

Our Need – His Provision

Luke 22:47-65

We are looking today at three very familiar scenes. They are the ones we tend to focus on when it comes to the events leading up to the crucifixion. The first scene is in the garden of Gethsemane. Last week we saw that Jesus went there with His disciples following the Passover meal. He went to for the purpose of praying. It was a prayer about the upcoming cup of God's judgment He was about to experience on the cross as He took on the sin of the world. In a moment of wondering if the cup could pass by, He rose from prayer resolute in the agreement He had made to become our sacrifice for sin, a decision made even before creation.

We consider it a victory blow to the enemy. Yet in what is about to unfold the enemy thought perhaps it was a victory for them.

Open your Bible to Luke 22:47-65 where we will look at these three scenes.

The first scene is about the betrayal of Jesus by Judas.

The second scene is the denial of Jesus by Peter.

The third scene is the horrific treatment of Jesus by the guards.

This morning I would like for us to see something different from these three scenes. Rather than look at the events themselves I would like to consider the compassion Jesus demonstrated in each of these scenes.

The need for compassion

The nearness of compassion

The newness of compassion

I. THE NEED FOR COMPASSION

In a world that is self-centered and often

predisposed with vengeance, compassion is a rare attribute. Oh, we see it from time to time.

While a veteran is in the hospital recovering from heart surgery, the only companion he has, his dog, has been carted off to a shelter. He desperately wants to be reunited with his beloved pet but can't afford to pay the bill to get the dog out. A stranger steps to the counter and pays the bill.

A police officer on duty near the finish line of a marathon notices a runner who has fallen, bloodied from the impact with the pavement, struggling to get up so that he can complete the race of his dreams, rushes to help him up and jogs alongside the runner so that he can finish.

Hair stylists from all over donate a day at a salon to give free haircuts to the homeless.

But there are other stories, the all too often stories where compassion is something found only in the dictionary.

There is the story of Pastor Lee in the movie *The Drop Box* who shared about the many babies who are abandoned by their mothers.

There are the stories of homeless veterans who need medical care but can't get it.

Those stories are all too familiar. Unfortunately sometimes the familiar often leaves the hearer a bit more calloused, hardened, indifferent, unmoved. They justify their indifference because they have their own problems. They are like the two religious leaders in Jesus' parable who just passed by.

It's quite evident from the news that we need compassion.

We need it like a flat tire needs air.

We need it like a garden needs rain.

When you think about it, a little compassion can go a long way in changing someone's attitude or outlook. Nobel prize, Oscar winning playwright,

George Bernard Shaw is quoted as saying “The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them.”

Let’s take a look at the characters in our passage that need compassion. Consider the first scene.

A. The Arrest - vs. 47-53

Who are the characters here needing compassion?

There is Judas who betrayed Jesus with a symbol of friendship – a kiss, which was a customary greeting between friends.

There is the crowd that came with Judas whose task it was to arrest Jesus. Included in this group would be soldiers and officials sent by the High Priest.

They were armed with clubs and swords as if some threat of great violence was about to break out from the man who demonstrated only and always peace, well, except for the two times He threw the merchants out of the Temple. Today we might say they were loaded for bear or they were armed to the teeth.

We also find Peter who quickly rose to the defense of Jesus in vengeance wielding a sword cutting off the ear of servant of the High Priest. He was perhaps as accustomed to using a sword as I am of being a pianist. He at least knew which end to hold.

And there is Malchus, the guy forever known as the one who had his ear cut off, standing there holding a bloodied hand where his ear used to be attached.

Did these people need compassion? It seems rather evident that in some way they all had some form of malicious intent on their mind.

John MacArthur notes that “throughout history there have always been people who, like the crowd, reject Jesus. There have also been false disciples, like Judas, who outwardly profess affection and loyalty to the Lord, but inwardly hate Him. Still others, like the eleven apostles, genuinely love Him, but are weak and vacillating.”

From our perspective, we might conclude they all need compassion, even Peter, but don’t deserve it.

If Jesus needed to defend Himself, He certainly didn’t need Peter and the other disciple who carried a sword. Jesus said if He wanted to defend Himself He could have called 12 legions of angels to come and defend Him. A Roman legion was comprised of 6,000 soldiers. 72,000 angels could have instantly been dispatched to His aid. A sword was hardly necessary. We read in II Kings 19 that one angel alone killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. Think what 72,000 angels could do.

But even that wasn’t necessary if He truly wanted to defend Himself. From John’s account of this scene there is an exchange between Jesus and the crowd who came to arrest Him. He asked who they were looking for. They were looking for “Jesus of Nazareth.” When He identified Himself as the one they were looking for they all fell backward to the ground. The same power that spoke all things into existence at creation is the same power of the One who is now speaking and with just His spoken word could have instantly brought an end to their quest.

In the end, armed defense on the part of the disciples or of Jesus calling angels would have undermined the Old Testament prophecies that spoke of the fulfillment of Jesus’ death and its necessity. Instead of avenging or defending Himself Jesus chose to show compassion.

Everyone in the garden needed compassion. Would they get it? Did they deserve it?

We move now to the second scene. It’s the denial.

