

Compassion Sunday

Compassion = to have mercy, to feel sympathy, to have pity (NT Greek = “a gut-wrenching yearning”) (OT Hebrew = “cherishing a baby in the womb”)

A. God is compassionate.

“The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love... He does not punish us for all our sins; he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve. For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. For he knows how weak we are...” Psalm 103:8-14 (NLT)

B. Jesus showed us what having compassion towards others looks like.

“A man with leprosy came and knelt in front of Jesus, begging to be healed. ‘If you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean,’ he said. Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out and touched him. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be healed!’ Instantly the leprosy disappeared, and the man was healed.”

Mark 1:40-42 (NLT)

“When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ‘Where have you laid him?’ he asked. ‘Come and see, Lord,’ they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’”

John 11: 32-36 (NIV)

“...’Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.’” Luke 23:34a (NLT)

C. Jesus commands us to be compassionate to others.

“One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: ‘Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus replied, ‘What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?’ The man answered, ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ‘Right!’ Jesus told him. ‘Do this and you will live!’ The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ Jesus replied with a story: ‘A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’ Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?’ Jesus asked. The man replied, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Then Jesus said, ‘Yes, now go and do the same.’” Luke 10:25-37 (NLT)

D. Four ways we can show compassion to others:

1. We can help someone in need.

“If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God’s love be in that person?” 1 John 3:17 (NLT)

2. We can tell someone the Good News about Jesus.

“Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.’”

Matthew 9:35-38 (NLT)

Note: To refuse to tell others they need to repent of their sins and come to Jesus is the exact opposite of compassion.

"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. Just kill me now, Lord! I'd rather be dead than alive if what I predicted will not happen." Jonah 4:2b-3 (NLT)

3. We can choose to forgive/be kind to someone who has not been kind to us.

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Colossians 3:12-14 (NIV)

"If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return. Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate." Luke 6:32-36 (NLT)

4. We can comfort someone who has experienced pain and loss.

"Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them... Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep." Romans 12:9a,15 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions

Read Psalm 103:8-14 and Luke 10:25-37. Then discuss the following questions:

1. What does the word "compassion" mean to you?
2. Describe a time in your life when you experienced God's compassion. What happened? How did this experience change your life?
3. Who is the most compassionate person you know? What do they do differently from others?
4. Discuss the following four ways we can show compassion to others:
 - We can help someone in need. (James 2:14-17, 1 John 3:17)
 - We can tell someone the Good News about Jesus. (Matthew 9:35-38)
 - We can choose to forgive/be kind to someone who has not been kind to us. (Luke 6:32-36, Colossians 3:12-14)
 - We can comfort someone who has experienced pain and loss. (Romans 12:9-15)

Which of these suggestions comes most naturally to you?

5. Have someone in your group look up the homepage for Compassion International (compassion.com) on their phone. Spend a few minutes in the "about us" section discovering what they do and why they do it. What do you think of the idea of sponsoring a child through this organization? Does it excite you to know that Centerpoint Fellowship is partnering with this organization?
6. Spend some time as a group praying for God to give us compassion for others through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Quotations to Consider

"When it pleased God in July, 1829, to reveal to my heart the truth of the personal return of the Lord Jesus... the effect that it produced upon me was this: From my inmost soul I was stirred up to feel compassion for perishing sinners, and for the slumbering world around me lying in the wicked one, and considered, 'Ought I not to do what I can for the Lord Jesus while He tarries, and to rouse a slumbering church?'" George Mueller

"This is what the Lord Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.'" Zechariah 7:9-10 (NIV)