

Lesson 6 3 September, 2017

The Compassion of Jesus Christ

Lesson Scope: [Luke 7](#)

References in brackets refer to Luke 7 unless otherwise noted.

Lesson Focus

This lesson records events in Jesus' Galilean ministry. Even in Galilee, His work involved a fair amount of travel. The opening scene of the chapter occurred in Capernaum, where Jesus healed the centurion's servant. The next day found Him in Nain, at least twelve miles away. Jesus did not just happen to be there. He knew of the need and undertook the journey to alleviate the suffering of a poor widow. The later events of this chapter occur in this region as well.

Compassion is a prominent attribute in God's dealings with His people. Even in Old Testament times, His compassion is evident in the long-suffering and mercy shown in the face of human failure. The psalmist said of God, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:13-14).

Jesus, in His earthly ministry, personified divine compassion. He healed all manner of ills. He reached out to people in all walks of life. He gave Himself without reserve, many times denying Himself of ordinary comforts to be able to meet the needs of others. His vicarious death was the greatest single act of compassion the world has ever seen. This love extends to mankind yet today.

Jesus is touched by human need. His boundless love and His infinite knowledge enable Him to meet the needs of all men.

The compassion of God is His yearning of sympathy and pity toward helpless, fallen mankind. It is a union of His attributes of goodness, mercy, and love. As He extends His compassion to men, He looks for a response of faith in return. That response of faith includes an acknowledgment of human need and an appeal to the power of Christ to save.

The compassion that moved Christ to come and provide redemption for all humanity was clearly evident during His earthly ministry. It spanned national and social boundaries to touch the lives of those who sought His aid. In each interaction recorded in this chapter, Jesus showed His interest in men's spiritual needs by appealing to their faith. He commended the centu-

tion's expressed faith, encouraged the widow's shattered faith, and rewarded the sinful woman's sincere faith.

The practical application of this lesson is twofold. First, all of us were sinners in need of Christ's compassion. In fact, we still face situations beyond our power in day-by-day experience and continually need a compassionate High Priest (Hebrews 4:15-16). Also, as recipients of Christ's compassion, we are called to likewise show compassion to those around us. Christ is not physically present in the world today, but His compassion is mirrored in the lives of His people. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench" (Isaiah 42:3).

Lesson Aim: To show Jesus' compassion in ministering to the varied needs of men.

Theme Verse: [Matthew 9:36](#). But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

Lesson Text **Healing the Sick**

[Luke 7:2-10](#)

And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. ³ And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. ⁴ And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: ⁵ For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. ⁶ Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof: ⁷ Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. ⁸ For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth *it*. ⁹ When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. ¹⁰ And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

Raising the Dead

Luke 7:12-16

Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. ¹³ And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. ¹⁴ And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare *him* stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. ¹⁵ And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. ¹⁶ And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.

Forgiving the Sinner

Luke 7:37-50

And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, ³⁸ And stood at his feet behind *him* weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw *it*, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this is* that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. ⁴⁰ And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. ⁴¹ There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. ⁴² And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? ⁴³ Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he*, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. ⁴⁴ And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. ⁴⁵ Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶ My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷ Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little. ⁴⁸ And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. ⁴⁹ And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? ⁵⁰ And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

Questions for Study

Healing the Sick

1. Why did the centurion feel unworthy of Jesus' help?
2. What did Jesus see in the centurion that revealed a great faith?
3. How can we see beyond the person in showing compassion to others?

Raising the Dead

4. In what ways can the help of Jesus go beyond human aid?
5. How can we keep the focus on God in our efforts to help others?

Forgiving the Sinner

6. Why was Jesus not perturbed by the sinner's approach to Him?
7. What blessings did Simon miss by failing to see his own need?
8. How can we cultivate a sense of our need of Jesus' compassionate aid?

Analyzing the Passage

The Jews judged the centurion worthy (7:4) because of his great philanthropy. The centurion himself said he was not worthy. But Jesus judges worthiness on the basis of faith. This great faith from a Gentile superseded that of his Jewish acquaintances.

