

Sermon: No Guts, No Glory

Text: Luke 10:25-37

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“A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.” – Luke 6:40 (NIV)

Introduction: In **John 8:48** the Jews called Jesus a Samaritan. The name was sometimes used to describe a man who was a heretic and a breaker of the ceremonial law. It may also have been equivalent to calling Jesus demon-possessed. It was never a term of endearment from the mouth of a Jew.

There had been a long history of why there was no love lost between Jews and Samaritans: Racial and political issues divided them. There had been 450 years of tension (in 440 BC the Samaritan's help was refused to rebuild the temple). Their places of worship were different (Jerusalem or Mt. Gerazim). The Samaritan place of worship was destroyed by a 2nd century B.C. Jewish king. It is no wonder we hear the Samaritan woman in John 4 say to Jesus:

John 4:9 (NIV) ⁹... “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Language sure has changed over the years. Cool hasn't had anything to do with the temperature for some time – any more than hot does - or swift has to do with velocity. From that kicks, to that rocks, to that's “cheezier than Swiss” to yo and word—it's hard to be as hip as I am. The word Samaritan has certainly undergone a transition in meaning as well. It now is a “good” term.

From the account of the Prodigal Son it is clear that the father represents God. He shows compassion for his undeserving younger son. Compassion is always God's response to repentance. Jesus talks about compassion in other contexts as well. He has compassion for people who are without a shepherd.

Matthew 9:35-38 (NIV) says, “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. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, BECAUSE they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

As Christians we have the power through our lives to change how the culture feels when *they* hear words like “Christian” and “Church of Christ” or “Jesus.”

Compassion is:

I. More Than a Feeling

But compassion is also a feeling. The word, in our text today, for compassion literally means “bowels.” The KJV of the Bible frequently translates the Greek word that way.

Philippians 1:8 (KJV) says, “For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.”

There are some interesting verses in **Philemon (vv. 7, 20)** that talk about “refreshing the heart” in the NIV, but in the KJV talk about refreshing the bowels.

In our parable of the Good Samaritan the idea of compassion expresses the attitude of complete willingness to use all means, time, strength, and life, for saving at the crucial moment. It is contrasted with the passing by on the other side. (vv.31-32) Since seeing and being prepared to help are one, it sets in motion as with Jesus himself, a whole chain of events which together are called mercy (ελεος – v. 37a). Humanity and neighborliness are not just qualities but action. (v. 37ff)

Luke 10:25-37 (NIV) ²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” ²⁷He answered: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ ; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” ²⁸“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” ²⁹But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³²So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ ³⁶“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” ³⁷The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Stoics had a goal to not show emotion – to be dispassionate or apathetic, but God has come close to show us how much He loves us. Loving one’s neighbor begins with a feeling of compassion, but it expresses itself in acts of mercy and pity.

C.S. Lewis put it this way, “...The rule for all of us is perfectly simple. Do not waste time bothering whether you “love” your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him.”

We do not always feel like being compassionate, so if we are to be like Jesus our actions have to be based on more than feelings.

But compassion just like love is more than a feeling. It also has to be:

II. More Than Words

Words are never enough by themselves. They are naked if they are not clothed in good deeds.

James 2:14-18 (NIV) says, “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? (? expects a response!) Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. 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.”

Just like faith – compassion cannot be effortless.

Sometimes we are afraid that we do not have enough faith to pray for a child, a friend, or someone’s marriage. Our fears should be put to rest, for the Bible tells us that great miracles are possible through faith the size of a tiny mustard seed. Frequently our lack is not faith but compassion. (Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, pp. 39-40)

Do we have enough compassion to pray? Jesus was moved to compassion for people. We should be as well. We need to pray for hearts that are sensitive to God.

Lip service is never acceptable in isolation. Confession is not enough. It is too easy! There is a real danger in some religious traditions in putting too much emphasis just on confession to get people into the Kingdom. Not everyone who calls me Lord, Jesus said, will be recognized as one of my children and enter into the Kingdom. (para. [Matthew 7:21](#))

As much emphasis as we may put on action, compassion involves:

III. More Than Action

Compassion is not limited to those we know. The Samaritan did not know the traveler who had been attacked. He was a stranger. Have you ever been a stranger? We are told: sometimes angels are given hospitality without knowing it.

Illus. William Booth could not sleep one evening, so he went for a walk in the night. He walked down to the poor side of London and there, in the cover of darkness, saw the impoverished and beaten half-lives that existed in that setting. The rain was beating down on some of London's derelicts who were sleeping near the curbsides. When Booth returned home, he told his wife, "I've been to hell." Out of that nightmarish experience came the dream of the Salvation Army.

Had Booth not left the security of his own home, he might never have become aware of the needs of the homeless masses. (Greene, p.349)

Compassion is not a self-centered feeling of achievement according to a predetermined standard of obligation. It is rather a spontaneous outflow of a heart that forgets itself in the presence of any human need.

