

Sunday August 9, 2026
FGBC at the Playhouse
Matthew 9:35-38, Matthew 14:13-21, Matthew 30:29-34
30 Minutes

Compassion

- Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you are so unsure of what to do or what needs to be done, but you know that Jesus needs to show up somehow?
 - o AKA Have you ever found yourself just completely broken by a situation before you?
- Just after I graduated from university, I ended up making my way to Sierra Leone where I served alongside an organization called Word Made Flesh...an organization whose aim was to love and serve the most vulnerable people in the name of Jesus.
 - o During my time in Sierra Leone I experienced a number of situations where I just didn't know what to do...not because I couldn't figure it out logistically but because I had to reconcile my affluence with the poverty and apparent brokenness that was all around me.
 - Much of the ministry that I was involved with was in a local slum...
 - I will remember the first time that I met Yusuf, who was about 12-13 years old, who never seemed to smile.
 - In talking to him a little bit, I found out he had been abandoned as a baby and was taken in by his aunt.
 - He said that he didn't have any friends...he was always on the outside looking in.
 - That seemed to be very true...every time I would make my way to his home, I would see him alone, trying to entertain himself, and he was never smiling.
 - o My heart broke for him.
 - I could see his dignity and value as someone created in God's image.
 - I could see his passion and love for the game of soccer.
 - o I didn't know what to do or even what I could do.
 - I wanted to take him with me and buy him what he needed and find friends for him, but I knew those weren't feasible options.
 - So I sat in the brokenness that I felt for this young boy.
 - I prayed.
 - I continued to visit him as often as I could.
 - And I continued to hurt deeply for him.
 - Prior to moving to PG I lived in rural Manitoba I was an associate/youth pastor.
 - o I loved almost every minute of it.
 - I loved the planning.
 - I loved the students.

- I loved being able to interact with different churches.
 - I loved being able to connect with some of the local schools.
- About 5 years into my time there, I came face to face with numbers...
 - I had about 50 students that were a part of my youth ministry, many of them apart of other churches which didn't have a student ministry and some who were just community youth with no church background.
 - One day I found myself standing outside of the local high school doing some math...
 - I realized that my 50ish students, plus approximately another 50 students (maybe) who had a church background that I just didn't know about, left about 550 other students who had never encountered the gospel at all.
 - And that didn't count the middle school and the smaller high school in the town next door that I was also involved in.
 - In that realization that there were probably 750 students who were in grade 7-12 who didn't know Jesus, my heart broke...I caught a glimpse of a huge need in the community, and I had no clue what to do about it.
- Over the last few weeks, I have come face to face with many other situations where my only prayer was "Lord have mercy...I have no idea what you want me to do."
- We just finished going through the book of Jonah.
 - Throughout the book of Jonah, we talked about how God is a merciful and gracious God.
 - "Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, Lord? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people." (Jonah 4:2, NLT)
 - "But Nineveh has more than 120,000 people living in spiritual darkness, not to mention all the animals. Shouldn't I feel sorry for such a great city?" (Jonah 4:11, NLT)
 - As we were making our way through Jonah, I found myself wondering about that compassion of the Lord, so we are going to stay on that theme today.
- What does it look like for God to be merciful and compassionate?
 - And then how does that impact your life and my life?
- The compassion that God had for the people of Nineveh is a compassion that tempers judgement with the possibility of renewal. (<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/7349.htm>)
 - God's compassion is a compassion for the nations which foreshadows the broader mission that is made explicit in the New Testament.

