

Compassion in Action

Matthew 9:18-38

Intro

Let's begin by opening to a very controversial passage...

James 2:14-18 (NKJV)

14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,

16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?

17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Though believers may differ on how to interpret the implications of this passage, one thing is very clear to me...

Actions reveal what a person truly believes — actions reveal who a person truly is...

And in our passage in Matthew this morning we will see who the Lord Jesus truly is — through His good works we will see His ***compassion in action...***

*Now, it is very important that we read the gospels not only to understand the things that the Lord Jesus **says**...*

- *But also to understand the things that the Lord Jesus **does**...*

*Because both His **words** and His **actions** reveal who He is...*

And both His **words** and His **actions** reveal the life that He would have us to live as His disciples...

With this in mind, let's turn to our passage — Matthew 9:18-38 — and move into our first verse...

18 While He spoke these things to them,

Jesus had been talking with the disciples of John the Baptist...

behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live."

As we put the pieces together from Mark and Luke we understand that this ruler was the leader of the local synagogue and his name was Jairus...

- And Jairus comes and bows down before Jesus in honor and respect — fully acknowledging that Jesus is his superior...

This is a very important point because the Lord Jesus was already an enemy of the religious leaders...

- So the ruler of the synagogue coming to Jesus and begging Him for help could be a costly decision...

And what we see from the ruler is something called the ***hierarchy of values*** — *the differing value we place on those things that are valuable to us...*

- It seems certain that Jairus valued his reputation as the leader of the synagogue — *but he valued the life of his daughter more...*

Therefore, he was willing to go and bow before the Lord Jesus and beg Him to heal His daughter — even if it cost him his position in the synagogue...

APPLICATION — We should evaluate our own hierarchy of values...

Because it is very easy to ***major on the minors*** — to spend our ***time, talent*** on ***treasure*** on the less important things while neglecting the things and people that really matter...

- And all that matters to Jairus is that the Lord Jesus comes and heals his daughter...

LESSON — Bring your requests before the Lord Jesus — bow before Him and beg Him to intervene — place all your faith in Him...

J.B.Stoney

"It is a great thing to learn faith: that is, simple dependence upon God. It will comfort you much to be assured that the Lord is teaching you dependence upon Himself, and it is very remarkable that faith is necessary in everything. 'The just shall live by faith,' not only in your circumstances, but in everything. I believe the Lord allows many things to happen on purpose to make us feel our need of Him. The more you find Him in your sorrows or wants, the more you will be attached to Him and drawn away from this place where the sorrows are, to Him in the place where He is."

As we consider these words, we realize that the trial that Jairus and his family were going through was actually ***an opportunity to get to know the Lord Jesus to and to learn to trust Him...***

Moving on to vs 19 we read...

19 So Jesus arose and followed him,

I find this to be an incredibly interesting phrase — **Jesus arose and followed him...**

- And I find it to be so interesting because usually the examples and exhortations in the New Testament are about ***us following Jesus*** and not about ***Jesus following us...***

And don't get me wrong — the emphasis ***should*** be on ***us following Jesus*** — that is what the Christian life is all about...

Us following Jesus as His disciples — going where He goes — doing what He does...

But I love this picture in vs 19 where the Lord Jesus arises and follows Jairus as Jairus leads the way to his daughter...

- *And I believe that there is a beautiful picture of intercession here — of what it looks like to intercede for others through prayer...*

You see, through prayer we go to Jesus and intercede for our lost family members — for those in need of help — for whoever is on our heart no matter the need...

- And through prayer *we ask Jesus to follow us to them* — we seek to lead the Lord Jesus to where they are — because we know that we are not the ones who can help them...

The Lord Jesus is the one who they need — He is the one who has all authority in heaven and on earth — and He is willing to follow us to them!...

Now as we consider the whole of vs 19 we read...

So Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples.

This is a wonderful example of how we are to live as disciples...

As disciples we are to go where Jesus goes — we are to follow Him wherever He might lead us...

And in order to follow Him, it is vital that *we see where He is going — that we understand where He is leading...*

- Wonderfully, we will be able to understand where He is leading as we read the Bible, as we pray, as we fellowship, as we serve, as we respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit...

And we are not going to be able to follow perfectly — we will get it wrong sometimes — because the Lord Jesus wants us to walk by faith — and as we step out in faith we won't always get it right...

ENCOURAGEMENT — Take small steps of obedience today — start doing the little things that you know the Lord Jesus wants you to do...

Do the things that are clearly in His will and you will begin to understand — more and more — what it looks like to follow Him...

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV)

**5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
6 In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.**

Continuing on in Matthew 9 to vs 20-21...