No one can fulfill the demands of love. Jesus alone has done it. He was what Luther called God's Good Samaritan for all men.

We don't have time to read it now, but the sheep in [Matthew 25:31-46](#) are surprised to hear that they had supplied Jesus' needs (by helping others). They ask him, "When did we see you...?" They remember taking care of the poor and needy, but they did not recall seeing Jesus in any of the hospitals or prisons they visited. Though the "goats" never went to those places themselves, they offer the same plea: "Lord, when was it that we saw you...?"

The clear point of the story is that the things we do for others we are actually doing to and for Jesus.

In the criterion of helping and showing compassion we should never be calculating on whom or what do I get in return. Our compassion, as Jesus' children, needs to be for the prostitutes, tax collectors and other various sinners as well as those who may appear to be without need.

Compassion from God is:
IV. Never Restricted

The expert in the Law was trying to live within a very restrictive definition of “neighbor.”

I John 4:11 (NIV) ¹¹Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

I think that “one another” is talking about “the Church,” but some would so narrowly define “one another” to mean that *we* are the only true church. (see **John 13:34**)

It could even be twisted into only loving the Church. We need to show compassion for everyone no matter what – following the example of our Savior. We dare not try to qualify who receives compassion.

Compassion should be extended to everyone. This is the kind of compassion that meets immediate needs as well as helping heal to the point of restoration of health. And we certainly could look at this restoration as spiritual as well. Everybody gets wounded. You have seen them. **Illus.:** Betrayal, divorce, cancer, death, job loss. The key is: **DO NOT GIVE UP** (He may send someone you least expect to help you.) The Samaritan, as a hero, was a complete surprise to Jesus’ listeners.

The man who had been beaten up – was half-dead, but God in His mercy and compassion sent someone just like Jesus to help.

Compassion cannot be withheld to anyone on the grounds of race, gender, social, political, or educational grounds. There are no grounds for refusal to love and show compassion.

There are some important cautions we should consider before we enter into any project of service. In the book *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), Richard Foster notes the important difference between self-righteous and true service to others. He lists nine important points to consider as we engage in any work of compassion. They are as follows:

1. Self-righteous service is impressed with the “big deal,” whereas true service flows out of a relationship with God. Listen to the promptings of God as you begin and lean on Him for direction.

2. **Self-righteous service relies on human effort, whereas true service makes no distinction. Be indiscriminate as you choose what you do, knowing that God is only concerned that you do what needs to be done when it needs to be done, regardless of how big or small the task.**
3. **Self-righteous service requires external rewards, whereas true service rests content in hiddenness. Avoid doing things for others as a means of getting applause or reward, knowing that the divine nod of approval is completely sufficient.**
4. **Self-righteous service is highly concerned with results, whereas true service is free of the need to calculate the effects. Do not let your expectations guide your service and do not be disappointed if your service effects no external change.**
5. **Self-righteous service picks and chooses whom to serve, whereas true service is indiscriminate in its ministry. Be careful not to neglect the poor and the lowly in favor of the rich and powerful. Also, watch that you not neglect the rich and powerful in favor of the poor and lowly!**
6. **Self-righteous service is affected by moods and whim, whereas true service ministers on the basis of need. Do not let your feelings determine your actions.**
7. **Self-righteous service is temporary, whereas true service is ongoing. Compassion is a way of life, not merely an occasional helping hand.**
8. **Self-righteous service is without sensitivity, whereas true service can withhold as freely as it gives. Listen with tenderness and patience before you begin. Be sensitive to what people really need, not merely what you think they need.**
9. **Self-righteous service features community, whereas true service builds community. Be careful not to let your “good works” become debts that others must repay. Let your efforts be directed toward the building of unity in the community.**

The best way to start your tasks this week is to begin with this simple prayer: “Lord Jesus, bring me someone this week whom I can serve.” This is a prayer that God loves to answer. Always remember that godly compassion is never self-serving.

Conclusion: Jesus' example of compassion always requires duplication by his children. It is easy to be too hurried, too preoccupied, too afraid, or too insensitive of others' needs. Jesus calls us to pay attention to His Spirit within us and to be like Him. He wants us to respond as He would.

Wouldn't it be great if the Church could once again be known for how it loves not only its own, but also those who are less fortunate than we?

John Wesley once said that true happiness comes from helping others. We become involved in the task of "carrying one another's burdens" out of compassion, but we may find that it is we who have been truly blessed in the end.

Who then, is the neighbor?

He is the one who cannot stand to see another suffer.

He is the one who cannot enjoy his prosperity while another is deprived.

He is the one who knows he is needed and does not shrink from offering what he has.

He is the one who develops his will to do right and is guided by principle rather than emotions.

He is one who cares.

He is one who cannot pass by.