

Introduction

This week I spoke with Paul Brown, a minister in Fort Worth. He and his wife, Susan, have ministered in most of the churches that I have pastored. In the church where they are serving, they had to start meeting in homes. The school that they were meeting in told them that they could not be on campus any longer because of the COVID-19 restrictions. They went to a hotel, and met there for a couple of weeks. Then, the hotel informed them that they could no longer meet there. Out of necessity they broke up into home fellowship groups and have been meeting that way for a few months. Paul said that in the home setting, the gifts of the Spirit were operating, and that a number of people had also been saved. Everything sounded upbeat until I asked about Sue. She has Shingles and is in a lot of pain. I told Paul that I could empathize with her because I had Shingles a couple of years ago. I know from first hand experience how painful the Shingles can be. I told Paul that we would be praying for Sue.

Shortly after Karen and I got married, we took the Modified Houts Spiritual Gifts test. My teaching gift scored high, but in the area of mercy and compassion, I only got three out of a possible twenty-five points. Obviously, the gift of mercy was not my primary gift. I have taken the same test several times now and each time I have scored a little higher. I have been learning to have compassion and to show mercy to others. Sometimes, I have had to go through things like the Shingles, so that I know what another person is going through. I can easily identify with others who are going through some of the same things that I have been through. I believe that showing compassion is something that we can all learn about and grow in our ability to show it to others. I have certainly grown in my ability to show compassion.

What is compassion? The Greek word is *splanchnizomai*, Strong's G4697, and it means to have the bowels yearn, to feel sympathy or pity. The root word is *splanchnon* which means the spleen or intestines. It is the inner organs. Compassion is to have these strong feelings or emotions that come out of our inner being. In our text today, Jesus had these strong inner emotions or feelings towards the thousands of people who had not eaten in days and were hungry.

In the Old Testament, the word is *racham*, Strong's H7356. It means to come from the womb. It is a deep inner feeling like a mother has. In 1 Kings 3, Solomon had just become king and God gave him great wisdom and discernment. Two harlots were brought in for a judgment. Both of them had a child and one of the babies died. The mother of the dead baby took her baby and swapped it with the baby of the other harlot. They fought over whose baby it was, and so the case was brought before Solomon. He said, cut the baby in half. The real mother was moved with compassion. The KJV says her bowels yearned. That is *racham*. It is a deep stirring of feelings, emotions, and sympathy that a mother would have for her baby.

(1 Kings 3:26) "Then spake the woman whose the living child *was* unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, *but* divide it."

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines compassion as a "sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it." The word compassion is a joint word. The prefix *com* means to join together, and *passion* comes from *pati*, which mean to bear or suffer. It literally means to "to suffer together."

There is a difference between having empathy and having compassion. Empathy refers more generally to our ability to take the perspective of and feel the emotions of another person. I could have empathy towards Sue Brown because I had Shingles and could identify with what she was going through. On the other hand, compassion is when those feelings and thoughts include the desire to help. My offer to pray for Sue Brown included the desire to help. I identified with her pain and I offered my help. In our text, Jesus identified that people were hungry. He was probably hungry Himself and was suffering hunger with them. But, He did not just suffer with them, He offered to feed the crowds. He did something to alleviate their hunger.

In our text today, Mark gives us three keys to having compassion. Jesus is in Decapolis, a Gentile region south of the Sea of Galilee, and east of the Jordan River. He has been teaching, and healing those who were sick. In Mark 7:31-37, Jesus had healed a man who was deaf and spoke with difficulty. He had actually healed the lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others (Matt 15:30-31). At the end of three days, He said, "I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat." Jesus identified the needs of the people. Not only was Jesus aware of these needs, He considered their needs. He gave careful thought to their situations. He thought about the long journey home that some had to make and how they might possibly faint if they did not get something to eat. Jesus was selfless. Third, Jesus acted. He took advantage of the opportunity and acted out of compassion. Compassion requires action.

Three Keys To Compassionate Ministry

1. Compassion Requires Awareness
2. Compassion Requires Unselfish Thoughtfulness
3. Compassion Requires Action

In Colossians 3:12, Paul told the church in Colosse to "put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." You and I have been chosen by God, and God wants you and I to put on a heart of compassion. It may not be your spiritual gift. It may not come natural. But, God wants us to put on a heart of compassion. How do we do this? I hope this morning gives us some insight about how to put on this heart of compassion. I have been learning how to be more compassionate. All of us can learn about compassion, and all of us can put on a heart of compassion. My prayer this morning is that you and I will become more compassionate.

(Col 3:12) "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;"

Turn in your Bibles to Mark 8 and we will read the first ten verses.

