

Bethlehem Ev. Lutheran – Carmel IN; October 6, 2019

Text: Matthew 9:35-38

Theme – A Mission Heart Has Christ-Like Compassion

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.”

Dear Fellow Proclaimers of God’s Word,

While we can’t see inside a person’s heart, often his actions will show us his heart. If a person is very generous, considerate and willing to assist those in need, we might say that person has a big heart. If a person is described as a softy, being sentimental, we might say that person has a tender heart. And if a person is selfish, uncaring, and maybe even cruel, we might say that person has a cold heart.

What word would you use to describe a person who has a “mission heart?” To be clear the mission I am talking about is telling people that Jesus Christ is their Savior from sin. How would you describe that person? Think of Christ Jesus for Jesus had a “mission” heart. What we see from our text as well as in other parts of the Bible is Jesus had compassion for the lost. It was a heart which ached for the lost. It was a heart which desired the lost to believe in Him.

As people who have been blessed to believe that Jesus Christ is our Savior from sin, we too are directed to share the Word. We are to tell others what Christ has done to save the lost. Understanding that, it is important for us to realize:

A Mission Heart has Christ-Like Compassion

- I. Christ shows us what compassion is
- II. Christ shows us who needs compassion

Matthew records, “**When He saw the crowds, He (that is Jesus) had compassion on them.**” Compassion literally means to have the heart, liver and lungs move. These organs are considered the seat of our feelings. To have them move is to have the greatest pity for someone. Now, while intellectually you may understand what I just shared, it probably is more helpful to understand what compassion is by seeing compassion in action.

To do that, let’s look at two parables. Recall the parable of the Good Samaritan. We remember how robbers beat a man, stole his goods and left him in the road. Eventually a man stops to help. He was a Samaritan. He bandages his wounds. He took him to a place to stay. He paid his bills. Here is how Luke describes this person, “**And when he (the Samaritan) saw him, he had compassion on him.**”

(KJV). His heart opened to the man who had such dire needs. He had compassion; not only did he take pity on him, he also attended to his needs.

Over and over Jesus took compassion on people. Going through chapters 8 & 9 of Matthew to our text we read that Jesus healed a man with leprosy, healed a Centurion's servant, healed Peter's mother-in-law, calmed a storm, healed a paralyzed man, raised a ruler's dead daughter, healed two blind men, and healed a demon possessed mute man. People could see Jesus was a compassionate person.

Another parable which helps us better understand compassion is the parable of the prodigal son, the lost son. When the prodigal son made his way back home, the father is pictured as watching for him. When the father sees his son, Luke records, **"He was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."** Why such emotion, why such deep feelings? Later the father said, **"But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."**

No doubt about it, Jesus had compassion for this world of lost and condemned people. His mission heart, the heart of our Savior Jesus led to our Savior's compassionate actions in doing what was necessary to save us from our sins. He knew every human being had a situation we could not handle – the enormity of our sins. Try as we might; pray as hard as we could, be the kindest people to those around us, always focus on doing good, we could never do enough to earn a perfect grade from the Father. When we were conceived we inherited a sinful nature. Jesus knew that, and He had compassion on us. Jesus knew that and came to this earth to live the life we could never ever live. Jesus knew that and travelled all the way to a cross to show us the height of compassion. He was the perfect Lamb of God who offered Himself to pay for our sins, so we wouldn't have to spend everlasting life in hell. What is compassion? It is seeing a need and as able addressing that need. In Christ's case, it was going to a cross, so we won't have to go to hell.

Jesus clearly shows us what compassion is. He also shows us who needs compassion. **"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."** Again, Jesus showed compassion as he healed every disease and sickness. Note though He also had spiritual compassion because as He looked at the crowds, He fully understood they were like sheep without a shepherd. They were harassed and helpless in the face of the false teachings of the Pharisees as they twisted and turned and changed God's Word. The Pharisees had the appearance of being spiritual leaders, but they were wolves in sheep's clothing. Jesus saw how these people were being hoodwinked, fooled, and being fed lies. His heart went out for them. He knew they needed the truth of God's Word and while on this earth did everything He could for the truth to get to the crowds.