20 And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment.

21 For she said to herself, "If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well."

As the Lord Jesus made His way to the ruler's house, a woman intercepted Him and touched the hem to His garment in hopes of being healed from her terrible condition...

- We are told that she had been suffering from a flow of blood for 12 years...

Now, Mark tells us that this woman had spent all her money on physicians but her condition had only gotten worse...

- It is hard to imagine the desperation of this woman — out of money, out of options, ceremonially unclean for all these years...

And through all of this — to her amazing credit — she did not give up hope — she reached out in faith thinking that she would be healed if she simply touched the hem of Jesus' garment...

APPLICATION — Even if your situation seems hopeless, keep reaching out for the hem of Jesus's garment...

I can't guarantee that you will get the result that you are hoping for but I can guarantee that you will please the Lord as you keep reaching out to Him in faith...

22 But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well." And the woman was made well from that hour.

What a beautiful picture of God healing through the avenue of ***faith...***

And it is important to know that God is still healing today — *but always according to His purpose and plan...*

- *Now, this wonderful account of the woman's healing does bring up some difficult questions...*
- ***If the Lord was going to heal the woman, why wait 12 years?***
- ***Why doesn't the Lord heal every time faith is present?***
- ***Should I keep praying for myself or my loved one even though it has been years and the healing has not arrived?***

Unfortunately, I do not have answers for all of these questions...

And I think it is important to come to grips with the fact that *many questions will remain unanswered* — that as we walk by faith we will never have it all figured out...

- With that said, if you are wrestling with difficult questions — if you are being tormented by a seemingly hopeless season — please do not suffer in silence...

Please come and talk with one of the elders or with someone else in the fellowship who can minister to you...

- Remember — discipleship is a team sport — we are in this together — through the good and the bad...

Moving on to vs 23-24...

23 When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing,

24 He said to them, "Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him.

The Lord Jesus arrives at the ruler's house and assesses the situation...

- [expand — noisy mourners / common in the Middle East...]

Now, the Lord Jesus states that **the girl is not dead, but sleeping...**

- And the Lord Jesus says this not because He is misdiagnosing the situation...

Instead, I believe Jesus is saying this because to Him, death is nothing — it has no more power than sleeping does...

- In other words, the Lord Jesus can raise someone from the dead as easily as you can wake a napping baby...

[ex. The Lord Jesus calling Lazarus back from the dead...]

REMINDER — The Lord Jesus does not see things the way that we see them — He has to complete perspective — He sees it all — so we would be wise to trust Him...

Please notice again the end of Matthew 9:24...

And they ridiculed Him.

Because the crowd of mourners misunderstood Jesus, they thought they knew more than He did...

- And because they felt that they were superior to Him, they chose to ridicule Him...

Interestingly, this attitude toward Jesus has not changed all these years later...

The prevailing sentiment among those who refuse to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ is that *they are smarter than He is* — so they ridicule Him...

But notice what happens in vs 25...

25 But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose.

*This is a very important point — all who fail to repent of their ridicule of Jesus will eventually be **put outside**...*

- Now, those who ridiculed Jesus in vs 24 suffered loss — the loss of seeing Jesus raise the little girl from the dead...

But those who remain in their attitude of ridicule throughout their lives will be *put outside in the ultimate sense*...

- They will be permanently put outside of the Lord Jesus' Kingdom — they will be put outside of all that is good — for all of eternity...

At that point there will be no remedy...

So, if you are in a place of ridiculing Him today then please repent — turn to Him and ask Him to forgive all of your sins — and He will welcome you inside...

- Now, we don't want to miss the wonderful truth that the Lord Jesus raised the little girl from the dead and displayed His wonderful compassion in action...

26 And the report of this went out into all that land.

As you can imagine, word spread quickly that the Lord Jesus had brought the ruler's daughter back to life...

27 When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!"

It is interesting to note that these two men cry out to Jesus as **Son of David** which was a title of the Messiah...

- Ironically, the blind men perceived the truth about the Lord Jesus while people who could physically see missed the truth completely...

28 And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him.

Here we see the persistence of the blind men as they pursue Jesus into the house — they refuse to quit on their mission...

And then the Lord Jesus asks the men a question...

And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?"

This is a very interesting question...

- Jesus asks the men, point blank — “do you believe that I can give you your sight?”...

Put yourself in a similar position — imagine yourself seated before the Lord Jesus — about what thing would He ask you “*Do you believe that I am able to do this?*”...

- What situation are we bringing before Him — and do we believe that He is able to change it?...

Now, the blind men answer Jesus’ question...

They said to Him, "Yes, Lord."