The bier of verse 14 was a simple open coffin or plank. Likely it was somewhat customary to pause to let newcomers to the funeral procession view the deceased. The One who said, "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25), halted this funeral procession entirely. The people's response of joyful reverence included a recognition that the four hundred silent years were ended'. "God hath visited his people."

The alabaster box was likely a stone flask—durable quality for its precious contents. Meal customs of that time had the guests reclining on couches perpendicular to the table where this woman could stand "at his feet behind him" (7:38).

Jesus' compassion was coupled with His omniscience. He could discern the woman's repentance and faith, and compassionately forgave her sins. He also knew Simon's thoughts and attitudes, and could appeal to him to recognize his need of forgiveness as well.

Principles and Applications

Healing the Sick

1. Jesus' compassion is free from prejudice and respect of persons (7:2-3, 6, and 9). Jesus was not moved by the centurion's credentials. He did marvel at the greatness of his faith. How thankful we are that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34)! He saves and strengthens without regard

to race, color, wealth, or position. How are we as His representatives faring? Like the Jews in this account, we tend to be moved by the wrong things. God helps us to see a living faith in the few that possess it, for that is really what counts.

2. Jesus delights to see and reward faith (7:9, 10). This centurion did not talk about his faith. He lived it out in practical terms. His faith was in the Word, which he believed could heal his servant (7:7). And indeed it could. In some instances Jesus was hampered in His desires to meet men's needs because they did not believe in Him (Matthew 13:58). Here the cure was prompt, effective, and complete. Jesus never tells a sincere individual, "I'm sorry, but you are expecting a little too much of Me this time." Rather, He loves to say, "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29).

3. Jesus has compassion for those in physical need (7:10). No need is too small or too insignificant for Him to care. No need is too great or beyond His power. Every need arouses the compassion of Christ, but He sovereignly chooses whether or not to heal. Just as healing is an outpouring of His compassion, so is His grace. And so at times He says, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). So if healing is not forthcoming as we wish it would be, we need not question our faith, but rather let it be strengthened by the experience of His grace.

Raising the Dead

4. Jesus understands and ministers to emotional needs (7:12-13). In this account, the emotional needs were within the woman following her son's body. "Much people of the city" could sympathize with her, but only Jesus could dry her tears. When we face emotional needs, we seek the support of others and at times get help from the medical profession. But let us never fail to bring our needs to Christ. Outside of His compassion and mercy, every situation is hopeless.

5. Jesus' deeds of compassion moved people to glorify God (7:16). They saw beyond the man Jesus to the heavenly condescension that had sent Him. How is it with our deeds of compassion today? Do people see the love of Christ shining through us? Our deeds of compassion ought to identify us as God's messengers to the dying world.

Forgiving the Sinner

6. Jesus discerns and responds to spiritual needs (7:39-40, 47). Improper attitudes in professing Christians are among the most difficult for men to analyze and address. "But all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13). Jesus not only sees these

needs, but they invoke His compassion just as much as the needs of those who come to Him repenting of "great" sins. Jesus' ability to meet our spiritual needs is dependent on our ability to see our needs and to open ourselves to His direction.

7. Jesus desires that people understand and experience His compassion (7:39-43). He Himself is the creditor and all of us are debtors. In ourselves we have nothing to pay and must come to Him and plead His forgiveness. And so He gently works with us, as with Simon, to help us understand our debt and our helplessness to pay. Those who have experienced the compassion of Christ will respond in love to Him. Jesus openly denounced Simon's lack of love, while holding up the despised, yet repentant, sinner as an example of perfection in love. Where do we fit into the picture?

8. Faith is the key to understanding and benefiting from Jesus' compassion (7:50). Because of her faith in Christ's mercy and forgiveness, the woman who had such great sins could go in peace. Meanwhile, the self-righteous Pharisee with his critical attitudes could not be forgiven and would not experience peace. Must a person experience the depth of sin before he can benefit from Jesus' compassion? God forbid. He must realize that he cannot pay his debt and that Christ can meet his every need.