(Mark 8:1-10) "In those days, when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples and said to them, {2} "I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. {3} If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance." {4} And His disciples answered Him, "Where will anyone be able *to find enough* bread here in *this* desolate place to satisfy these people?" {5} And He was asking them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." {6} And He directed the people to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them, and started giving them to His disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the people. {7} They also had a few small fish; and after He had blessed them, He ordered these

to be served as well. {8} And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces. {9} About four thousand were *there*; and He sent them away. {10} And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha.”

1. Compassion Requires Awareness (Mark 8:1-2)

Our text begins with Jesus identifying the need for the crowd to eat. Jesus was very aware that the crowd had nothing to eat. There were no Pizza Huts, Wendy’s or Olive Gardens out there in the desert. There was no where for the crowd to get something to eat. Jesus knew that the crowd had stayed with Him these three days and had not gone anywhere to get something to eat. An observant person would be aware of these things and know that the people needed something to eat. There may have been some people come to Jesus asking for some food. Our text does not state that, but there may have been some that had heard that Jesus had fed 5,000 people a few months earlier, and they may have approached Jesus and/or His disciples about feeding them. A third way that Jesus may have become aware is that He may have been personally hungry. When He considered His own hunger, He may have thought about others being hungry. However, He had become aware, He was aware of the crowd’s need for food.

(Mark 8:1) “In those days, when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples and said to them.”

There are people all around us with needs that we are not aware of. We cannot show compassion towards someone when we are not even aware that they have a need or are suffering. Compassion begins with an awareness of a problem. Sometimes people hold up signs that they are hungry, and they stand or sit at street corners. They are hoping that people will see their need and give them some money. I challenged on man about his pan-handling. He did it for a living. He called himself a professional fund-raiser. I told him that he needed to find a job and work for a living. He was perfectly capable of working, but he made a lot more money at the street corner than he would working an hourly job. He confided with me that veterans were the easiest to get money from. Since he had served in the navy, all he had to do was mention that he had served, and the vets would give money. There are many others that are out there on street corners and homeless shelters that really do need the money. You and I cannot show them compassion without being aware of their situation.

In the military and in law enforcement, they teach people situation awareness. Many of the officers that I have been with will not sit in certain seats in a restaurant. They have to be facing the doors and have clear visibility of the area around them. They also look very carefully at the surroundings and are trained to see possible security problems. To those of us who are not trained, we are not even remotely aware that there is a potential problem. In the context of compassion, there are lots of people all around us that have potential problems that we are not aware of. In becoming a people that shows compassion, we have to increase our situational awareness. We have to be able to identify people that have needs. Some people have needs that are quite apparent, while many other people are hurting and go unnoticed.

How can we become more alert and identify those in need of compassion? We can make a conscientious effort to be more alert. We can join up with groups that have already identified those in need of compassionate ministry. We can also pray and ask God to make us more aware of the needs around us. We need to identify the needs of others so we can show compassion.

2. Compassion Requires Unselfish Thoughtfulness (Mark 8:1-5)

It is not enough to be aware and to identify those with a need; we must give some thought to the situation. Notice that Jesus said that the people had not eaten in three days. Notice what He said next, If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. Jesus gave some thought about how some of them had come from a great distance. Jesus had given some thought to their specific situations.

(Mark 8:2-3) “I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. {3} If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance.”

A few weeks ago, when we were looking at how Jesus fed the five thousand, He saw the large crowd and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus saw a crowd of people that were tired of the corrupt rule that they were under. They wanted to force Jesus to be their king. They were tired of living under fear, and of being taken advantage of by the government authorities. They were tired of the hypocrisy and corruption in the religious leaders. Jesus thought about their situation and what they were going through. He saw that they needed a shepherd to care for their souls. He saw that they needed a shepherd to guide them and feed them. Jesus thought about them and felt compassion for them. He did not leave it there; He also began to teach them. Eventually, He fed the five thousand. Jesus acted upon His feelings of compassion. We will talk more about that later.

(Mark 6:34) “When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.”

The apostle Paul wrote the Philippians and told them to have the same attitude that Christ had, which was an attitude of compassion. He said, “if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.” Then, Paul gave some instructions about how to do that. He said you have to think about others and their situations. Notice verses three and four. “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” That is what Jesus did. He may have been hungry. He was getting ready to cross over the Sea of Galilee and go to Dalmanutha. He had a journey to make. But, He was not just looking out for His own interests; He was looking out for the interests of others. He was considering their interests.

(Phil 2:1-5) “Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, {2} make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. {3} Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; {4} do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. {5} Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,”

It is not just thoughtfulness; it is thoughtfulness about others. We have to think about the interests of others in order to show compassion to people. There is no room for selfishness. Showing compassionate care to others requires us to do nothing from selfishness, and to look out for the interests of others.

