

## Compassion

*Prepared by Kathryn*

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not  
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be

Great is Thy faithfulness, great is Thy faithfulness  
Morning by morning new mercies I see  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided  
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me

I could not love Thee, so blind and unfeeling  
Covenant promises fell not to me.  
Then without warning, desire, or deserving,  
I found my Treasure, my pleasure, in Thee.

I have no merit to woo or delight Thee,  
I have no wisdom or powers to employ;  
Yet in thy mercy, how pleasing thou find'st me,  
This is Thy pleasure: that Thou art my joy.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide  
Strength for today, and bright hope for tomorrow  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside.

**Lord Jesus**, thank you for the incredible compassion you showed to the hurting people that you met. Help us to be gentle towards the people we meet today, in thought word and deed. At times we face difficult circumstances in life, help us to experience your compassion and reflect it to each other. We praise you because you understand all the different situations that we face and you hear the cries of our hearts. Help us to give you the first place in our lives and may our love for you continue to grow. Thank you that your word assures us that you work all things together for good for those who love you.

Thank you Jesus. **Amen.**

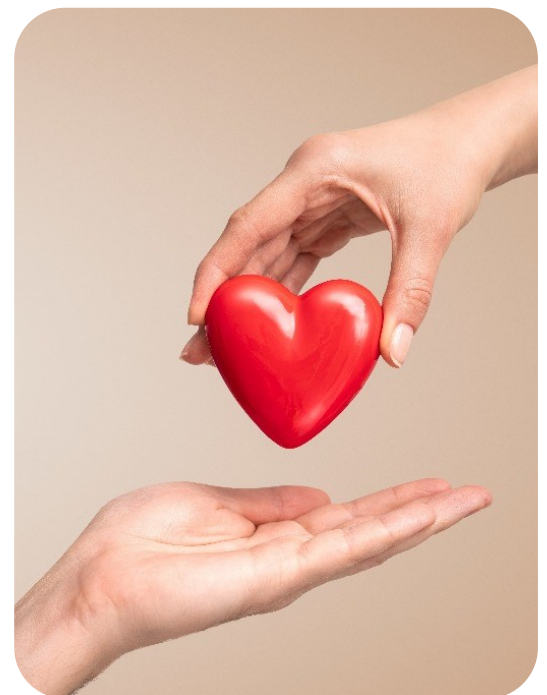


**Happy Birthday**

**Jack**

**(4th July)**

**God Bless You!**



We know that all things  
work together for the good  
of those who love God,  
who are called according  
to his purpose.

Romans 8:28

Today we are continuing with our teaching series on our church core values.

All of our core values are modelled to us in the life of Jesus, He is our example and today we are looking to become more like Jesus by being a church that is loving and compassionate. At first glance, love and compassion might appear to be the same thing and they often do operate in tandem, but also they are very separate, a bit like the two trees behind me merging together, both of them acer trees, both stunning whether side by side or standing alone.



Not everyone is strong in compassion, it can be lacking but also learnt. Compassion is considered to be a bit like a muscle that like any other can be strengthened with relevant exercises. Your capacity for compassion can expand if you choose.

We're going to focus on compassion today because we have looked at the theme of love quite a lot recently.

Compassion is a sympathetic concern for the suffering of others, it's selfless, it's not attention grabbing. It's shown in little things that help others along and often shows up in those who are volunteers or carers who do what they do because they want to. We see compassion in the hearts of our wonderful pastoral team who are keeping in touch and praying for you because they care. When you're compassionate you want to make the world a better place for people, even if it's just your neighbours. In school, children learn that compassion is **empathy + action**. To be able to put yourself in someone else's shoes and take action to help make their situation more bearable in some way.



One of the definitions of

Compassion as stated on the website of the organisation which happens to be called 'Compassion' and sponsors children in poverty is this..... ***"Someone else's heartbreak becomes your heartbreak"***

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German, Lutheran theologian and anti-Nazi dissident who died in a German concentration camp in 1945

aged 39. He said, ***"We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or omit to do, and more in the light of what they suffer"***. True compassion changes the way we live.