What about us? Do our hearts ache for people who are in groups which have the appearance of religion, but are rejecting Christ Jesus as Savior? How are you showing compassion to those who do not have a church home, who may be confused by the various voices of the world, clamoring at them and calling them to follow so many dead-end roads? People of God, there are so many people in the crowds of life around us who are just like the people of Jesus' day, harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Are we going to walk past them, and not give them a second look?

If we are honest, when we compare ourselves to the mission heart of Jesus and his compassionate actions, we have a long way to go to have the mission heart He did. Often our focus is on ourselves. Often, we want to take care of our needs, first and foremost. When it comes to reaching out to others, if they are different from us or have different morals or have the ways of the world clinging to them – well, yes, we are to go to all, but. When we remember again Jesus' compassion and understand we are to tell one and all about His saving works, first we need to repent. First, we need to admit we aren't doing the work Jesus calls us to be. We need to admit we aren't always anxious to help the lost. When we do that, and realize Christ Jesus paid for these sins too, then we can ask our loving compassionate Savior, help me to be answer to the prayer you spoke.

Listen again to Jesus' prayer, **“Then He said to His disciples, ‘the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.’”** Jesus knew this wasn't a one-person job. Yes, saving us and the world from our sins was only something He could and did do. But getting the message out is something the Lord has entrusted to you and me, to the people of God. As we hear Jesus' prayer, He wants us to be an answer to that prayer as we tell those around us what our Savior has done to save them from their sins.

One of the blessings I have as Home Mission Administrator is hearing how God's people are sharing His Word. Here are some examples. We have mission churches which send out 1000s of postcards inviting their neighbors to worship. The mission pastor and members then often visit many of those homes. Some homes receive a 2nd and a 3rd visit. Eventually some of those unchurched people come to worship and then start a membership class. In some missions as they reach out and then as they raise up Jesus in bible classes, 20 to 30 and in some congregations up to 40 adults are confirmed in a twelve-month period. While we are very thankful when these people join our mission churches, more importantly they have been made members of God's heavenly family. Since the spring of 2011 our church body has been blessed to open 55 missions where that focus is to reach out to lost souls.

Over the past twenty-five years our church body has been reaching out to numerous cultures in North America. For example, the past twenty years we have seen our Hmong and Hispanic ministries grow. We have 6 Hmong men who serve as pastors and in our Hispanic ministries there are 19 locations which offer Spanish for worship with some 1,900 in attendance. More recently we have been serving more souls in the Sudanese and Korean cultures in the US. For over 10 years now Home Missions has used close to 25% of its budget on cross cultural ministries or missions which have multiple cultures in its membership.

As I share this information and talk about the blessings the Lord has showered on our church body, I am not saying or implying all our mission churches are doing great. No, some struggle and over time some mission churches have closed. I do share this information about Home Missions though, so you can rejoice with me that the Holy Spirit is working through the Word of God and blessings are taking place. We live in a world where for the most part it seems more people want to push Christianity into the background. More and more it seems like it would be easier and perhaps even safer if we as Christians just keep quiet. We can begin to wonder, is the Word still able to create faith? Is it still powerful? It certainly is! Rejoice with me in what the Word of God does and accomplishes as the Holy Spirit works through it. Using people like me and you, the Lord works through mission pastors and mission members. More souls are being brought into the Kingdom of God as law and gospel are proclaimed and the Holy Spirit gives faith to lost souls.

During Jesus' ministry, He served many, many people. In fact, He served everyone as He paid for all sin. No doubt, Christ's compassionate actions show us Christ has a mission heart. Now, our Savior comes to us. We know what He has done for us. We know what that means. And so, we pray, Lord through your Word and Sacraments bless us to grow in our faith. As we grow, bless us to tell more about you, Jesus Christ, so more can hear how you are their Savior from sin and by the Spirit's power believe and join us in praising you now and forever. Amen.