thinking, praying and putting down some initial notes, I told Pastor Brad/Pastor Dale in our staff meeting on Monday that the old hymn “Great is Thy Faithfulness” came to mind as I was thinking about the word COMPASSION...you know that line in the song that says: “Though changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not, As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.”

As I thought about that song, I began wondering “Who was the writer of that song and what was going on in their life that caused them to write the song?” I thought, “It’s got to be something big or some life-changing event that caused them to write: ‘Great is Thy Faithfulness.’” Maybe something kind of like Charles Wesley’s great hymn: “And Can It Be.” You know Charles Wesley, was the founder of the Methodist Church movement and it was after his dramatic salvation experience that he wrote “And Can It Be,” because he was so overwhelmed by that dramatic experience.

Or maybe it was like Horatio Spafford, who penned the words of comfort that he found when he wrote: “It Is Well with My Soul,” after the tragic death of his children in a shipwreck as they were crossing the Atlantic Ocean. So, I looked up the song and I found out that this man wrote it...



That’s Thomas Chisholm. Chisholm was born in a log cabin in Franklin, Kentucky in 1866 and lacking a high school education or any college training; he became a school teacher at the age of 16, and several years later entered the newspaper business. But at the age of 26, he gave his life to Christ and entered the ministry one year later when he was 27. Unfortunately, poor health forced him to leave the pastorate after just one year. He would move to New Jersey and work as a life insurance agent. And it was during that stage of his life that he wrote nearly 1,200 poems and songs with several eventually being published as hymns.

Chisholm said this at the end of his life:

“My income has not been large at any time due to impaired health in the earlier years, which has followed me on until now. Although I must not fail to record here the unfailing faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God and that He has given me many wonderful displays of His providing care, for which I am filled with astonishing gratefulness.” Thomas Chisholm

And hence the powerfully, rich Hymn “Great is Thy Faithfulness.” Nothing earth-shattering...no tragic death...no spine-tingling salvation experience. Just the ordinary mundaneness of life working a desk job as an insurance agent! See the words...

Great Is Thy Faithfulness, Thomas Chisholm (1925)

*Great Is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father!
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.*

Refrain:

*Great Is Thy faithfulness, Great Is Thy faithfulness,
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed, Thy hand hath provided
Great is Thy Faithfulness, Lord unto me!*

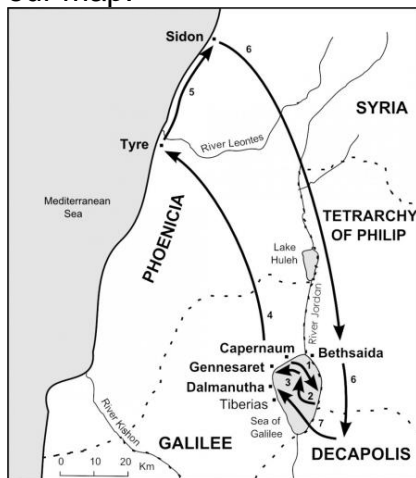
As you are doing so, let me tell you, Chisholm got his inspiration from the old King James...

Lamentations 3:22-23

²²It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. ²³They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

Compassion. That's what we'll see today. Just like Chisholm! The Lord has compassion on us all! He is faithful day to day. God remains faithful day in and day out in the largest and smallest of circumstances. And that's because He is a God of great compassion!

Now you will remember if you've been with us that Jesus had left Capernaum and the national borders of Israel and gone into the area known as Syro-Phoenicia or Gentile territory. Remember our map.

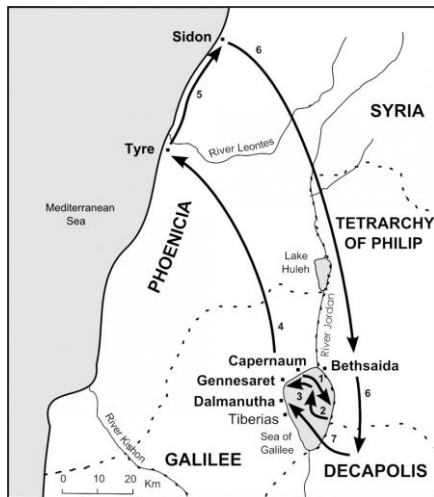


While there, He healed a Canaanite woman's little girl who was demon-possessed. And in so doing, Jesus was teaching His disciples that the Gospel wasn't just for the nation of Israel, but for all people including Gentiles...even the hated Canaanites. Now look at verse 29...