Jesus is our model for compassion. We see throughout his life that he was compelled to take action against human suffering whenever he came across it, and often making specific journeys to relieve the physical, mental and emotional suffering of individuals, as well as the crowds who followed him. Jesus is motivated by compassion. In **Matthew 14**, when Jesus was told that John The Baptist had been executed on the orders of Herod to satisfy a grudge that his wife had been holding, he withdrew in a boat to a solitary place in private... **“Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick”.**

In **Matthew 20** Jesus has compassion on two blind men who were sitting by the side of the road.... **Jesus stopped and called them. “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked. “Lord,” they answered, “we want our sight.” Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.**

He saw people as individuals made in God’s image, and compassion is the reason he came; it’s the reason he left heaven and was birthed into our world, that he might show the compassion of God The Father towards us.



In **Luke 7**: Jesus is approaching a town called Nain; again, there is large crowd with him as well as the disciples. As they approach the town gate, there is a funeral procession coming out from the town. A widows only son has died and is being carried out.



**<sup>13</sup> When the Lord saw her, He felt [great] compassion for her, and said to her, “Do not weep.” <sup>14</sup> And He came up and touched the bier [on which the body rested], and the pallbearers stood still. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise [from death]!” <sup>15</sup> The man who was dead sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother.**

Where did that all-inclusive compassion ultimately take Jesus in order to reach it’s end conclusion.?

The end conclusion is a day yet to come when there will be no more suffering, no more pain. That was the motivation behind his compassion.

**<sup>4</sup> ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”**

In order for us to get to that conclusion, Jesus took the way of the cross. He took into himself the suffering of the whole world, took the blame and paid the price. Jesus lived out compassion to it's end conclusion, the one who was truly qualified by his perfection to make the world a better place.

**“Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look around and see. Is any suffering like my suffering that was inflicted on me, that the Lord brought on me in the day of his fierce anger? Lamentations 1:12**

Jesus took your judgement and mine for everything we have ever done that is offensive to God, and everything that we are capable of doing given the right circumstance. If I'm ever tempted to judge someone who's committed some terrible crime, I often think to myself..... What would I be capable of doing if my life had been circumstantially different? What depths of depravity could I have the potential to sink to if my upbringing had been abusive and neglectful ? What darkness could fester in my life if I had been exposed to evil influences? None of us can take confidence in any goodness we think we may have. All have sinned and offended the holiness of God.

That tender mercy and compassion of God flows to us today through the ministry of The Holy Spirit and we can experience his comfort and his presence as a reality in our struggles.

Maybe even today, you find yourself really struggling. Maybe life has been really hard for a long time and you feel that you are not going to be able to cope for much longer, you're exhausted, frightened about the future, maybe you feel unsupported, unloved and yet the demands on you are relentless.

Jesus is with you, filled with compassion for you. He cares, he truly understands everything that has contributed to where you find yourself today and he already has a plan to work it all out for your good. Your heartbreak is his heartbreak. Some years ago, my mum used to have a little card stuck on the wall beside the kitchen sink which said..."If it matters to you, it matters to him." Not only does it matter to him, but he wants to make things better for you by coming into your life at your invitation and sorting it all out with you. He invites you to give all your worry and fear to him because he cares for you. Not merely to just give your worries to him, but **1 Peter 5:7 tells us to cast all your cares, anxieties and concerns onto him , because he cares for you.**

Casting your care means to throw it away from you with some degree of force, a bit like when you're casting a fishing rod. By throwing the worry and panic about your situation away from you, and onto Jesus (who truly cares for you), you are acknowledging that **he** is now responsible for



***Anxiety needs to be  
cast not carried.***

carrying this burden and that you are going to trust him to meet your needs, direct your path and help you put right things that are wrong. It's got nothing to do with feelings and everything to do with faith. You can lean your full weight on his promise to care for you.

But compassion is not just a passive feeling sorry for someone, compassion is proactive not passive and Jesus suffered in order that you might know life in all its fullness. Jesus cares for you too much to allow you to remain stuck in the same old thought processes, the same behaviour patterns, the low value that you place upon yourself, the destructive situations that you are trapped in. The compassion of Jesus toward you will always seek to raise you up into your new position in Jesus, will disciple you into new ways of thinking and behaving, new ways of valuing yourself and others properly.

So back to our core value of wanting to model the compassion of Jesus as a church.

There is no doubt that our compassionate God also want his church to be a compassionate church. The Bible tells us frequently to be compassionate in the way that God is compassionate towards us.

**Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Colossians 3:12**

**Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2**

**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us all in our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4**

**Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:32**

**Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. 1 Peter 3:8**

**This is what the Lord Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.' Zechariah 7:9-10**

**Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Philippians 2:1-2**

***"The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy."***  
**Psalm 145:8**





How do we continue to grow more like Jesus, filled with compassion and being a compassionate church? Is it possible that the way of compassion may lead to sacrifice for us or even the ultimate sacrifice as it did for Jesus? How do we as a church balance compassion with discipleship and what about the risk of burning ourselves out through being compassionate? How do we deal with that?

Lots of questions which we can't look at fully today, but we'll skim over very briefly as we close.

As with all our core values, compassion is something that is taken to a higher level when we look to Jesus as our example.

Compassion usually requires personal sacrifice on some level, whether that be missing out on something in order to help someone else; it may mean tightening the belt financially to help meet someone else's need. Individual Christians, and the church have made incredible sacrifices throughout history when faced with desperate times... believers who showed compassion towards grieving families by giving a dignified burial to plague victims, pastors who refused to abandon their congregations as Hitler youth and Nazi soldiers burnt down churches and hunted out individuals, believers who smuggle bibles across borders to get the Word of God into the hands of persecuted Christians who are desperate for even just one page. For most of us, that level of sacrifice may not be required of us, but compassion always identifies with hard things that people are going through and seeks to make it better on some level.

The compassion of Jesus always made a difference, but was also focussed on bringing people's lives in line with the ways of God in order that they might live on a new level as sons and daughters of God.

***How do we as Christians and as CCC, walk the tightrope of the modern church by striking the right balance between compassion and discipleship into the ways of God. It's a tough balancing act.***



Should we concentrate on just showing compassion to those who do not have the hope of Jesus working in their lives as yet, or should we focus purely on discipleship in order to see people grow and mature in their faith. A church that is full of compassion, but has no focus on discipleship will be friendly, but lack any spiritual depth or challenge because we don't want to upset or offend anyone. Without the challenging teaching of Jesus, there will be little spiritual growth. On the other hand, a church that is fully focussed on programmes for discipling people may end up lacking in compassion for those whose faith is weak or are still on the journey of seeking Jesus, which can make us judgemental rather than compassionate.

We want to avoid becoming legalistic, and yet we also want to show compassion to someone whose behaviour is sinful, without accepting that sinful behaviour.

Jesus modelled compassion whilst at the same time encouraging people to go deeper in their walk with him. Angela talked a couple of weeks ago about the woman who was caught out having an affair and was dragged to Jesus for his condemnation and judgement. Jesus, filled with compassion did not condemn her, but encouraged her to go and leave that sinful behaviour.



Jesus has great compassion, but his compassion also seemingly makes hard demands of us in the light of some of his challenging teachings. "If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out". That's pretty harsh! Does Jesus actually want us to pluck our eye out? Of course not, he's speaking figuratively but he's calling us to take radical action and cut off at source those demeaning, degrading things that enter into us through our eyes. The compassion of Jesus wants more for us than the demonic will that Satan wants us to absorb through our eyes, and ultimately leaves us and others devalued and covered in shame.

We see in the life of Jesus the perfect mixture of compassion and discipleship and that is what we are called to do - show compassion and encourage discipleship which leads to wholeness and restoration.

And finally, it's important to treat ourselves with compassion, to remember that we are fearfully and wonderfully made by God, and incredibly valuable to him. If we invest ourselves fully into a life of compassion for others, without caring for ourselves properly, we will find ourselves spiritually, emotionally and physically wrecked, like a car that has been driven many thousands of miles with no maintenance, no water, no oil and poor quality fuel. Jesus took regular time out to refresh himself in the presence of his father. God commands us to love our neighbours in the way that we love ourselves, not instead of ourselves! In other words, you are only capable of living a life of compassion, without burning yourself out, if you have a healthy compassion towards yourself and you follow the example of Jesus by taking time to recharge your tanks within the love of God.

## Ministry for God flows from intimacy with God.

- ♦ **To sum up:** Compassion is empathy with action, that identifies with the sufferings of others and is moved to make it better in some way.
- ♦ God is kindness and compassionate towards us, and intimately acquainted with our struggles. He longs to lift the burdens off our shoulders if we will trust him.
- ♦ We are called to comfort others with the comfort we have received from God. As a church, we model that compassion balanced with the desire to disciple others into their new high position “in Christ”.
- ♦ Each one of us is need quality time in the presence of God , in order to make a difference in the lives of others.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.