Notice that Jesus and His disciples were not selfish. When Jesus told the disciples that the people had not eaten in three days and if they sent them away hungry, some may faint, the disciples answered, "Where will anyone be able to find enough bread here in this desolate place?" And Jesus responded, "How many loaves do you have?" Compassionate ministry means that you are unselfish and you look to see what you have to give. They only had seven loaves, but they gave Jesus what they had. Jesus took it and blessed it and it fed twenty to twenty-five thousand people. The key was that they used what they had to show compassionate care to others. They were unselfish. Compassionate care is focused on others, not ourselves.

(Mark 8:4-5) "And His disciples answered Him, "Where will anyone be able *to find enough* bread here in *this* desolate place to satisfy these people?" {5} And He was asking them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven."

3. Compassion Requires Action (Mark 8:4-10)

We must be alert to the opportunities around us if we are going to show compassion to people. We have to think about their situations, and not merely look at our own lives. Third, compassionate care requires action. Jesus did not just feel compassion; He did something about it. He asked the disciples how much bread they had. Next, He directed the people to sit on the ground. After giving thanks, He broke it and began giving to the disciples to feed the people. Jesus fed the crowd. He acted on these deep feelings of compassion that He had.

(Mark 8:4-8) "And His disciples answered Him, "Where will anyone be able *to find enough* bread here in *this* desolate place to satisfy these people?" {5} And He was asking them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." {6} And He directed the people to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them, and started giving them to His disciples to serve to them, and they served them to the people. {7} They also had a few small fish; and after He had blessed them, He ordered these to be served as well. {8} And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces."

I want to take a few minutes to look at some other examples of how Jesus acted upon these feelings of compassion. In Matthew 14, there was a large crowd of people and many of them were sick. What did He do? He healed their sick.

(Matt 14:14) "When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick."

In Matthew 20:29-34, two blind men were sitting on the road by Jericho and they called out to Jesus to have mercy on them. Jesus stopped and called them. He asked them what they wanted Him to do, and they asked Him to open their eyes. It says that Jesus was moved with compassion, and touched their eyes, and they immediately regained their sight. He became aware of their situation, and then acted upon it. We cannot just be aware of situations, we must act. If

we disregard and sweep aside the feelings of compassion for others, our hearts can become callous. We must act when we are moved with compassion.

(Matt 20:34) “Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.”

In Mark 1, Jesus was approached by a leper. The man fell on his knees and said, “If you are willing, You can make me clean.” Jesus was once again moved with compassion. He stretched out His hand and touched the leper, and healed him. Jesus acted upon those deep innermost feelings of compassionate.

(Mark 1:41) “Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."

In Luke 7:11-17, Jesus was in a city called Nain. As He approached the gate of the city, He saw a dead man being carried out. It says that he was the only son of his mother, and that she was a widow. I believe that Jesus must have inquired about the situation. He was thinking about it. When you think about something, you start asking questions. Then, you find out more of the details. He found out that this was a widow’s only son. As He heard this, Jesus felt compassion for her. It was not enough to feel compassion, He acted upon it. He said to the widow, “Do not weep.” Then, He touched the coffin and said, “Young man, I say to you arise!” The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. Jesus acted upon these feelings of compassion.

(Luke 7:13-16) “When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep." {14} And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!" {15} The dead man sat up and began to speak. And *Jesus* gave him back to his mother. {16} Fear gripped them all, and they *began* glorifying God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and, "God has visited His people!"

After Jesus fed the crowd He sent them away. Mark records that there were four thousand there. In Matthew’s account we see that there were actually four thousand men, besides women and children. So, there were probably between twenty and twenty-five thousand Gentiles that were fed there in Decapolis. A lot of people were fed by this compassionate action of Jesus.

(Mark 8:9-10) “About four thousand were *there*; and He sent them away. {10} And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha.”

(Matt 15:38-39) “And those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. {39} And sending away the crowds, Jesus got into the boat and came to the region of Magadan.

Conclusion and Applications

Our text ends by saying that Jesus immediately entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha. Matthew wrote that they went to the region of Magadan. This is not a contradiction. Dalmanutha has a number of different names. Migdal, Dalmanutha, Magadan, Al-Majdal, and Tarichaea are all thought to be one and the same. It is on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Magadan means tower. What do we know about Dalmanutha or Magadan.

Dalmanutha means a bucket or branch. Magadan means a tower. In the Babylonian Talmud this town is referred to as Magdala Nunayya, which means “tower of the fishes.” It was also known as Tarichaea, which means a place of processing fish. Dalmanutha or Magadan was a fishing town where they processed fish.