B. The Denial – vs.54-62

Who are the characters in this scene needing compassion?

The obvious character is Peter. He is after all the central character in this scene. Jesus has been taken into custody and we find in the other gospel accounts that all the disciples had fled. Jesus had requested of the soldiers that His followers be let go because they had the person they came for.

Mark tells us that Peter followed from a distance. John adds that Peter and another disciple followed Jesus and because the other disciple was known by the High Priest, both were allowed to come into the courtyard. Scholars generally agree that it was John. While warming himself by a fire, Peter was asked three different times if he was one of Jesus' followers. Each time he denied knowing Jesus. And then the rooster crowed just as Jesus predicted. Peter adamantly denied he would ever do such a thing. Yet here he is standing guilty of denying Jesus. At that moment Jesus looked at Peter.

I don't think it was with a condemning look.
 I don't think it was with a condescending look.
 I don't think it was with a convicting look.
 It wasn't with an "I told you so" look.
 I'm not even sure it was a look of disappointment.
 I think it was a compassionate look. I think it was a look that said "I know you did what you said you would never do, and I forgive you."

Remembering what Jesus had said, Peter ran out and wept bitterly. It was heartfelt repentance. Deep sorrow had gripped him. He needed compassion.

When we compare the other accounts of Peter's denial and the kangaroo court that had assembled to convict Jesus, so He could be put to death, certainly those who were trying Jesus needed compassion. Motivated by their hatred for Jesus they went against all Jewish law to convict and condemn Him.

Everyone in the courtyard needed compassion. Would they get it? Did they deserve it? Let's look at the third scene. It's the mockery.

C. The Mockery – vs. 63-65

Who are the characters in this scene needing compassion?

They are the men whose task it was to guard Jesus. But they did more than just guard Him, we read that they mocked Him and beat Him. They blindfolded Him and demanded that He tell them who hit Him. They insulted Him.

We may sit back as armchair theologians condemning them adamantly claiming we would never treat the Lord in such a way. We would never stoop to such a low disregard for the Lord. We might even say that if it were someone other than Jesus we still wouldn't treat them like that.

I'd like to think that I wouldn't be like them, but unfortunately I have to be honest with myself and admit that I'm just as capable. Friday I was merging onto I-75 to get to the office after dropping David off for school. I was behind a vehicle doing 25 with busy morning commuters. It was dangerous and I was irritated. I laid on the horn to try and get the person to go faster. It didn't work and I didn't feel any better. I was even tempted to give them the eye as I sped by without compassion.

If we have ever made fun of or judged someone else because of how they look or what they are wearing or how they act, or if we have ever shown disrespect to someone else like a parent or a boss or a neighbor when we talked behind their back about them or even to them, or if we looked down on someone then we're just like those who mocked Jesus. Oh, we may not be guilty of beating or abusing them, but the rest --- well, then we're walking on pretty thin ice.

Did Jesus see the hurt behind the mockery? Did those insulting and beating Him need compassion? Of course the rhetorical answer is yes, they all needed compassion. Would they get it? Did they

deserve it, after all, they were beating and ridiculing the one who was about to die for them.

The truth is yes, they and all the rest of humanity before them and since them would receive compassion on the cross. We all need compassion. We are not all that far removed from them in terms of our character. The Bible says we are all sinners, every last one of us, even the very best person that has ever lived, except for the one who had been betrayed, denied, beaten and crucified. People are no different today than they were in the three scenes before us.

There is a great need for compassion.

Did they receive it?

Will we receive it?

Where ever there is compassion there is hope.

Let's consider the nearness of compassion.

II. THE NEARNESS OF COMPASSION

Was compassion near to them?

Is compassion near to us?

Let's define compassion before we go any further. Understanding what it is will help us see it in the three scenes we are considering.

The Greeks had an unusual way of looking at emotions. They referred to the bowels as the place where their emotions came from. They believed their deepest feelings centered there.

In today's vernacular it would be like me saying "I love my wife with all my heart." Now, you know I'm not speaking literally of that organ that is about the size of my fist that beats about 50 times a minute pumping blood throughout my body. You know I am speaking of my heart in a figurative way meaning that I love my wife with my whole being.

You would think I was a bit odd (okay maybe you already think that), but you would think me peculiar if I went around saying "I love my wife with all my

bowels." But to the Greeks that was the depth of their being.

In the Old Testament the word compassion comes from the Hebrew word "womb" and shows us the gentle feeling of concern and care that God has for us. The word literally means, "to be moved in the heart out of love for another." God's compassion emanates from deep within Him and floods our lives. *When He thinks of you, He is moved in the depth of His heart for you to act on your behalf.*

There are several Greek words in the New Testament for compassion. It can be translated as mercy or sympathy or kindness. One word is always and only used in reference to Christ and the compassion He showed others. In each case, compassion is spoken of when Jesus sees a particular need, feels their pain of the individual and then is moved to do something about it.

Compassion is more than just a feeling it is an action that stirs the heart to do something.

Compassion sees. Compassion acts.

We see this in three parables Jesus told.