READ MATTHEW 9:35-39

- Theologian BB Warfield once wrote, “The most typical statement of Jesus’ emotional life, was the phrase, ‘He was moved with compassion.’” (“The Emotional Life of Our Lord” quoted in Rediscovering Jonah, Keller, 124)
 - Each of the gospels highlight Jesus’ compassion for those around him.
 - Jesus had compassion on all sorts of people that weren’t his family and weren’t his friends and weren’t his closest followers, but were still people that he viewed as being so important.
- This passage reiterates much of what we know about Jesus.
- Jesus Traveled
 - In reading through the gospels, we can very quickly find that Jesus moved from place to place, and walked from town to town
 - Walking was the way to get around.
 - His travels from town to town were his way of proclaiming the Kingdom.
 - It was Jesus’ compassion for people that motivated his travels.
- Jesus Taught
 - Jesus didn’t travel because he was a tourist.
 - He travelled because people needed a spiritual encounter...they needed to experience abundant life...they needed to hear a message of hope.
 - So Jesus taught in the synagogues and announced the Kingdom of God to big crowds and small crowds.
 - Jesus took formal opportunities to teach, like in the synagogue.
 - Jesus took informal opportunities to teach, like when he came across a group of people on the side of the road.
 - Jesus was always on the lookout for ways to teach, preach, and announce the good news about the Kingdom of God, all because of the compassion that he had on the people around him.
 - READ MARK 8:1-9
 - This giant crowd wasn’t just in close proximity to Jesus for 3 days without anything happening...It is safe to infer that Jesus was taking every opportunity he had to teach and proclaim the Kingdom of God to this crowd.
- Jesus Healed
 - Jesus saw the brokenness of people...the spiritual brokenness but also the physical brokenness.
 - Jesus healed diseases and illnesses along the way as he taught.
 - It was in healing people that he pointed them to the Kingdom of God.
 - READ MATTHEW 20:29-34
 - Jesus had compassion on these men, which is why he healed them.
 - Jesus saw their physical brokenness, but also their emotional and spiritual brokenness.
- When you find yourself in a crowd, how does it make you feel?
 - For some of you, Sunday morning is a crowd and you may not like it.
 - Crowds can cause excitement for some but anxiety for others.

- Crowds can cause some people to feel lost and cause others to feel the need to fight to be noticed.
- In a crowd, Jesus saw each person for who they were...not just another number in the crowd, but as a son and daughter of the Most High.
 - It was in the busyness of a crowd that Jesus noticed those around him.
 - Regardless of the size of the crowds, it was the people that caught Jesus' attention in way that the disciples didn't.
- Jesus had "compassion on the crowds because they were harassed and helpless."
 - This compassion is a compassion that is rooted in the bowels because the bowels were thought to be the seat of love and pity...kind of like when you get butterflies in your stomach.
 - Compassion is not just love.
 - Compassion is not just pity.
 - Compassion is love and pity coming together to realize that without hope there is only hopelessness.
 - The compassion of Jesus is more than a "there there" response while you give someone \$5.
 - It is seeing the physical, the emotional, and the spiritual aspects of a person's life.
 - Jesus' compassion on the crowds is a pain of love.
 - This is not pain for its own sake but a pain of compassion that moves towards broken people for their good.
 - Jesus embodies compassion in a way that none of us can completely fathom.
- Jesus sees the harassed, helpless, confused, weary, and aimless...it is those who were experiencing oppression and suppression.
 - Jesus doesn't see these crowds as just being lost and unable to find the store, but spiritually vulnerable, emotionally weary, socially neglected, and burdened by poor leadership of the Jewish elite.
 - He sees them as following whatever "new wind of teaching" comes about (Ephesians 4:14)
 - He sees the crowds as being easily distracted by this or that.
 - He sees them as having no God-given leader...they are sheep without a shepherd.
 - Sheep are quite intelligent animals, but they are not the type of animal that ventures out on their own without some leaderships from the outside.
 - If there is a particularly alpha sheep, the rest will follow.
 - If there is a farmer who the sheep recognize, they will follow.
 - Without a leader, sheep simply eat, sleep, watch for danger, and exist in their pasture.
 - Humans are often compared to sheep.
 - Humans tend to follow the next best trend.

- Some tend to rely on others to tell them what they should do next.
 - But without the leading of a divine being...Father, Son, Spirit, humans tend to do whatever they think is best for themselves.
- This illustration of a sheep without a shepherd, is a fulfillment of a request made by Moses to God in the book of Numbers.
 - “Give them someone who will guide them wherever they go and will lead them into battle, so the community of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd.” (Numbers 27:17, NLT)
 - Now, as Jesus stands amongst the crowds, he sees the shepherdless sheep first hand...these people who are vulnerable, scattered, and poorly led by those who should have cared for them, but didn’t.
- Jesus sees the crowds with compassion.
 - I am sure he weeps over them, he longs for them to experience abundant life...
 - Then he turns to his disciples and says, “Pray.”
 - Jesus doesn’t say to the disciples, “You see their brokenness like I do right?...do something about it.”
 - He doesn’t tell his disciples to teach more or preach more or heal more.
 - He tells his disciples to pray.
 - Prayer is not a substitute for mission, but it is how we acknowledge that mission belongs to God and that we need God to raise up and send the workers...that is not something we do on our own.
 - I think it is worthwhile for me to make a confession here...one of the things that we as a church have been trying to do is communicate ways that people...you...can get involved in the life of FGBC.
 - Our hope is that people who call FGBC home find a place that they can serve and love and make a difference in our community.
 - I confess though that praying for God to provide for God’s mission has not been something I have done enough...I don’t want to speak for everyone else in leadership, but we are called to pray first for God to send the workers...I know I haven’t done that the way I should.
 - “Pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.” (Matthew 9:38, NLT)
 - Frederick Bruner writes, “Where there is prayer, there is mission.” (*The Christbook – Matthew 1-12*, Bruner, 450)