Matthew 15:29

²⁹Jesus went on from there and walked beside the Sea of Galilee. And he went up on the mountain and sat down there.

See the map again... Look at the top left at Sidon...



Jesus would leave from there and go back down to the East side of the Sea of Galilee into an area known as the Decapolis (because it's an area of 10 cities...***deca*** means TEN, ***polis*** means cities).

Now this is GENTILE territory and you might remember that Jesus has been here before. We saw this in Matthew 8 when He healed the two demon-possessed men in that area in a town called Gadera. It was then that Jesus cast the demons out of the men into a herd of pigs and they went over the cliffs into the Sea of Galilee. So, Jesus has been to this area before and now He's back. **WHY?**

Because He has compassion! He had been showing that compassion to the Jews in Galilee for 2 years and now He's going to show it to the Gentiles in Decapolis. He wants them to have the same opportunity to receive Him as the Jews had in Galilee. And what you're going to see is the same scenes that played out in Galilee are now going to play out in the Gentile territory of the Decapolis.

Matthew 15:30-31

³⁰ And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, ³¹ so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.

Folks, that's exactly what Jesus did in Galilee. I want to remind you of this. **Turn back to Matthew 4, verse 23** (11 chapters ago) and we'll see this. Because, as Jesus started His first year of ministry, He taught in all the synagogues of Galilee and His fame spread throughout not only Galilee, but all Israel and beyond.

Matthew 4:23-25

²³ And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. ²⁴ So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. ²⁵ And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

So, Jesus is back in Decapolis and He's going to do the exact same thing that He did **last** in Galilee. What was that? Remember the miracle He performed that they wanted to make Him King?

The FOOD KING! The feeding of the 5,000 (25-30k). **And it was after the FEEDING**, that He began His WITHDRAWAL from the Jews and made His way to the Gentiles of Syro-Phoenicia and now He's among the Gentiles of the Decapolis and He's going to do the same thing.

So, here He is healing everyone in the region and He's been doing this for three days and Jesus pulls His disciples together for a meeting.

Matthew 15:32

³² Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."

And so there was that phrase that we started with earlier this morning, "I have compassion on the crowd..." You see, that's why He came in the first place. He left heaven and all of the glories of heaven because He had compassion for us in our lost, broken and pitiful condition of sin.

Philippians 2:6-8

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Why? Compassion! He came to suffer with us.

You see, throughout Scripture, God always suffered with His people. He feels their pain; and, more than that, He came to alleviate its cause...sin. He came to redeem us and buy us back because He had compassion. That's why He healed and comforted and extended grace and mercy and kindness, ALL SO THAT we might have a way to be delivered from ourselves, and our sin. Why? COMPASSION. **I want you to see the Greek definition of the word...**

Compassion: (Greek: Splagchnizomai):

to be moved as to one's bowels, to be moved with compassion, (for the bowels were thought to be the seat of love and pity)

When you have compassion, you're moved in your gut to do something! **Jesus looked at that throng of people** who had been gathering over the last three days and He said, "I have compassion on these people." In other words He had to do something!!

You see, Matthew records that people were being "**put at Jesus' feet**" in verse 30, but I want you to understand what was actually happening.

The sick and the lame and the demon possessed and the crippled and the blind weren't being placed at Jesus feet in some kind of orderly fashion. The people weren't in line. This wasn't an orderly process. How do we know this? The Greek for "put at Jesus' feet" is the word: **Rhipto** and it literally means: "**to throw to the ground with haste.**"

Can you see this scene in your minds eye? For three days (and probably during most the nights) people have been bringing their family members, friends, neighbors with all of these

diseases and ailments and they were dragging them and throwing them to the ground in front of Jesus. They were desperate not to miss Him before He left. They didn't know when He was leaving and if you had a sick child or parent or loved one and you heard and were now seeing people being healed, wouldn't you try to get your loved one up to Jesus? I would! And according to Greek...this was chaotic... It was like **Black Friday** after Thanksgiving when WalMart opens those doors. Crazy!

