

## **I Have Compassion** **Mark 8:1-21**

We live in a world that is looking for a compelling vision – something to believe in – something that is so real that it is worth following and giving one’s life to.

As Christians we have given our lives to Jesus – and I believe He is worth following – worth giving our lives to – He is compelling. Yet, within the Church’s walls and halls people are riddled with unbelief. In fact, I am convinced that the greatest threat to the Church today is unbelief within the Church.

There are two story lines in this passage – One story line involves the continuing unbelief of Jesus’ disciples, and the other has to do with the continuing work of Jesus.

The problem is that for many, living out the Faith is a static thing – well-laid out answers, a regimen of spiritual exercises, a history of ecclesiastical activities – all of which we can hide behind and protect against having to wrestle with what we believe or with having to face life in the present and on its most honest levels.

Jesus never hardened to the Power and Majesty of the Gospel. And I think it is because two things marked His continuing ministry:

1. He Embodied Compassion – *“I have Compassion...”*

**Isaiah 42:3** – “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice...”

It is Jesus' nature/will to move with compassion.

**Lamentations 3:22-23** – "...his compassions never fail. They are new every morning..."

And because of this, the sick, the hungry, the weak, the outcast, the broken, the sinful – all were beneficiaries of His compassion.

His default is Compassion. This is difficult for us to grasp, because ours isn't.

2. He Practiced Mercy – *"If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way..."*

The way we put it is that He embodied the Gospel in 'Word' and 'Deed.' This is the double-edged sword of a Gospel-driven ministry – He both spoke the Good News, and He practiced it.

**James 2:18** – "But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do."

The Gospel – it is of no noticeable benefit to a world that hears rhetoric then observes no manifestation of these words, and experiences no life-giving force from what the Gospel asserts itself to be – through the Church!

But all of this begs the question, 'Can we really love the way Christ loved?' The answer is, 'No, absolutely not – not in our own strength.' The fact is that we don't have it in us to love like Jesus did. We aren't that 'friend who sticks closer... brother.' We don't have that 'greater love' that we would 'lay... friends.' We don't love the unlovely and we don't love our enemies. No, in our strength and with our nature there is no such thing.

But Christ does – and this is the Gospel – that we have a Substitute – One who has done and become and accomplished all we cannot on our own merit and in our own strength. None of what is good about the Gospel is native to us – but all of it is availed to us – in Jesus.

And it is in looking to Him that we find the strength and compassion to love.

**2 Corinthians 5:14** – “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.”

But you must Settle on Two Things:

- Settle that you will forget the Gospel every day – Every day you will be tempted to reach into your own strength, intellect, wisdom, and valor to meet the challenges of life. Every day you will struggle with your own instinct to control. And every day we forget/fail, so every day we are called to surrender to Christ, admitting our inability to adequately love, serve, give, and care. Martin Luther – preaching the Gospel to ourselves – living lives of Repentance.
- Settle that you have something to offer a broken world – Only don’t check your pockets – it isn’t small change/loaves of bread – it is Jesus. If nothing else, our passage once again reveals that the empty can always approach Jesus and be filled. Jesus always has compassion on the hungry, and it is through the Church, His Body, that He desires to feed them.

“He prays, but He hears prayer. He weeps, but He causes tears to cease. He is bruised and wounded, but He heals every disease and

every infirmity. He is lifted up and nailed to the Tree, but by the Tree of Life He restores us, yes, He saved even the robber crucified with Him. He dies, but He gives life, and by His death destroys death. He is buried, but He rises again; He goes down to Hell, but He brings up the souls; He ascends to heaven, and shall come again to judge the living and the dead”

Gregory of Nazianzus – 4<sup>th</sup> Century Bishop of Constantinople