- The inverse of this then is probably true as well...if there is not prayer, there is not mission.
 - The mission of God is not dependent on my prayers.
 - But without prayer, mission can simply get left behind as God continues to pursue his mission in other ways and in other places with other people who pray to the Lord of the harvest.
 - When the time is right, God will send the people that need to be sent to live out the mission that God has in place.
 - It could be that some of you are feeling the call to sentness, and you aren't sure what that looks like.
 - This term "to send" is not "to be sent to the store for groceries"
 - It is a strong word that means to drive out.
 - Jesus is not merely saying that we should pray that God makes workers available, but that God thrusts those workers into the harvest.
 - These being sent then will require dependence on God, courage, and obedience.
- After this interaction where Jesus sees the crowds and breaks for the crowds with a heart of compassion and after he tells his disciples to pray, he then sends them to do just what he has been doing...go from town to town, teach and preach and proclaim the Kingdom, and heal and cast out demons.
 - I can only imagine that as Jesus had compassion on the crowds, the 12 disciples did as well as they saw compassion modelled to them.
- Jesus' compassion leads to action
 - Teaching, healing, proclaiming, listening to, sitting with, being present alongside
 - This action then leads to people experiencing abundant life.
 - I can only guess that out of those 4000 people who were fed, at least a few of them became followers of Jesus.
 - Some of them were in it for a free meal, but I would imagine a number were captivated by this gift of abundant life that was proclaimed.
 - The people that pursued Jesus' healing power, like the two blind men, wanted physical healing, but they were also interested in being spiritually healed too...I mean, they followed Jesus after their eyes were healed.
- Jesus models compassion to us.
 - He models what it looks like for us to see people as sons and daughters of the King of Kings
- Compassion sees the need.
 - God saw Nineveh
 - Jesus saw the crowds
 - Will we as the church see the people around us?
 - There are people every day that we come across that are like sheep without a shepherd.

- Compassion feels the pain.
 - o Jesus felt the pain of brokenness of the people in the crowds.
 - o I felt the pain that came with meeting Yusuf.
 - o Do we feel the pain of the broken people in our city?
 - Tim Keller wrote, “If your compassion is going to resemble God’s, you must abandon a cozy world of self-protection.” (*Rediscovering Jonah*, 225)
- Compassion requires prayer
 - o Jesus tells the disciples to pray to the Lord of the harvest.
 - o It stands to reason that we are called to pray the same prayer.
- Compassion then acts through the mission of God, not our own mission.
 - o Jesus teaches, proclaims and heals.
 - o Jesus sends his disciples to do the same.
 - o Jesus sends out the church to then proclaim the kingdom of God with word and action.
- You and I are not going to be compassionate the same way that Jesus was compassionate...simply because I am not God, I am not going to be able to have compassion on others the same way that Jesus did.
 - o But that doesn’t mean that I should see others through the eyes of compassion.
 - o Everyone matters.
 - o The gospel matters.
 - o Prayer matters.
 - Together, let’s be a people who are compassionate for those around us...compassion is hard.
 - Let’s be a people who pray deeply to the Lord of the harvest.
 - Let’s be a people who step into the mission that God is calling us to when he sends us.
 - If someone were to ask, “What is FGBC all about?”, there would likely be different answers.
 - Mission is “Recovering the abundant life that Jesus calls us into.”
 - Practically, I would love if the answer included, “FGBC is a compassionate church that proclaims the Kingdom of God and is fueled by prayer for the nations.”
 - Are you up for joining that?

God show me how I'm supposed to trust
 in things beyond my sight
 Teach me how to kneel
 When I don't know how to feel
 and show me where you are
 when my faith can't reach that far (Eleventyseven, “*Reach That Far*”)