Once again we see a demonstration of faith — the ruler had faith, the woman with a flow of blood had faith and these blind men had faith...

29 Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be to you."

30 And their eyes were opened.

Amazingly, the Lord Jesus heals these men in response to their faith...

But we must also realize that the faith of these men coincided with the Lord Jesus' will...

In other words, the Lord Jesus had compassion on these men and wanted to heal them and chose to heal them according to their faith...

- I point this out because we must never view faith as spiritual currency that can give us whatever we want if we have enough of it...

That is the false teaching of the so-called "faith and prosperity gospel"...

- In contrast, biblical faith is simply trust in the true and living God — biblical faith asks God to do what He knows is best...

And sometimes that involves healing and sometimes it doesn't...

Continuing on in vs 30 we read...

And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, "See that no one knows it."

Interestingly, the Lord Jesus — *in no uncertain terms* — warns the formerly blind men not to tell anyone about the healing...

- *Now, the Lord Jesus is not using reverse psychology on these guys...*

Instead, I believe Jesus is not interested in simply being a healer for healings sake...

- [ex. Guy selling hot dogs at a baseball game “Hot dogs! Get your hot dogs!” — you don’t have a *relationship* with that guy — you just have a *transaction*...]

*The Lord Jesus is not primarily interested in **transactions** — He’s interested in **relationships**...*

If the Lord Jesus chooses to heal then it is always part of a larger story — He does not heal just so we can depart from Him and go and do whatever we want...

- And if these guys go and tell the story of their healing, it is likely that people will come to Jesus for all the wrong reasons...

31 But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country.

Unfortunately, the healed men do not obey the instruction of the Lord Jesus...

LESSON — We are to talk about what the Lord Jesus tells us to talk about — and we are to stay quiet about what He tells us to stay quiet about...

Moving on to vs 32-33 we read...

32 As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed.

33 And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, "It was never seen like this in Israel!"

The multitudes are excited — and they should be — because a mute and demon-possessed man has been healed and delivered...

- It was an incredible occasion for rejoicing!...

But not everyone is happy...

34 But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons."

The **Pharisees** view Jesus as their enemy because He is causing them to lose their *false position* and *false prestige*...

- And the Pharisees cannot deny the fact that the mute man was healed and delivered — so they claim that the Lord Jesus **casts out demons by the ruler of the demons**...

But this is an absurd assertion — it is grasping at straws — why would the ruler of the demons want to cast out demons?...

- As Jesus says on a similar occurrence in Matthew 12, a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand...

Moving on to vs...

35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

The Lord Jesus continues His ministry of **teaching, preaching, and healing...**

- *And as always, the ministry of the Lord Jesus has two points of emphasis — Loving God and Loving Others...*

Everything that the Lord Jesus did had these two points of emphasis — in this order...

- And if we can keep these two as our points of emphasis, we will live life well...

36 But when He saw the multitudes,

Because the Lord Jesus is focused outward — because He is focused on loving God and loving others — He sees the people around Him — He notices them...

And Matthew tells us that...

He was moved with compassion for them,

- [expand — felt in His guts — His insides — He was impacted by them...]

He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

The Lord Jesus was moved with compassion for the multitudes because they were tired and wandering — with no direction and no leadership...

- They were wasting away — lost, confused, without meaning and purpose...

[ex. going to a carnival and you see a lost child looking for his parents — that's how the Lord Jesus saw all of the multitude...]

37 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

The imagery shifts from sheep to grain — from a scattered multitude to a harvest ready for reaping...

- And this reminds us that the Lord Jesus not only sees things ***as they are*** — He also sees things ***as they can be***...

He sees this weary multitude as a potential harvest — but laborers are needed to bring in the harvest...

- And the disciples (which we have been called to be) are to pray to the Father — the Lord of the harvest — that He would send laborers into His harvest...

What a wonderful thing to pray for — to pray for people who will go forth as disciples and bring the harvest into the Father's house...

- But it is not enough to simply pray — ***we are to pray for laborers*** and ***we are to go as laborers***...

You are to be the first answer to that prayer — you be the first to go out into the harvest and as you are going — pray that more laborers are sent into the field to join you...

Conclusion

We will stop here for today and Lord-willing pick up in Matthew 10 next week...

- *But before we move into our time of communion, I ask you to consider the following question...*

What acts of compassion — what good works — has the Lord called you to?...

They may be small in your eyes — but do them anyway...

Be kind to the cashier, be patient with the driver who cut you off, choose not to correct the family member who misspoke — the list is endless...

- And please remember that you were created for this — you were created to display compassion in action — you were created for good works...

To remind you of this, I will close with...

Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV)

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Let's pray...