TITLE: Compassion

TEXT: Mk. 1:40-42; Col. 3:12-17; Gal. 6:2; 2nd Co. 5:17-19; Mt. 6:14; 1 Jn. 4:20-21; Jn. 13:35; James 1:22-25; Jn. 1:1, 14

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about one of the greatest of Christian virtues.. And that is Compassion.

I heard a story about a little girl who was sent on an errand by her mother. She took much too long in coming back. The Mother, therefore, demanded an explanation when she finally did return. The little girl explained that on her way she had met a little friend who was crying because she had broken her doll. “Oh,” said the mother, “then you stopped to help her fix her doll?” “Oh, no,” replied the little girl. “I stopped to help her cry.”

Compassion is a great Christian virtue because compassion is a virtue, an attribute of Jesus Himself…

**Mark 1:40 (NIV) A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."**

**41 Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"**

**42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.**

We see the compassion of Christ time and time again in scripture… To me, one of the most noteworthy times is when he gets news of the death of his friend Lazarus. Mary & Martha and Lazarus’s friends and relatives are gathered at the tomb where Lazarus has been laid. As Jesus approaches the tomb and sees all the heartache and pain of the people, Scripture simply says, “Jesus wept”.

Jesus knew He was about to rise Lazarus from the dead so why did He weep?

Because he was moved with compassion! He saw His friends hurting and it touched His heart and He hurt with them. Their grief caused Him to grieve.

Jesus was compassionate and He calls His church to be compassionate also. Compassion is a defining mark of Christianity; it is to be a defining mark of your and my life as a Christian.

Colo 3:12 (NIV) Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion…

As Christians one of the things that we are to clothe ourselves with is compassion!

So just what is compassion? What does it mean to be compassionate?

**Com·pas·sion** *n.* Deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve that suffering.

Compassion is not just recognizing the pain of others, but recognizing the pain and having a desire to help relieve their pain.

The word comes from the Greek

**{oyk-tir-mos'}**

**1) compassion, pity, mercy**

**1a) bowels in which compassion resides, a heart of compassion**

Having a heart filled with the desire to relieve the pain and suffering of others..

We are to **clothe** ourselves with compassion.

**1746 enduo {en-doo'-o}**

**1) to sink into (clothing), put on, clothe one's self**

It is an action verb… An action that we are to perform.

We are to put on compassion as we would put on a shirt.

In short---Compassion is a decision, a choice that we make. It is something that we have to allow God to do within us.

I once read about a tremendous example of this kind of compassion, the compassion that we are to clothe ourselves with as Christians, manifest in the lives of some elementary school boys…

In a fifth-grade class at Lake Elementary School in Oceanside, California, there where fourteen boys who had no hair. Only one, however, had no choice in the matter. A boy by the name of Ian was about to undergo chemotherapy for lymphoma and faced the prospect of having his hair fall out in clumps, so he decided to shave his head before he took the chemo. When he did 13 other boys shaved their heads also, so that Ian wouldn't feel out of place.

One of the other boys said: "If everybody has his head shaved, sometimes people don't know who's who.” "They don't know who has cancer, and who just shaved their head." A Ten-year-old boy by the name of Kyle started it all. He talked to some other boys, and before long they all trekked to the barber shop.

Kyle said:"The last thing Ian would want is to not fit in,” "We just wanted to make him feel better."

This group of young boys saw the trial that one of their friends was going through and had compassion on him.

Their compassion was real compassion in that It moved them into action!

So that their friend wouldn’t feel so out of place, look different because of the trial that he was going through, they all decided to look like their friend so that he would not “stand out”.

Folks that is the compassion of Christ!

To see someone’s pain and suffering and be moved to share in that pain and suffering in order to help bring relief.

Gala 6:2 (NIV) Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Scripture tells us how we can cloth ourselves with the compassion of Christ

Colo 3:12 (NIV) Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

How can we clothe ourselves with these things…

**13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**

**14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.**

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

**16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.**

**17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**

There are 6 things here that Scripture says we must do in order to clothe ourselves with the Compassion of Christ.

#1. **Bear** with each other

**430 anechomai {an-ekh'-om-ahee}**

**1) to hold up**

**3) to sustain, to bear, to endure**

We are to bear with each other, hold each other up. Sustain one another, Endure with one another.

#2. Forgive each other just as we have been forgiven.

If we are unforgiving we will be UN-compassionate!

Forgiveness is necessary in having compassion.

Just take a look at Jesus Himself? He was compassionate because He was forgiving.

**Hebrews 13:8** **“While we were yet sinners Christ died for us”!**

While we were yet sinners Christ had compassion on us!

