



BEN WASHINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH

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Wednesday Noon Bible Study

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SERMON SERIES

“Serving in HD (High Definition)”

PART 3 - Compassion — Leading With the Heart of Jesus

Key Thought

Servant leaders don't merely see people - they see the needs of people.

Compassion asks us to move beyond:

- “What's wrong with them?” to: “What happened to them, what do they need, and how can I serve them?”

The Hebrew and Greek words translated “compassion” in the Bible mean “to have mercy, to feel sympathy and to have pity.” We know that, according to the Bible, God is “a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” (Psalm 86:15). Like all of God's attributes, His compassion is infinite and eternal. His compassions never fail; they are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23).

DO YOU SEE PEOPLE OR JUST THEIR PROBLEMS?

Matthew 9:36:

“But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them...”

There are two important actions in this verse:

- Jesus saw.
- Jesus was moved.

Many people saw the same crowds Jesus saw. But Jesus saw something in the crowd that others overlooked.

He saw:

- Hurt.
- Confusion.
- Weariness.
- Spiritual need.
- Brokenness.
- People who needed direction.

Definition of Compassion

- Biblical compassion is more than feeling sorry for someone.

Compassion is recognizing another person's suffering or need, being moved by it, and responding in a way that seeks their good.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, exemplified all of the Father's attributes, including His compassion. When Jesus saw His friends weeping at the grave of Lazarus, He felt compassion for them and wept alongside them (John 11:33-35). Moved with compassion for the suffering of others, Jesus healed the large crowds who came to Him (Matthew 14:14), as well as individuals who sought His healing (Mark 1:40-41). When He saw the large crowds as sheep without a shepherd, His compassion led Him to teach them the things the false shepherds of Israel had abandoned. The priests and scribes were proud and corrupt; they despised the common people and neglected them, but Jesus had compassion on them, and He taught and loved them.

Leadership Principle

Compassion is not simply something you feel. Biblical compassion moves you toward people.

When asked what was the greatest commandment, Jesus responded that it is to love God with all our heart, mind and strength. But He added that the second commandment "is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 22:34-40). The Pharisee had asked Him which single command of God is the greatest, but Jesus provided two, stating not only what we are to do, but also how to do it. To love our neighbor as ourselves is the natural result of our loving devotion toward God.

First John 3:17 asks, "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need, but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?" Originally made in His image, man is to exemplify God's traits, including compassion. From this it follows that "If anyone says, 'I love God' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20). The Bible is clear that compassion is an attribute of God and of God's people as well.

THE COMPASSION OF JESUS BEGAN WITH HOW HE SAW PEOPLE

Matthew 9:35–38

Jesus traveled through cities and villages teaching, preaching, and healing.

Then Matthew tells us:

- "when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion..."

Jesus Saw Beyond Behavior

People often judge what they can see.

We see:

Anger.
Attitude.
Addiction.
Rebellion.
Laziness.

Withdrawal.

Failure.

Jesus teaches us to ask whether something deeper is occurring.

- Sometimes anger is covering hurt.
- Sometimes withdrawal is connected to disappointment.
- Sometimes difficult behavior is coming from fear.
- Sometimes poor performance is connected to problems we know nothing about.

This does not excuse inappropriate behavior.

But compassion seeks **understanding** before **condemnation**.

Jesus Saw Their Condition

Matthew describes the people as being like:

“sheep having no shepherd.”

Jesus recognized that their behavior was connected to their condition.

They needed:

- Direction.
- Care.
- Protection.
- Truth.
- Leadership.

Jesus Saw Their Potential

Jesus looked at struggling people and then told His disciples:

“The harvest truly is plenteous...”

Jesus looked at broken people and saw a harvest. Where others might have seen **problems**, Jesus saw **possibilities**.

Leadership Principle

A servant leader sees people not only for where they are, but also for what God's grace can help them become.

COMPASSION MOVES FROM FEELING TO ACTION

Mark 6:30–44

Jesus and His disciples were tired.

Jesus had actually told them:

“Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while...”

They needed rest.

But the crowd followed them.

Mark 6:34 says: “Jesus...was moved with compassion toward them...”

This is important because **compassion** often appears when helping someone is **inconvenient**.

It is easy to be compassionate when:

- We have time.
- We have energy.
- The person is easy to help.
- The problem is simple.
- The person appreciates us.

COMPASSION DOES NOT MEAN THE ABSENCE OF TRUTH

This is an important distinction.

Compassion does not mean:

- Ignoring wrongdoing.
- Avoiding difficult conversations.
- Removing accountability.
- Accepting destructive behavior.
- Allowing manipulation.
- Saying yes to every request.
- Refusing to establish boundaries.

Jesus was both: “full of grace and truth.” — John 1:14

True compassion wants what is **best for someone**, not merely what makes them **feel best at the moment**.

Servant leadership is not simply getting people where you want them to go. **It is caring about people while you lead them there.**

Jesus never allowed the importance of His mission to make Him insensitive to the people involved in the mission.

The servant leader must remember:

- People are not interruptions to ministry.
- People are the ministry.