The first is the parable of the wicked servant. Matthew 18:21ff

This guy owed his master more than he could ever pay back. His debt was huge and he begged the master to be patient with him until he paid back every cent. In verse 27 it says the master looked with pity on him. It means he had compassion for the servant. He saw a need and went beyond what the servant asked and forgave the whole debt. He didn't say "Ok, let's draw up a plan so you can pay it off. I'll garnish your wages until the debt is gone." Instead he canceled the whole debt. That is compassion.

The second parable is about the Good Samaritan. Luke 10:30ff

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In the story two religious leaders who should have known better and offered to help the man in the ditch clinging to life refused to show compassion. They saw the need and passed by. On the other hand a foreigner happened on the scene and did what he could to help, going well beyond what might have been expected. Jesus concluded the story with a question to the expert in the law. The answer was the one who showed mercy. In verse 37 the word *eleos* is used which also means compassion.

The third parable is about the prodigal son.
Luke 15:11ff

A selfish, young kid wanted what was coming to him out of his father's inheritance to him. The father gave it to him and he ran off and squandered all he had and was left destitute and in despair. He thought about his options and decided to return home and hope for the best. All he wanted was a job working with the other servants. In verse 20 we see his father was filled with compassion for him.

The father then gave him symbols of sonship, evidence of His compassion for his son who has returned home. He received a robe, a ring, sandals, and a feast. We might think that the son didn't deserve it. He should have been given just what he deserved and nothing more or maybe nothing at all. But that's not compassion.

If there is one verse that sums up the life and ministry of Jesus we find it in Matthew's Gospel. Matthew 9:35-36 "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.*"

They were helpless. There was no one to guide

them. The spiritual shepherds had failed to point them to the true shepherd and so they were wandering around. They were lost. When He saw them, Jesus was moved with compassion. But in the context of the passage we note that His compassion went beyond acting on their physical need. He went to the heart of the matter. His meeting a physical need was merely an avenue of meeting their spiritual need. His greatest act of compassion would come on the cross.

Consider for a moment some of the times Jesus showed compassion.

He fed the 5,000.

He healed lepers.

He cast out demons.

He raised the dead son of widow.

He made the deaf to hear, the blind to see, and the dumb to speak.

Each instance is an example of His compassion.

How near was the compassion of Jesus?

It was as close as a touch.

It was as close as the sound of His voice.

And the need for His compassion is just as great today.

People are depressed.

People are oppressed.

But the need for compassion goes much deeper than the physical, deeper than anything you or I might be able to do.

How near was the compassion of Jesus to those in our passage? It was available to each of them because they all needed it, even if we think they didn't deserve it.

Judas refused it.

Peter received it.

As to all the others – the priests, the soldiers, the arresting crowd, Malchus – we don't know. But it was near them. His compassion is near us, too.

Here's the thing about compassion. The more I see

it the more I understand that it is born in the petri dish of love. The compassionate actions of Jesus toward others were motivated by His great love for them, a love that sought them that they might receive His gift of salvation. Compassion was near them.

Let's conclude by talking about the newness of compassion.

III. THE NEWNESS OF COMPASSION

What is our greatest need?

Money? Health? Status?

I submit to you that our greatest need is salvation. I submit to you as well that our greatest need is met by God's compassion.

Every one of them could have met their end right then. Yet God in compassion, mercy, and love is patient to provide the opportunity for people to repent of sin and turn to Him for salvation.

II Peter 3:9 "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Is His patience a demonstration of His compassion? Yes it is.

How unfortunate, even troubling that so many want nothing to do with God because they see Him as a harsh, dictatorial Being who is bent on wrath and vengeance. They fail to see the evidence of His compassion found throughout the Bible. Or maybe it's not that they fail to see it so much as they choose not to see it or they reject it altogether even though they know it's available.

Consider just for a moment these passages from the Old Testament that affirm the compassion of God. II Chronicles 30:9 "The Lord your God is gracious and compassionate..."

Psalm 78:38 "Yet He was merciful; He forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after

time He restrained His anger and did not stir up His full wrath."

Psalm 86:15 "But You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness."

If there is ever a time you question the compassion of God or His faithfulness to demonstrate it then you need look no further than to Lamentations 3:22-23 "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because His compassions fail not, they are new every morning, great is Thy faithfulness."

Every day and night, all day and all night God is compassionate toward us; otherwise we would be consumed in His wrath. When we look at our sinfulness in view of who God truly is, then instead of seeing His judgment we will see His compassion. That is the difference between Peter and everyone else in our text. Peter saw his great sin, but he saw that God's compassion was greater and they do not fail one bit.

One author (Clarke) put it this way: "If, indeed, any sinner be kept out of hell, it is because God's compassions do not fail."

Never forget that they are new every morning. In the betrayal, in the denial, and in the mocking the compassion of Jesus for others moved Him to continue to the cross. He is full of compassion.

Have you experienced it today?

If you have, thank Him, because it is just as new today as it was yesterday, and will be each day. If not, take a lesson from Peter and experience the compassion of Jesus. He saw each of them as people needing compassion.

I wonder if we see people in the same way. But that's another message. It begins by seeing people's need and then motivates us to action.