How is that possible? Because he first was forgiving!

**2Cor 5:17 (NIV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**

**18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:**

**19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.**

As Christians we are called, actually, we are commanded to forgive just as we have been forgiven.

So we need to ask: How is it that God has forgiven us? Totally, completely, no strings attached! Scripture says our sins and lawless acts are buried in the depths of the deepest sea! They are as far removed from God sight as east is from west! Scripture says that God remembers them no more!

How many of you can say praise God for His great forgiveness?

Now realize that this is the same forgiveness that we have been called to as a Christian!

To forgive just as we have been forgiven!

And this is not listed as an option to us. Forgiveness is not a suggestion of God-- it is a command of God to His Church requiring full obedience on our part..

Jesus, after teaching us how to pray, puts it rather strongly when He says this:

**Matt 6:14 (NIV) For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.**

**15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins**.

You see folks, if we have accepted and received God’s forgiveness for our sins, and that great forgiveness doesn’t motivate us to forgive others who have wronged us, then something is seriously wrong in our relationship with God.

Just as God had compassion on us and forgave us, from His heart, we are to have compassion on others and forgive them from our heart.

To say we are a Christian and yet we are unwilling to forgive others is a contradiction in terms.

To be a Christian is to be a Christ like one, and not being willing to forgive is as unlike Christ as you can get!

#3. Over all these virtues put on love

We are to clothe ourselves with the virtues of

Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

And then we are to put on the virtue of love over them all! Kind of like a pair of coveralls.

Love is that which binds all the other virtues together in perfect unity.

**1Joh 4:20 (NIV) If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.**

**21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother**.

The age old question…Who is my brother?

Just look at the person beside you and those around you wherever you may be.

Husbands, your wife is also your brother, Wives, your husband is also your brother, parents your children are also your brothers, children, your parents are also your brothers, this assemble of believers is also your brothers, your brother is in the home, the workplace, the marketplace and beyond!

**If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar.**

**God has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother**.

It doesn’t say should! It doesn’t say might! It doesn’t say can! But it says that whoever loves God MUST love his brother…

Love is thee distinctive trademark of the Church, of the believer.

Jesus said;

John 13:35 (NIV) By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

#4. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts

If I asked you, do you want the peace of Christ to rule in your heart, every one of you would probably say yes.

If we don’t feel like the peace of Christ is ruling in our heart then it is because we haven’t allowed it to happen.

The command here is: **Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.**

We need to let the peace of Christ rule. Allow it to rule in our hearts.

How do we do that?

Primarily by living lives of obedience and surrender to God.

**Jame 1:22 (NIV) Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.**

**23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror**

**24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.**

**25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does.**

This is also what Scripture means when it says

#5. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.

We need to let, allow the Word of Christ dwell in us richly.

**John 1:1 (NIV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

John 1:14 (NIV) The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Word of Christ is the Word of God!

Jesus is the Word, the Logos of God!

We are to allow, action on our part, the Word of God to dwell richly within us. It is the same thing as saying we need to allow Jesus Christ to dwell richly within us because Jesus is the Word..

The evidence of that action on our part is surrender and obedience. Becoming a doer of the Word and not just a hearer of it.

**25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does.**

Is it your desire to be blessed in whatever you do?

Then become a doer of the Word! Become obedient to Gods Perfect law that brings life and health and peace.

Finally..

#6.Whatever you do, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus.

How much of what we do in our life are we doing in the name of the Lord Jesus?

Let me tell you something… If we do something and claim that we are doing it in the Name of the Lord or that it is OK with the Lord that we do it then we better make sure that it lines up with Scripture.

I have known people who have made a decision to do something and have tried to justify it by saying that they have felt the Lord directing them to do it, yet what they are contemplating doing goes totally against Scripture.

God will never direct us to do anything that contradicts His Holy Word.

(Example—Several years ago I was counseling a married couple who were having marital problems and the woman told me that she felt like God was telling her to leave her husband so that she could be happy. They were not getting along at all but there was no marital unfaithfulness on either person’s part.

Good rule of thumb is that if we feel that God is directing us to do something, or is approving of something that we are doing, and what we are doing doesn’t line up with the Word of God then it is not the voice of God that we are hearing!

We may be hearing a voice but it is just not the voice of God.

It is either the other guy, the devil, or the voice of our flesh, our own sinful nature.

God will never direct us to do anything that would contradict His Word.

Most of the time when we start out with the statement, “I don’t feel”, we need to be alarmed.

If we say something like “I don’t feel like God would have me go through this, or go in this particular direction with my life, even though the word of God may plainly tell us what the right direction is, we are headed for trouble.

