

The Compassion of Jesus

by J. Wilbur Chapman

The sermon emphasizes the compassion of Jesus as a model for believers to actively reach out to the lost and weary in their communities.

Scripture: Genesis 32:28, Proverbs 11:30, Matthew 9:36, Matthew 25:40, Luke 15:4-11, John 21:5, James 5:16

Topics: "Christian Compassion", "Personal Evangelism"

Description

J. Wilbur Chapman preaches on the compassion of Jesus Christ as the keynote of His earthly ministry, showcasing various instances where Jesus showed compassion through healing and miracles. The sermon emphasizes the need for Christians to have the same spirit of compassion towards the lost and the importance of personal contact and consecration in reaching out to those who are weary, lost, and in need of spiritual guidance. Chapman urges believers to pray, speak, and write to share the message of Christ, highlighting the transformative power of personal dedication and faith in leading others to salvation.

Transcript

TEXT: "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion."--Matt. 9:36.

The keynote of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ was "compassion." You have but to follow him in his journeys by day and by night to find the proof of this statement. Whether he ministers to the sick of the palsy, turns aside to help the father whose child is dead, heals the woman with the issue of blood, drives away the leprosy from the man dead by law, stops to open the eyes of the blind man by the wayside, helps the beggar or wins the member of the Sanhedrim, he is always the same.

If you journey with him in the morning on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, or at noon rest with him as he sits on the well curb of Jacob's well; if you stop with him in the evening as he bares his side and thrusts forth his hand to the doubting Thomas, or behold him as he is roused from his sleep in the boat to quiet the storm; if you study him on the mountain side at midnight or behold him in the garden of Gethsemane when no one beholds his agony but the eye of his Father--you will learn that he was always compassionate. You cannot discover him under any circumstances when this statement is not true of him.

This ninth chapter of Matthew is indeed remarkable. It can be appreciated only when we read the closing part of the eighth chapter, for it is here that the people, angry because of the destruction of the swine, besought him to leave their country; and it is here we see him taking his departure. Men have since that time driven him from their hearts and their homes for reasons quite as trifling. It is a sad thing to know that

any one can drive him away if he chooses to do so.

The chapter is remarkable, however, because here we not only read the story of the calling of Matthew from his position of influence, but find more specific cases of healing than in most other chapters of the New Testament. There is the healing of the sick of the palsy in the second verse, the significant part of which is he was healed when Jesus saw their faith; the picture of the father whose child was dead and then raised by him, in the eighteenth verse and the twenty-fifth verse; the account of the woman with the issue of blood, in the twentieth verse, and the picture of discouragement when all earthly physicians had failed changed into great joy when the virtue of the great physician healed her: the account of the dumb man, in the thirty-second verse, who was possessed of a devil as well; and then in the thirty-fifth verse a general statement concerning him to the effect that he healed all manner of diseases.

The chapter is also remarkable because these cases presented to Jesus were of the very worst sort. The man with the palsy could not come himself, however much he wanted to do so, and four men were required to bring him; the child was dead and so beyond all human help; the two blind men were undoubtedly beggars and outcasts; the dumb man was possessed of a devil in addition to his dumbness; the group of people who were subjects of his healing power had every manner of disease, but while the people were different and the cases were desperate, Jesus was always the same.

There were six specific illustrations of healing: three of these came to Jesus for themselves, the two blind men and the woman; two others were brought to him, the man sick with the palsy and the man who was dumb; and for the other case the father came and took Jesus to the child. In all the general cases Jesus went himself to the suffering.

When all these subjects have been presented then comes the text, which is its own outline. There is first the picture of the multitudes, a great number of people. Then the statement that they had fainted; literally it is, "they were tired." Then they were described as sheep, the only animal known which in its wandering cannot find its way home of itself. And finally it was stated that they had no shepherd, the responsibility for their wandering resting upon others rather than upon themselves. This is the outline of this message.

I

The picture which Jesus beheld as he walked through his own country is repeated to-day on every side of us, and he is still moved with compassion because of those who are helpless and undone. It is true we have done something for him. The last census shows that the membership of the Protestant churches has increased more rapidly than the population. For this we should be thankful. It is also true that the church machinery of the day is well nigh perfect: the buildings and equipment with which we have to do have never been excelled. Yet, counting the membership of both the Catholic and Protestant churches, there are forty million people to-day in our land who are not in the church and who evidently do not care for the church. With these people there seems to be a growing indifference to everything that is spiritual.

A man in an apartment house in New York, when asked the other day to do something for a poor family for the sake of God, answered blasphemously, "I do not care for the opinion of men, I do not even care for God himself; I am for myself first, last and all the time." As we walk the streets we ought to be impressed with the fact that men on every side of us are lost in the proportion of one to four. As we sit in a car we ought to be impressed with the fact that one in four have rejected Christ and are hopeless. In every city it is literally true that there are thousands of unchurched people without God and without hope in the world. Of them the text would be true. "But when he saw the multitudes he was moved with compassion."

II

When Jesus saw these multitudes he saw them fainting or literally "growing tired," and this is the picture of lost people to-day. I am persuaded that they are tired of many things which follow in the wake of sin.

