

Matthew 15:21-39

“The Kingdom and Compassion”

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Compassion is concern for the pain of others that moves to action to relieve. Compassion is the most frequent expression of Jesus’ emotions. Jesus models compassion to those in relationship with God and those who are not as an example for us.

Study Guide Qs

1. What did you learn about Jesus from His encounter with the Gentile woman?
2. What did you learn about the connection between faith and a relationship with God from Jesus’ encounter with the Gentile woman?
3. Consider Jesus’ display of compassion in healing the multitudes [29-31]. What did you learn about how compassion can influence people for God?
4. How has Jesus shown compassion to you in this last year?
5. What are some of the needs (or people) that you feel strongly about, and are moved with compassion to take action to relieve?

Intro. Compassion is concern for the pain of others that moves to action to relieve. Compassion is the most frequent expression of Jesus’ emotions.

Subject: Jesus’ compassion displayed

Object: Be compassionate like Jesus

Context: To this point, Jesus ministry has been almost exclusively to Jews. Here, we see Jesus’ *compassion to Gentiles, those outside of a covenant relationship*. [Church]

I. Jesus shows compassion to a Gentile woman [21-28]

²¹ Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.” ²³ But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries out after us.” ²⁴ But He answered and said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” ²⁵ Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, help me!”

²⁶ But He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw *it* to the little dogs.” ²⁷ And she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” ²⁸ Then Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

A. God is compassionate to those who come to Christ in faith

Jesus' ministry to a Gentile (non-Jew) reveals His ministry to the Church. Tyre and Sidon are northern coastal and Gentile areas. A Gentile woman seeks mercy for her severely demon-possessed daughter [22]. She doesn't presume that she is entitled to God's intervention. Her time of affliction brought her to Jesus. She refers to him as "Son of David" [22] a Messianic title used by Jews, but she is a Gentile. She probably had heard Jews use the title. *But Gentiles had no covenant relationship with God.* How would Jesus respond? Jesus initially does not respond to her, and then declares that He was sent to the Jews [23-24]. *Was Jesus being harsh or seeking to test or grow her faith?* How would you imagine she felt? She knelt down before Him recognizing Him as Lord and begs for help [25]. Jesus again affirms His ministry is primarily to the Jews by saying you don't give your kids' food to the pet dog [26]. She replies that the dogs don't get the best but they do get what falls from the table [27]. Jesus commends her faith and miraculously heals her daughter [28]. This Gentile woman, and a Gentile Centurion, are the only people that Jesus publicly praised for their great faith.

1. Faith is hearing God speak and responding with actions of obedience and an attitude of dependence upon Jesus.

II. Jesus shows compassion to a multitude [29-39]

A. Jesus Heals Great Multitudes [29-31] Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. ³⁰ Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them *the* lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. ³¹ **So the multitude marveled when they saw *the* mute speaking, *the* maimed made whole, *the* lame walking, and *the* blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.** Jesus returns to the Galilee, but on the eastern shore, a primarily Gentile area (Mk. 7:31 the Decapolis), and ascends a rolling hill. Great multitudes (thousands v.38) came to Him and many with physical ailments including the blind, lame, mute, and maimed were brought to Jesus and He miraculously healed them [30]. The multitude was amazed and glorified the God of Israel [31].

1. God is compassionate and ultimately restores all who come to Christ

B. Feeding the Four Thousand [32-39] Sequel to the feeding of 5,000 [ch.14 Jews] ³² Now Jesus called His disciples to *Himself* and said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way." Jesus was moved with compassion [32]. The people had been with Jesus for three days and were likely unprepared. They were hungry and Jesus does not want them to struggle on their return journey home [32]. *Jesus blesses them because they had come to Him not because they were worthy. Nor were they in a covenant relationship, but simply because He is compassionate.* Jesus was also moved with compassion when he fed the 5,000 [Matt. 14:14]. How has Jesus shown compassion to you in this last year?

1. God shows compassion because of His nature, not our worthiness.

³³ Then His disciples said to Him, "Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?" ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven, and a few little fish." ³⁵ So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. ³⁶ And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke *them* and gave *them* to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. ³⁷ So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. ³⁸ Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides

women and children. ³⁹ **And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala.** The disciples forget the Lord's past work in feeding the 5,000 [Ch. 14] and wonder where *they* could get enough food to feed such a huge crowd [34]. *Sometimes I, like the disciples, forget God's past faithfulness and compassion and worry about future provision.* Jesus instructs them to take an inventory of resources, and they report seven loaves and a few fish [34] (Ch. 14 - 5 loaves and 2 fish). Jesus instructs the multitudes to sit on the ground [35] (in Bible times the teacher sat (29) and the learners stood). Jesus gave thanks (*Hamotzee*) and miraculously multiplied the loaves and fish and gave to the disciples to give to the crowd [36]. The crowd of 4,000 men + women and children ate and were satisfied, and they gathered leftovers [37-38]. Abundant provision: large baskets (*spuries*) [37] were woven baskets big enough to contain a person [Ac. 9:25]. Seven represents completion. We are called to be good stewards. After ministering to the need, Jesus dismissed the crowd. *See, Lord's ability to answer prayer for daily bread [Matt. 6:11]*

2. Jesus' disciples show compassion: concern for the pain of others that moves to action to relieve. Why does Jesus give the food to the disciples to distribute [36]? I believe that He wants them to take action to relieve the suffering of the multitude. When considering a multitude, the crowd and their needs are very impersonal. But when we look at people as individuals and see (or hear) their pain, we are far more likely to be moved to compassion. What are some of the needs (or people) that you feel strongly about, and are moved with compassion to take action to relieve?

Conc. Be compassionate like Jesus