You see, we can’t always trust our feelings because they are subject to our sinful nature….

But we can always trust Gods Word…

We may feel used and abused and like kicking our neighbor in the face, but the Word of God says love your neighbor as yourself and so fulfill the law of Christ!

We may feel like we are justified in holding a grudge or remaining bitter over something that someone has done to us, but the Word of God says that we must forgive just as we have been forgiven! And so we fulfill the law of Christ!

Don’t live your life by your feelings unless you first make sure that what you feel lines up with Gods Word and His will!

Again, a defining mark of the Church, a defining mark of the Christian, is being a man or woman who has clothed themselves with Compassion, particularly the compassion of Christ Jesus.

Compassion is a calling and a command for all who claim the name of Christ.

A small orphaned boy lived with his grandmother. One night their house caught fire. The grandmother, trying to rescue the little boy who was asleep upstairs perished in the smoke and flames. A crowd gathered around the burning house. The boy's cries for help were heard above the crackling of the blaze. No one seemed to know what to do, for the front of the house was a mass of flames.

Suddenly a stranger rushed from the crowd and circled to the back where he spotted an iron pipe that reached an upstairs window. He disappeared for a few minutes, and then reappeared with the boy in his arms. Amid the cheers of the crowd, he climbed down the hot pipe as the boy hung around his neck.

Weeks later a public hearing was held in the town hall to determine in whose custody the boy would be placed.

Each person wanting the boy was allowed to speak briefly. The first man said, "I have a big farm. Everybody needs the out-of-doors."

The second man told of the advantages he could provide. "I'm a teacher. I have a large library. He would get a good education." Others spoke.

Finally the richest man in the community said, "I'm wealthy. I could give the boy everything mentioned tonight: farm, education, and more, including money and travel. I'd like him in my home."

The chairman asked, "Anyone else like to say a word?" From the back seat rose a stranger who had slipped in unnoticed. As he walked toward the front, deep suffering showed on his face. Reaching the front of the room, he stood directly in front of the little boy. Slowly the stranger removed his hands from his pockets. A gasp went up from the crowd. The little boy, whose eyes had been focused on the floor until now, looked up. The man's hands were terribly burned and scarred. Suddenly the boy emitted a cry of recognition. Here was the man who had saved his life. His hands were scarred from climbing up and down the hot pipe. With a leap the boy threw himself around the stranger's neck and held on for life. The farmer rose and left. The teacher, too. Then the rich man. Everyone departed, leaving the boy and his rescuer who had won him without a word. Those marred hands spoke more effectively than any words.

Church, actions always speak louder than words.

The action of compassion is the loudest of all actions.

A heart of Compassion will always put the needs of others above the needs of self.

Being compassionate will most likely cost us something, maybe even leave us scared, particularly in the world of sin that we live in, but compassion will always have its reward. Compassion will always result in God’s blessing, whether in this life or the next…

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**13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**

**14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.**

This morning have you clothed yourself with compassion, the compassion of Christ?

The manifestation of that compassion in our life will be bearing with one another and forgiving each other and loving each other with the love of Christ….

True Compassion comes about by allowing the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts and allowing the Word of Christ to richly dwell within us and determining that whatever we do, we will do in the name of Christ giving thanks to God for Him….

Does the compassion of your heart bear witness to the fact that Jesus is alive and well on planet earth? Does the compassion of our heart bear witness that Jesus is alive within us?

Church, it is to this that we have been called. To manifest the compassion and love of Christ to all whom God brings across our path… Whether it be in our homes, our workplace, our marketplace and beyond….

Is our life fulfilling the law of Christ? Are we loving our brother with the compassionate love of Jesus--Allowing Jesus to manifest His love and compassion in us and through us to the world around us?

For it is to this that we have been called! It is this that our world desperately needs…

Prayer

Heavenly Father, one of the things we see lacking in our world today, many times even lacking within our own lives is compassion. Especially the compassion of Christ being manifest in our lives.

Lord, forgive us this sin and help us to represent You more fully in our world. Help us to literally clothe ourselves in the Compassion of Jesus and bring His compassion to all those around us.

Give us hearts of discernment to see the needs of others as we live our day to day lives. Open our hearts to them and move us to show them your love and compassion.

With this world wide pandemic and the separation it has brought there is a lot of depressed and distressed people all around us. Let your compassion for them overflow within us. Give us spiritual discernment to know how we can reach out to them with your love.

May our lives be reflective of the love and compassion that you have for them. Bring wholeness and revival to our nation.

In Jesus name we pray…