

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.<sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.<sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.<sup>38</sup> Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

<sup>10:1</sup> He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

<sup>2</sup> These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; <sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup> Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

<sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. <sup>6</sup> Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. <sup>7</sup> As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ <sup>8</sup> Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Matthew 9:35-10:8)

### Jesus Has Compassion on Us

How’s your doctor’s bedside manner? We’re pretty happy with our family doctor. If I have any complaint at all, it’s that he speaks very softly. But it’s a little thing. I see a lot of doctors while I’m visiting people in the hospital. Some have better bedside manners than others. Hopefully, they all want what’s best for their patients. But a good doctor sees hundreds of patients a year. It might be easy for them to forget that no matter how many worse cases they’ve seen this week, when we go to them because something hurts, it’s a big deal to us. And we need their compassion. That’s really the key to a good bedside manner.

I wonder what Jesus’ bedside manner was like? Sometimes, we get a sense of it. We see Jesus talking with someone before he heals them. But how much time did he have with each person? When huge crowds brought their sick relatives to him, was it like an assembly line – one healing after another until it was over? Or did he spend time talking to each one? I don’t know. But Jesus did possess that key to a good bedside manner: he had compassion. That’s still true today. He may not do a miracle to heal us when we’re sick. We don’t get to chat with him when we feel down. But even so, this will always be true: **Jesus has compassion on us.**

#### I.

**He helps with our real problems.** Jesus understood how much life hurts and he moved purposefully to help people with those real problems. In fact, he did so much of it that the Bible can only record a sample of the things he did. In the two chapters before our reading, Jesus healed a man with leprosy, two men who were paralyzed, Peter’s mother-in-law who had a fever, three demon possessed men, one woman with a bleeding disorder, two blind men and he raised a dead girl. But Matthew says to us today: **“Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.”** How many healings do you think that equals? How long would the Bible have to be for God to give us even a brief account of every one? And then you have the command that Jesus gave his disciples, **“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons.”** In a world where people didn’t understand the role of germs, so they had only a limited ability to prevent infection and disease, in a world that had no anesthesia so surgery was limited and crude, in a world that did not have modern drug therapies and so was pretty hit and miss about having medicines that worked, illness was a very serious and common reality. People died in horrible pain from things we ignore today.

Jesus had compassion on the people he saw suffering every day. It’s easy for us to dismiss suffering. It’s easy for us to be moved by a story on TV but to walk past a hungry person on the street. It’s easy for us to feel guilty for a moment about not doing anything and then focus on something else and forget about it. Jesus displayed greater compassion than you or I can ever have. Why? In part, because he was the Son of God and God is love. It was the horror of what sin does to us that brought Jesus to this world. All pain, all sorrow, all illness and hurt come from sin. When God created Adam and Eve, there was no pain or sorrow. God made them to live forever and to have children and grandchildren and endless descendants who would live forever, in

perfect joy and in perfect health. But sin changed all that. Human sin broke God's creation and now every living thing dies. We get sick because we're dying.

The Son of God looked down from heaven and his heart was filled with compassion for us who have to live in this painful and broken world. So when his Father asked him to come down here and rescue us, he did. He brought the heart of God into this world and that heart of God was moved constantly to ease the pain of the people around him. Of course, that heart of God was joined to a perfect human heart that was moved the way our sinful human hearts rarely are. The man Jesus looked had compassion on the people he saw suffering all around him.

Jesus still has compassion. The heart of God within him is still moved by human suffering. The perfect human heart that God gave him still reaches out to us here in this painful world. So Jesus helps us when we suffer. On one the hand, he helps us with the guilt we feel because of our imperfect love and compassion. When we see how much Jesus loved, we can't help but feel bad for the countless times we passed by without helping that person in need on the street. We can't help but remember the steaks we've eaten and the leftovers we've let go bad in our refrigerators while 16 million American children struggle with hunger every year. We can't help but think about sick friends or relatives that we haven't visited or even called and the hurting that we didn't help. We're right to feel guilty because that lack of compassion is sin. It deserves God's wrath in hell forever.

But Jesus was perfect in compassion in our place. His perfect love for the hurting replaces our lack of love in God's sight so God calls us perfect. Jesus then showed the full extent of his love. He died to pay for our sin. He took our place in death and in hell and wiped away our lack of compassion. Then Jesus rose to tell us that. He rose to take away all our feelings of guilt. We are loved and holy in God's sight. As far as God is concerned, we didn't fail to do anything. We didn't miss a single opportunity to show compassion.

But Jesus' didn't stop healing people when he ascended into heaven. He knows exactly what hurts in your life today. He knows exactly what help we need. In love, he still gives it. Now, he doesn't always do miracles today. But he does give success to surgeries and medical treatments and he heals us. And when it is the right thing to do, he does miracles, too. But when Jesus walked this earth, he didn't heal every sick person. He healed those that God chose to be healed. But he loved them all. So today, he doesn't always grant success even to our surgeries. But he knows every hurt that we experience and he works for our good. He decides what pains we have to face and he works through the gospel to give us the faith to endure them. He stands beside us and promises that he will never leave us or forsake us. He does everything to bring us home.

