

"Live as examples of Christ Jesus"

Devotions for Deacons

Title: Be Compassionate to the Needy

Scripture: Matthew 15:29-38

Text: Colossians 3:12

“ This world is not as it should be. No-one should be hurting or sick or hungry. And Jesus knew that. In fact, that is why He came to earth. ”

The crowds are not just coming to see Jesus; they are not coming just to hear Him preach. They probably do not know He is the Messiah; maybe they do not care. They *do* care, however, that He can heal. They have heard the stories. They have seen the evidence. So they come with their illnesses, looking for a cure. But is it for this that Jesus came? Is not His ministry about telling people to “repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near” (Matthew 4:17)? But here, He does not talk about the Kingdom of Heaven. He sits up on this mountainside, where everyone has access to Him, and He *shows* them the better way. He heals those who come to Him. Rich and poor alike. Those who believe He is the Messiah, and those who do not.

For 3 days, He heals the crowds. 3 days surrounded by 4000 needy people. It must have been exhausting for Jesus. But what would it have been like to be healed by Jesus? Can you imagine waiting for your turn, surrounded by the crippled now walking and the blind now seeing? Can you imagine the hope in your heart? And when you finally got your turn, would He speak to you? Look deep in your eyes? Lay His hands on you? Would you feel His power? Would you know the truth of who He was?

The Gospels do not give details, but it must have been amazing on the mountainside. What is also amazing is that, once healed, the people do not leave. They got what they came for, but they stay anyways. In fact, 4000 people stay for 3 days. They do not have food to eat; they have not come

prepared. But perhaps because of joy and in spontaneous worship, they stay. Jesus must have been exhausted, but He does not send them away. His compassion goes deeper yet. He knows they are hungry (He is too!) and will not have the strength to go home. And so He feeds them in a miraculous way. He meet all of their physical needs because of His great love and compassion.

Compassion means to “suffer with.” It is a state of the heart. It is deep concern for others. But it comes out of shared experience. Jesus’ compassion is deeply rooted in His humanity. He suffered with us. In the Bible, compassion and mercy are often linked to justice. In order to suffer with someone, you must also understand that all relationships are distorted and broken. This world is not as it should be. No-one should be hurting or sick or hungry. And Jesus knew that. In fact, that is why He came to earth. He knew humanity’s ultimate need. Until He would fill that need for reconciliation with God, Jesus would spend time filling other needs that resulted from the broken world He had entered.

Deacons, we have been called to be compassionate. We must suffer with those around us. To do that, we must understand that we are all the same. We all suffer in an imperfect and sinful world. We are all equally in need of a Saviour. So thank the Father for His love in Jesus. Pray that the Holy Spirit will move your heart. And ask Jesus to “clothe you” in His compassion.