1. They must be weary of the hollowness of the world, for it cannot satisfy. I one day talked with a woman in Massachusetts whose opportunity to mingle with the so-called best people of the world had been unexcelled. She had been a chosen and welcomed guest in the homes of royalty and knew intimately every President of the United States since she had grown to womanhood. After her conversion I asked her if the life of the world had satisfied; her answer was, "It is hollowness and sham almost from beginning to end."

2. The unchurched people must be weary of an accusing conscience. There is no unrest like it. The man who sees the folly of his conduct and whose conscience will not let him sleep, the man who realizes the blighting power of sin and yet seems powerless to heed the call of conscience, is in a pitiful condition.

"And I know of the future judgment, How dreadful so'er it may be, That to sit alone with my conscience Would be judgment enough for me."

3. They must be tired of the world's sorrow, for it is on every side. We are born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward and I cannot but think that in all parts of our cities to-day the people away from Christ are saying, "Oh, that I knew where peace might be found."

4. I know they are tired of the slavery of Satan. A man formerly prominent in social and political circles, the cashier of a bank, when he found that he was a defaulter took his own life and left a letter for his wife in which he said, "Oh, if some one had only spoken to me when I so much needed help all this might have been different."

III

In the Old Testament and New, God's people are represented by the figure of sheep. Especially it seems to me this must be a good figure, because sheep when wandering find it impossible to seek again for themselves their home, and in their helplessness they fittingly represent the one who wanders away from God. There are so many people to-day who are trying to find their way back without Christ. They are like wandering sheep. There are so many who are seeking to climb up some other way into the favor of God. These are on every side of us, and the time has come for us to present unto them Jesus Christ the Savior of the world.

IV

These people that Jesus saw were shepherdless. The responsibility for their wandering therefore rested not so much upon themselves as upon the fact that the one who should have cared for them was not doing so. We are our brother's keeper, whether we are willing to acknowledge it or not.

In meetings in California one of the ministers went forth during the week to invite those who were away from Christ to come to him. He found an old white-haired soldier who said, "When I was in the army years ago I promised God that I would be a Christian. I have never kept my word. Yes, I will come to him now." And when he came his wife and children came with him. "All these years," he said, "I have waited for some one to ask me." He called upon another man who had been impressed in the meetings and this man

acknowledged that he had long felt his need of help, that he had prayed the night before, "O God, if you want me to come to thee send some one to speak to me." When the minister came the man trembled when he said, "You must be the messenger of God for whom I have been waiting," and he came beautifully to Christ. On every side of us people are waiting as sheep without a shepherd for us simply to do our duty.

V

The result of this vision which Jesus had was that he did an unusual thing. In the tenth chapter and the first verse we read, "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." Which leads me to say that we must have the same spirit. Our present day church methods reach not more than one-fourth the unsaved and many of these come from the ranks of our Sunday schools and from Christian homes where for one reason or another they have not made a profession of their faith in Christ. Three-fourths of the lost are left to wander farther and farther away simply because they will not yield to our present day church methods. This is not as Jesus would have it.

In the twenty-first chapter of John the fifth and sixth verses we read, "Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitudes of fishes." Although these disciples had toiled and taken nothing the results were all changed when they cast their net on the right side of the boat. May it not be that we have been fishing on the wrong side or fishing in our own strength, or, as some one has said, fishing in too shallow water, when we should have been casting our nets in the deep? The fact is, we need him and without him we can do nothing.

I have been told that of the forty distinct cases of healing in the New Testament only six came to Jesus by themselves. Twenty were brought to Jesus and to the fourteen others Jesus was taken. I doubt not that the proportion is the same to-day, and if it is true then our methods of work must be changed and instead of praying for them to seek Jesus we must either take them to Jesus or bring the Master into their company. There can be no successful winning of the multitudes until the personal element enters into it all.

1. There must be prayer. When Jacob went forth to meet Esau he walked with fear and trembling, but in Genesis thirty-second chapter and twenty-eighth verse we read, "And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed," so that long before Esau was met victory was won. There must be no attempt to win the lost without first of all we have gained an audience with God in prayer, and if we pray as we ought to pray he will give us the assurance of victory before we start upon our mission.

2. There must be personal contact. It is said that a man recently went into a jewelry store to buy an opal and rejected all that were presented to him. One of them he rejected instantly. The salesman picked it up and closed it in his hand and finally in a casual way opened his hand and placed the opal upon the counter. "Why," said the customer, "that is the opal I want. I have never seen anything finer," and yet he had rejected it first. The salesman told him that it was a sensitive opal and needed the touch of a human hand before it could reveal its beauty. Oh, how many souls there are like this in the world!

I have read that when Robert Louis Stevenson visited the island of the lepers where Father Damien did his illustrious work he played croquet with the children, using the same mallets that they used; and when it

was suggested that he put gloves upon his hands he refused to do so because, he said, "it will remind them the more of the difference between us." This spirit must prevail in our work if we are to win souls.

Two things we may do to reach the lost.