Jesus shows us what real compassion looks like. As forgiven children of God, he calls us to live like he did. That means showing love and concern to those around us who sick, who are struggling, who are alone and afraid. It isn't just illness. It's all the hurts of life here. God calls us to reflect the compassion we have received by being compassionate to each other and to those outside our congregation. Be that Christian. Take the time to pray for those who hurt. Take the time to reach out and listen to other people's sorrows and encourage them. And be willing to dedicate your time and a portion of your wealth to helping those in need. Jesus has compassion on us. Let's have compassion on others.

## II.

When Jesus spent all that time traveling from village to village, healing and casting out demons, Matthew tells us, **“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”** What did he see when he saw people surging to him to be cured or to have their loved ones cured? He saw a spiritual need. He saw people who needed to be shepherded. So he sent his twelve disciples out to preach to them. And before he commanded them to heal and cast out demons and raise the dead, he said, **“As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’”** Jesus understood something about this dying world that is easy to forget: our greatest need is spiritual. No matter how much this life hurts, it will end. The life to come won't. **Jesus has compassion on us. He provides for our greatest need.**

Pain and sorrow cause a spiritual need. When my life hurts, it's natural for me to wonder why God is doing this to me. It's natural for my sinful heart to question and even doubt God's love and care for me. And the devil loves those moments because what he wants us to abandon our faith in Christ. So God gives us shepherds. Jesus told his disciples, **“Ask the Lord of the harvest ... to send out workers into his harvest**

**field.”** There are so many people who need to hear about Jesus. There is so much hurt that can only be healed by his love. There will always be a need for more workers

In the WELS, we have a growing shortage of pastors and teachers. We’ve wrestled with that fact for well over a year now. Jesus tells us to pray that God would send out workers because only he can give them. Every pastor and teacher that God sends to a congregation is a gift. He sends those men and women to care for his flock when they hurt and their faith is weak. He sends those gospel ministers to build us up so that we’re prepared when pain and sorrow come. Make no mistake about it – pain and sorrow will come. When we get to heaven, that won’t be true anymore. But this isn’t heaven. Hurt is part of our lives here.

God gives us ministers to help us with all that because he loves us. I’m convinced that one reason that God allows congregations to have vacancies is so that we can see that it’s a privilege to have gospel ministers among us. We have no right to a pastor or a teacher. But because God loves us, he asks them to leave their own families behind and go someplace they never imagined living. Sometimes, he asks them to face frustrations that they wouldn’t have known if they lived somewhere else. He does that because he has compassion on his people. Just like he sent his Son to die and rise to save his people, God asks his ministers put his people ahead of their own wants and preferences and even needs sometimes.

God calls guys like me to come and represent Jesus to you. So I come and pray with you in the hospital or before you have surgery. Obviously, you could pray without me there and God would hear. But when I come and pray with you, it’s easier for you to grab onto Jesus’ promise that he will hear you because he sends me to represent Jesus to you. And then, God sends you to represent Jesus to each other and to all those people who are out there. So every deed of Christian love and kindness, done just because it’s the right thing to do, opens the door for the gospel. Now, a person still needs to hear that Jesus loves them. That Jesus died and rose and took their sins away. But Jesus doesn’t appear to them in a dream or a vision. He doesn’t descend from heaven to talk to them. Jesus sends us. He speaks when we speak. He acts when we act. He calls us to show compassion and then to speak a message that addresses the real spiritual needs that people who live in a dying world need to hear.

So every deed of Christian love says that the kingdom of heaven is near. It demonstrates the change that the Holy Spirit makes in our hearts. It pushes back the hurt that sin and Satan cause and makes life better for someone here. That’s important. It is true that the life to come is far more important than this temporary life. But it’s also true that if you belong to Jesus and plan to live with him forever, you want to push back the power of sin and Satan wherever it grows. You are doing Jesus’ work when you show compassion in this life.

So what is your bedside manner like? Day after day, we have the opportunity to make life hurt less and in the process point to Jesus who conquered all that is wrong with this life and gave us eternal life. Now, we have to remember that we don’t have the power to cure anyone’s hurts. We can’t just say, “Jesus loves you” and expect that a person won’t be sad anymore or struggle anymore. Only God can cure us of the hurt and struggles that sin causes. But God does that through the gospel message that we share with each other. God calls pastors and teachers because his people need spiritual care. He calls all of us because we all need that care. Then he works through the care we provide to comfort and strengthen his people. Then he brings us home. Jesus has compassion on all of us. We need that compassion every day in this sinful world. Amen