We don't know exactly why Jesus and His disciples went to Magadan. We do know that Mary Magdalene and a number of other women traveled with Jesus and the disciples. (See Luke 8:1-3.) Jesus had cast out seven demons from her. (See Mark 16:9-10.) Mary Magdalene was from Magadan. It could be that they visited her home town. That is just one possible reason.

One scholar said that Jesus always ended His periods of ministry with a feeding. He ended His ministry to the Jews in Galilee by feeding the five thousand. He ended His ministry to the Gentiles by feeding the four thousand. Having finished the ministry to the Gentiles, Jesus headed back to Galilee, with His first stop at Dalmanutha. In Mark 8:19, He went to Bethsaida, where some of His disciples were from. In Mark 9:32, Jesus went home to Capernaum. This was His final days before heading down to Judea, where He would be crucified. Jesus finished His ministry to His disciples with another feeding, one that we refer to as the Lord's Supper. At this final supper, it was not five loaves or seven loaves that would be broken to feed the multitudes; it was His body, the Bread of Life, that would be broken for all of us.

I want to finish this morning with a parable out of Luke 10:30-37. It is the parable of the good Samaritan. A man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers. They stripped him and beat him and left him half dead. A priest went down the road, and when he saw the man, he passed on the other side of the road. He became aware of the situation, but he was moved with compassion, and he went to the other side of the road. A Levite happened to pass that way and he did the same thing. He became aware of the situation, but his heart was not stirred. He went on the other side of the road. In verse thirty-three, a Samaritan came upon him, and he felt compassion. The Samaritan went to the man, bandaged his wounds, poured his precious oil and wine on him, put him on his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him. He was unselfish and used his own oil and wine. It was not five fish, but it was what he had. He took his own money and gave some to the innkeeper to take care of him.

(Luke 10:30-37) “Jesus replied and said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. {31} And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. {32} Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. {33} But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, {34} and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on *them*; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. {35} On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.’ {36} “Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' *hands*?” {37} And he said, “The one who showed mercy toward him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do the same.”

Jesus ended the parable by asking, “Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands? Obviously, it was the Samaritan. “Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do the same.’” I believe that is what the Lord is saying to us. He wants the Connection Church of Albuquerque to be a church that is full of compassion. He wants us to go

minister to those who have been hurt and are lying half dead. He wants us to put on a heart of compassion. Pray and ask God to fill you with His love, mercy, and compassion. He wants us to show mercy and compassion to people. He wants us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and heal the sick. What will it take? It will take us being alert and identifying situations. It will take some unselfish thoughts and considering their interests, not merely our own interests. It will take soft hearts that feel compassion and are moved with compassion. It will take an unselfish approach that is willing to give time, money, and care to those who are in need. God wants us to go and do the same.

Some of you here this morning may feel like you need some mercy and compassion. In Nehemiah 9, we find mentioned several times that God is a God of great compassion. (See Nehemiah 9:27, 28, 31.) In Lamentations 3:22, we find that His compassions are new every morning. We used to sing a song of that verse.

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies (racham, compassion) never come to an end. They are new every morning, new every morning, great is Thy faithfulness, Oh Lord, great is Thy faithfulness.”

(Lam 3:22-23 ESV) “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; {23} they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

God is full of compassion. He has mercy and compassion for you this morning. He is a God of great mercies and compassion. In Psalm 51:1-2, a penitent David came before the Lord and pleaded for His mercy and forgiveness. He said, “According to the greatness of Your compassion (racham) blot out my transgressions.” If you are here this morning and need God’s forgiveness, He is a God of great compassion and He will forgive you. If you have never received Christ, He is ready to forgive all of your sins and to welcome you into His kingdom. Simply pray something like this, “Father God, thank You for being a loving and compassionate God. Thank You for sending Jesus to die for my sins and to pay the penalty for my sins. I ask You to forgive my sins. Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God and that You were raised from the dead. I ask You to come into my life and to be my Lord. Amen.”

(Ps 51:1-2) “Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. {2} Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin.”

Introduction (Mark 7:31-37, Matt 15:30-31, Col 3:12, Mark 8:1-10)

1. Compassion Requires Awareness (Mark 8:1-2)

2. Compassion Requires Unselfish Thoughtfulness (Mark 8:2-5, 6:34, Phil 2:1-5)

3. Compassion Requires Action (Mark 8:4-10, Matt 14:14, 20:29-34, Mark 1:41, Luke 7:11-17, Matt 15:38-39, Luke 8:1-3, Mark 16:9-10, Mark 8:19)

Conclusion and Applications (Luke 10:30-37)