(1) Speak to them. The power of human speech is simply marvelous. A Sunday school boy appeared in a Baptist Church to apply for membership and when they asked him about his conversion he said, "My Sunday school teacher took me for a walk one Sunday in Prospect Park and talked with me about Jesus and I gave myself to him." One of the officers of my church when an unsaved man was asked by his minister to attend special services in the church and then was urged by his wife to go with her. Both invitations were angrily declined. He at last agreed to escort her to the church but not to enter in. The biting cold wind of the night drove him into the church and he was just in time to hear the minister's appeal to the unsaved. All were asked to lift their hands who would know Christ and then he remembered that when he was a boy and had been drowning in Lake George he lifted up his hand as high as he could and his brother took hold of it and kept him from sinking. Suddenly it came to him in the church that he was sinking in another way, and instantly he raised his hand and Christ took hold of it. I do not know of a more godly man among all my list of friends than he; and he says to-day that the invitation given to him and refused with anger led him to Christ.

(2) Write. The chief justice of the supreme court of a western state was not a Christian until a few years ago. He was a genial, kindly man, and naturally a great lawyer, but he had never confessed Christ as his Savior, and apparently had little real interest in the church. One day the pastor of the Presbyterian church determined that he would write him a letter, and then decided that so great a man would not receive his communication and destroyed it. But the pastor's wife had more faith and urged him to write again. He did so, and sent the second letter and forwarded with it Spurgeon's "All of Grace." He received word almost instantly that the chief justice had been deeply impressed, and that as a matter of fact he was waiting for years for some one to speak to him. The letter moved him and the little book gave him the instructions needed. To-day he is one of the brightest Christians I know. His face is a benediction. He said to me one day that it was a wonderful thing to be a Christian; that he never allowed any one to meet him that he did not talk with him about his soul. Are there not hundreds and thousands of other men waiting, as the chief justice waited, for some one to speak or write?

3. There must be a personal consecration not only to Christ but to the work if we would be successful. The biography of Helen Keller [Transcriber's note: Keller?], who was released from her imprisonment by the devotion of her teacher, is an illustration along this line. This teacher must go to this girl sitting in darkness and describe to her the commonest objects of every-day life. She told her about water, heat and cold and when something hurt her she told her with the language of touch that she loved her and Helen Keller [Transcriber's note: Keller?] answered back, "I love you, too." The devotion of this teacher brought this noble soul to light and power. A work like this awaits many of us in bringing the lost to Christ.

When Elisha went down to raise the Shunammite's boy he put his eyes to the eyes of the boy, his hands to the boy's hands and his mouth to his mouth. Something like this we must do. We have friends who possess eyes and see not, we must have eyes for them; they have lips and speak not, we must speak to God for them; they have hands and reach them not out after God, and we must have faith for them. In other words, we must not let them go away from Christ. Such a spirit as this pleases God and such a spirit saves our friends. A friend told me that with the ship's surgeon of a vessel he once crossed the sea. He said the doctor told him that one day a boy fell overboard and was rescued but the case seemed

hopeless. The ship's surgeon casually passing along the deck said to those who labored with him, "I think you can do nothing more; you have done all that is possible," and then curiosity led him to look at the boy for himself. Instantly his whole spirit was changed. He blew into his nostrils, breathed into his mouth, begged God to spare him, labored for four hours with him before he could bring him back to life, for the boy was his own boy. What if we should not have this spirit with the lost!

"If grief in Heaven could find a place, Or shame the worshiper bow down, Who meets the Savior face to face, 'Twould be to wear a starless crown."

But on the other hand, what if we should simply be faithful? Then may the following be true of us:

"Perhaps in Heaven, some day, to me Some sainted one shall come and say, All hail, beloved, but for thee My soul to death had fallen a prey. And, oh, the rapture of the thought, One soul to glory to have brought."

General Booth of the Salvation Army describes a vessel making its way home from the Australian gold fields. The miners had struggled to get rich and at last every man had around about him his belt of gold. The ship lost her way in the ocean and, set out of her course, suddenly crashed upon the rocks of an island near by. Almost instantly she sank. As one miner stood looking at the shore he knew that he was strong enough as a swimmer to save his gold and save his own life; but as he was about to throw himself into the sea a little girl whose mother and father had been washed overboard came over to him to say, "Oh, sir, can you not save me?" It was then a choice between the child and the gold. The struggle was terrific but at last the gold was thrown aside, the child fastened to his body and he struggled through the waves until he fell exhausted and fainting upon the shore. The great Salvation Army officer says that when this strong man came to himself the little child was by his side. Throwing her arms about his neck she exclaimed with sobs, "Oh, sir, I am so glad you saved me." "That was worth more to him than the gold," said General Booth. And if in heaven some day upon the streets of gold we shall meet just one redeemed soul who was once lost and in the darkness, and we know that that one soul is there because we were true, the streets of gold will be better, the gates of pearl will be brighter, the many mansions more beautiful, the music sweeter, and, if such a thing were possible, the vision of Christ more entrancing. Certainly it would be thrilling to hear him say to us, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto these little ones ye did it unto me."

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