I believe for Jesus and the disciples it had to have been like trying to run a three-ring circus! People being thrown down everywhere! And Jesus had compassion on them! **See it again...**

Matthew 15:32

³² Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."

You know it's amazing, for three days Jesus has been healing people right and left. He's healed the blind, the lame, the deaf, the demon-possessed...every kind of ailment and sickness that you could possibly imagine, He's healed AND THEN He says, "I don't want them to go away hungry lest they pass out (faint) going home."

Talk about compassion. That's what Thomas Chisholm was talking about in his song, "Great Is Thy Fullness..." Morning by morning new mercies I see! All I have needed they had hith provided...great is thy faithfulness Lord unto me.

One of my favorite verses in the Bible is verse my Great Uncle, Curtis Greene used to quote...

Psalms 37:25

I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.

Jesus, because of His compassion, was not going to send them away hungry. He's so caring and so loving that yes...He'll do the big things and heal the blind and make the lame walk...but, He'll also give us bread for our stomachs...something much smaller in scope.

Because the truth is...I've fasted three days before. It didn't kill me. And it wouldn't have likely killed any of them...but, Jesus wanted them to be filled...satisfied... Who WAS THEM? Gentiles...just they same as He had satisfied the Jews...

And so Jesus is determined to feed them and so in that little "team meeting" with Jesus and the disciples, Mathew records in verse 33...

Matthew 15:33

³³ And the disciples said to him, "Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?"

Now if it had been me...I would have been looking for the little boy who had the little lunch basket with the 5 loaves and the 2 fish... You know the one in Bethsaida Julias for the feeding of the 5,000...but that was in Galilee and this the Decapolis and that's a good 15 miles away and he was a Jewish boy, so he wouldn't be in this Gentile area. And so Matthew records Jesus' response...

Matthew 15:34-35

³⁴ And Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven, and a few small fish." ³⁵ And directing the crowd to sit down on the ground, ³⁶ he took the seven loaves and the fish, and having given thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ³⁷ And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up seven baskets full of the broken pieces left over. ³⁸ Those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. ³⁹ And after sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan.

Church family, He did the same thing in Gentile territory as He had done in Jewish territory. I don't need to go through this passage in any more detail than we've already done because it's almost identical to the feeding of the 5,000. It was just a different audience. And you know, I want to share something with you that I read this week about this miracle. You see, Jesus, by that third day, had finished His work in the Decapolis and he would not return. I truly love what Bible Scholar, Alfred Edersheim said about this...

"It's interesting to consider that the Lord ended each phase of His ministry with a feeding. He ended the ministry in Galilee with the feeding of the 5,000. He ended the ministry in the Gentile area with the feeding of the 4,000; and He ended the Judean ministry, before His death on the cross, with the feeding of His own in the upper room; because the Lord always leaves people fed." Bible Scholar, Alfred Edersheim

Compassion! Jesus had shown for the past two years of His life ministering to so many people. Think of all the compassion He showed.

- He healed a leper and Peter's mother-in-law, right after He came down the mountain from teaching the Sermon on the Mount.
 - He healed the Roman centurion's paralyzed servant boy.
 - He healed the man with a shriveled hand
 - And a man who was lowered through the roof of Peter's home by his four friends.
 - He showed compassion to the woman who had an issue of blood, who just by touching the tassels of His robe was healed.
 - He showed compassion to a 12-year old girl who had just died, don't bother Jesus...she's dead... She was known as Jairus' daughter, the Synagogue Ruler... Jesus said to Jairus' "Don't worry, keep having faith" and He went to Jairus' home and to his daughter and He said: "Talitha Cumi" meaning: "Rise little girl," and she got up and walked.
-

Compassion! It didn't matter who you were! Jesus showed! To a Samaritan woman, to lepers, to the blind, to the lame, to the Gentiles. Compassion! It reminds me once again of the chorus of Chisholm's wonderful song, "Thy compassions, they fail not..."

As we close today, I want to show you the last verse of that song one last time:

*Pardon for Sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!*

Refrain:

*Great Is Thy faithfulness, Great Is Thy faithfulness,
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed, Thy hand hath provided
Great is Thy Faithfulness, Lord unto me!*
