

Compassion that Serves

Mark 6:30-44

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

³⁰ The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³² And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. ³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. ³⁵ And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. ³⁶ Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” ³⁷ But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?” ³⁸ And he said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” And when they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.” ³⁹ Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. ⁴¹ And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² And they all ate and were satisfied. ⁴³ And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴ And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

I. God's heart for the needy

Who are the genuinely poor? Those who cannot provide for themselves and do not have a family network of support.

Deuteronomy 14:29 ²⁹ *And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.*

- Widows
- Orphans
- Aliens/Sojourners/Refugees

II. Christ's example of compassion

- a. Compassion observes and comes alongside to meet the emotional needs of people (Mark 6:30-31).
- b. The compassion of Christ also sympathizes with the spiritual needs of people and shares the Good News (6:32-34).
- c. Compassion toward the physical needs of people shows itself in serving those needs (6:35-44).

III. Our responsibility to serve

Care for your own family

1 Timothy 5:8 ⁸ *But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

Care for the family of believers

Galatians 6:10 ¹⁰ *So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

Care for the needy

James 1:27 *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

- a. What is the biblical balance?
 - i. Prioritize the spiritual need
 - ii. Minister to the whole person
 - iii. Build bridges for sharing the Gospel

"A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor" (Proverbs 22:9).

INTRODUCTION

Two extremes

- A. Ministering only to the physical and social needs
- B. Disregarding the Scriptural mandates to help the poor—only focusing on the spiritual need
- C. What is the biblical balance?
 - i. Prioritize the spiritual need
 - ii. Minister to the whole person
 - iii. Build bridges for sharing the Gospel

I. God's heart for the needy

- B. Who are the genuinely poor?
 - a. Definition: Those who cannot provide for themselves and do not have a family network of support.
 - b. Examples of the poor
 - i. Deuteronomy 14:29

²⁹ And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.

 - Widows
 - Orphans
 - Aliens/Sojourners/Refugees
- C. God's heart for the poor expressed in the Law and Sacrificial System

- i. Leviticus 14:21

²¹ *“But if he is poor and cannot afford so much, then he shall take one male lamb for a guilt offering to be waved, to make atonement for him, and a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, and a log of oil;*

ii. Leviticus 19:15

¹⁵ *“You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.*

iii. Deuteronomy 15:7-8, 10-11

⁷ *“If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, ⁸ but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.*

¹⁰ *You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake.*

¹¹ *For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.’*

D. Reflecting the Character of God Toward the Poor in the Psalms

a. Psalm 72:12-13

b. Psalm 112:9

112 Praise the LORD!

*Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
who greatly delights in his commandments!*

² *His offspring will be mighty in the land;
the generation of the upright will be blessed.*

³ *Wealth and riches are in his house,
and his righteousness endures forever.*

⁴ *Light dawns in the darkness for the upright;
he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.*

⁵ *It is well with the man who deals generously and lends;
who conducts his affairs with justice.*

⁶ *For the righteous will never be moved;
he will be remembered forever.*

- ⁷ *He is not afraid of bad news;
his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.*
- ⁸ *His heart is steady; he will not be afraid,
until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.*
- ⁹ *He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever;
his horn is exalted in honor.*

E. What was God's message through the prophets regarding care for the poor?

a. Isaiah 61:1-3

*61 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,*

*³ to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.*

b. Jeremiah 5:27-28

c. Ezekiel declares why was Sodom destroyed.

Ezekiel 16:48 As I live, declares the Lord GOD, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done. ⁴⁹ Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. ⁵⁰ They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it.

d. Ezekiel 18:12

e. Ezekiel 22:29

f. Amos 4:1

*“Hear this word, you cows of Bashan,
who are on the mountain of Samaria,
who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,
who say to your husbands, ‘Bring, that we may drink!’*

g. Zechariah 7:10

F. Caring for the Poor

a. The Old Testament “Welfare System” was a “Workfare System”

i. Leviticus 23:22 Leaving the “corners of the field”

ii. Deut. 15:7-11 “Freely open your hand . . . to your needy and poor in your land.”

b. New Testament Guidelines

i. Matthew 25:34-36, 40

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

ii. 1 Timothy 5:3-16 Care for those who are “widows indeed.”

Application

One of the eight qualities of a healthy church, according to *Natural Church Development*, is need-oriented evangelism. I would call it, “Compassionate Evangelism.”

Look for receptive people in your community! Jesus ministered to the felt needs of people along with their

spiritual needs! Look at the fields that are ripe for harvest (John 4:34-38). Do you see the fields God has prepared to be harvested?

G. Christ's Example of Compassion

References	Object of Compassion	Act of Ministry
Matthew 9:36ff	Harassed and Helpless Like sheep without a shepherd	Proclaiming the Gospel Healing the diseases Pray for laborers to go into the harvest
Matthew 14:14	Great crowd (the 5,000)	Healed their sick
Matthew 15:32	The crowd is hungry (the 4,000)	Feeds them
Matthew 20:34	Two blind men near Jericho	He touched their eyes and healed them
Mark 1:41	Leper	He made him clean
Mark 6:34	People are like sheep without a shepherd	He taught them many things
Mark 8:2	The crowd of 4,000 has not eaten for many days	He feeds them
Luke 7:13	Widow of Nain's son has died	He raises him from the dead

There is also the parable of the Good Samaritan who had compassion on the beaten man on the road to Jericho.

The Example of Christ in Mark 6 . . .

- a. Compassion observes and takes a specific step to meet the *emotional* needs of people (6:30-31)

³⁰ The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.

COVID=19 has brought Isolation, stress, anxiety, loss of employment . . . it has exasperated family conflict . . . it has elevated addictive patterns of behavior.

- Counseling ministry

- Visitation ministry
- b. The compassion of Christ also sympathizes with the *spiritual* needs of people and takes a specific step to meet those needs (6:32-34)

³² And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. ³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.

- Sharing your faith
 - Home Bible Study
- c. Compassion toward the *physical* needs of people (6:35-44)

Matthew 14:14 He saw the crowd and healed their sick.

Mark 6: ³⁵ And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. ³⁶ Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." ³⁷ But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" ³⁸ And he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." ³⁹ Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. ⁴¹ And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² And they all ate and were satisfied. ⁴³ And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴ And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

Like the little boy with five loaves and two fish . . . we cannot feed everyone, but we can do our part.

Application

Food pantry has served in an extraordinary way . . .

H. Our responsibility to serve

a. Prioritize your giving

i. Care for your own family

1. 1 Timothy 5:8

⁸ But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

2. 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12

11 For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

ii. Care for the family of believers

1. Acts 2:44-45

2. Galatians 6:10

¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

3. 2 Corinthians 9:8-9

iii. Care for the needy

James 1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

b. Bridges to evangelism are expressed through ministries of compassion.

- i. Ministries of Compassion are more persuasive as corporate actions: Witness as a Community of Faith and not simply Individual Actions
 - 1. John 13:35 “Love one another . . .”
 - 2. John 17 “Be one as Jesus is one with his Father . . .”
 - ii. Compassion opens “people groups” to the presentation of the Gospel: “Make disciples of all nations (*ethnic groups*)...”
- c. What is the biblical balance?
- i. Prioritize the spiritual need
 - ii. Minister to the whole person
 - iii. Build bridges for sharing the Gospel