Important Teachings

1. Jesus' compassion is free from prejudice and respect of persons (7:2-3, 6, and 9).
2. Jesus delights to see and reward faith (7:9-10).
3. Jesus has compassion for those in physical need (7:10).
4. Jesus understands and ministers to emotional needs (7:12-13).
5. Jesus' deeds of compassion moved people to glorify God (7:16).
6. Jesus discerns and responds to spiritual needs (7:39-40, 47).
7. Jesus desires that people understand and experience His compassion (7:39-43).
8. Faith is the key to understanding and benefiting from Jesus' compassion (7:50).

Answers to Questions

1. Why did the centurion feel unworthy of Jesus' help?

He was a Gentile soldier pleading the aid of a Jewish man of God. His view of himself as under authority manifests his humble attitude toward himself and his reverence for the power of Christ. He understood that Jesus was just as able to heal from a distance as He could being present and did

not want to cause this great One undue trouble.

2. What did Jesus see in the centurion that revealed a great faith?

"Faith cometh by hearing," and the centurion sent for Jesus "when he heard of [him]." Jesus saw his interest in religious activity. Also the centurion called Him "Lord," acknowledging His authority. Jesus saw his humility, as well as his understanding of the power of a word spoken by the Master.

3. How can we see beyond the person in showing compassion to others?

We must possess the mind of Christ. A level view of others begins with a humble view of ourselves. Behind every person we must see a soul, either saved or in need of salvation. We realize that net worth is worth nothing to God, and good works are only of value when they are the result of faithful obedience to truth. We first follow the Golden Rule, asking ourselves how we would wish to be treated if we were in this person's place. Then we seek God's will in how He would have us to relate.

4. In what ways can the help of Jesus go beyond human aid?

Jesus is omniscient. He does not need to see or hear of a need to realize it. He can empathize more closely than any human since He knows each person perfectly. He knows what kind of help will be the best for all involved. He is omnipotent. Only He can fully comfort by reversing the effects of the Fall and restoring life to the dead. While He does not do this physically today, the spiritual parallel happens time and again. He alone can stop the death bier, raise us up, and cause us to walk in newness of life.

5. How can we keep the focus on God in our efforts to help others?

Many times when people praise us, we will need to point them to the One who sent us. However, as we focus primarily on the spiritual, and then on the physical, men will be reminded of God more than if the aid is simply humanitarian. We should honestly examine our own motives. If we ourselves struggle with feelings of pride, we will not be as effective at pointing others to God as when our chief desire is to glorify God.

6. Why was Jesus not perturbed by the sinner's approach to Him?

First, He understood that the sinner was repentant and that she had come to the only true source of help. Secondly, He saw all men as sinners alike, and Simon was on the same plain as the disreputable woman. Jesus saw her love to Him, and He compassionately forgave her.

7. What blessings did Simon miss by failing to see his own need? He missed the blessings of sacrifice, of forgiveness, and of peace. He could not experience the warmth and fullness of Christ's love because he saw no need of forgiveness. The woman had Christ's approval on her life and assurance of salvation, while Simon had only his proud self-sufficiency.

8. How can we cultivate a sense of our need of Jesus' compassionate aid? We must be humble and realize "that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18). We need to believe that Jesus is the only one who can help us. We see ourselves as the creditor who owed the most rather than the one who owed the least. We daily worship at His feet and seek His forgiveness for our failings. We open ourselves to the inspection and criticism of others, knowing that they are part of the aid Jesus has sent us.

Summarizing the Lesson

"We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Jesus is touched by every kind of human need. While He has the power to cure every ill, He sovereignly works in our best interest. His greatest desire is the salvation of the souls of men. He will help all those who come to Him in faith. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

Research Guide

1. Read the Scriptures in Nave's Topical Bible on "Jesus Christ—Compassion of (pages 658, 659).
2. Read the outlines of Luke 7 in Handfuls on Purpose, Book 2, Volume IV, pages 181-196.