

# The Gospel of Matthew

**Title:** Compassion

**Text:** Matthew 9:36-38

**INTRODUCTION:** Up until now, Jesus had been teaching, preaching, and healing. The disciples were along side, learning and watching.

## THE DIVINE COMPASSION OF CHRIST (FOR THE PEOPLE'S NEEDS)

Many came to **hear** and **listen**, to **watch** and **see**. Many were at the bottom of the barrel, desperate for relief, healing and a miracle. Many watched from a **distance**, many **pushed close** and **never left**. **But** the divine eye of Christ saw a **greater need**. It was a need that far surpassed a bleeding body, a blind eye, a demon inside, a man who couldn't walk or a leper. He felt **compassion** for **them** as only **God could**, for God is love according to 1 John 4:8.

After the death of John the Baptist, Jesus went to a **secluded place** and when He came down He saw the people, Matthew 14:34 “**When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick.**” Matthew 15:32, “**I feel compassion for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way.**”

The **noun from** of the verb **behind** “felt compassion” literally refers to the “intestines or bowels.” It was used literally to describe the death of Judas, “**and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out**” (Acts 1:18; ESV). More often its used **figuratively** to **represent emotions** such as the heart. The heart and mind were often considered the source of thought and action, whereas the “bowels” or “compassion” were the responder, or the reactor.

The **compassion of Jesus was not just in figurative form**. He saw the **crowds suffering**. He saw the **emptiness** on **many** of their faces. When our bodies **ache** in **pain**, **suffer** from **illness**, we can be sure the **Son of Man felt them even more**. Remember Matthew 8:17, “**This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases.**” Jesus didn't physically suffer from these, but **He felt them**, **He understood them**. A parent can become physically ill from concern over a child or loved one who is sick. The same principal applies in 1 Corinthians 12:26, “**And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it.**”

When Jesus saw Mary and her friends weeping over her brothers death, “**When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled**” (John 11:33). The word “troubled” here means in a **physical sense**. Jesus was **grieving** too. Luke 19:41 describes Jesus' emotional compassion to a city that has rejected a Savior, “**When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it.**” Isaiah 53:3, “**He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.**”

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In Hinduism, **caring for the sick or weak is off limits**, it's thought to delay the **karma process**. Islam's history is filled with both **secular** and **religious bloodshed**. No compassion on those inside or outside of Islam. In the miracles we have seen so far in Matthew, Jesus' compassion on the blind, the leper, the sick is evident. The **Puritan** writer **Thomas Watson** said, "We may force our Lord to punish us, but we will never have to force Him to love us." The Pharisees had developed a view of God as "angry, vengeful, and indifferent." 1 Peter 3:8-9 sums up the compassion of Christ, "To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing."

### THE DIVINE COMPASSION OF CHRIST (FOR THEIR LOST CONDITION)

He saw them as **distress** and **dispirited** or **weary** and **scattered**. It's also translated **harassed** and **helpless**. They had **physical needs**, but Jesus **saw a greater need**, a **spiritual need**. **One can be healed physically, and it's only temporal, but the spiritual sickness needs healing**. Jesus knew their heart, He knew they **needed** to be **freed** from **spiritual bondage**.

**Distresses or weary** - the root word means "to mangle, flay, skin" and it carries the idea of greatly troubled or harassed. A Bible dictionary has the word being used in terms of "battered, bruised, mangles, ripped apart, worn out and exhausted." The **scattered** description or **dispirited** literally means as a "drunk wondering around or mortally wounded."

The reason for their bewilderment was they were lost sheep, **scattered sheep with no shepherd**. The ones who were **suppose** to the **shepherds** were the **Pharisees**, but they were **largely responsible** for the **confusion** and **hopelessness**. Their religious leaders gave them no **pasture**, no **viable food**, no **viable water**, and **didn't bound up their wounds**. They let them go **without sheering**, and **wonder**.

For these shepherds the "common" people were an object of **disdain** not **compassion**. Here is Jesus' description of **their shepherding** in Matthew 23:3-4, "Therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but **do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them**. They tie up **heavy burdens** and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are **unwilling to move them with so much as a finger**." In other words, "rules for thee, and not for me." **That's not true shepherding**. It's not just the Pharisees, but Ezekiel prophesied against the false shepherds in his day, "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, "Thus says the Lord God, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat *sheep* without feeding the flock. Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them" (Ezekiel 34:2-4). **No wonder Jesus looked upon them as weary and scattered**.

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**APPLICATION:** There are many preachers in the pulpit, but few true shepherds. They give the sheep what they want, they feed them processed foods instead of meat. Ice cream for supper. They don't keep them sheared nor bind up their wounds. They feed them meals full of self righteousness, prosperity and good vibes. Jesus addresses this in John 10:11-13, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep." Many churches today have scattered sheep. They wonder. They drift near the edge of the cliff. They go near dangerous waters. All while the shepherd sits in the comfort of his home.

### THE COMING JUDGEMENT

Jesus changes His metaphors from shepherding to harvesting. We proclaim the gospel message because there is a day of judgement coming. Many Bible scholars agree to several different interpretations of the harvest, but most align with it representing judgment. For example in Isaiah 17:10-11, "For you have forgotten the God of your salvation, And have not remembered the rock of your refuge. Therefore you plant delightful plants, And set them with vine slips of a strange god. In the day that you plant it you carefully fence it in, And in the morning you bring your seed to blossom; But the harvest will be a heap, In a day of sickness and incurable pain." Furthermore Joel 3:11-14, "Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, And gather yourselves there. Bring down, O LORD, Your mighty ones. Let the nations be aroused, And come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, For there I will sit to judge, All the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision." In the parable of the wheat and tare (Matthew 13) there is both the righteous and the unrighteous described in the harvest. However, the clear emphasis in that parable is the judgement of the of the wicked.

On the island of Patmos, John receives the vision of the harvest, cf. Revelation 14:14-20. Jesus ministered compassionately because He saw the ultimate end of the harvest. We see the true evangelistic message and compassion as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:11, "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men." We preach today, we teach today, we share today so that men will repent. The dire warning of this is elevated in Mark 9:43, "And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire."

### THE PRAYER FOR WORKERS

The reality - there aren't many who will work the harvest. I don't have to spend time here speaking of this, we all know that. There's much to be done in the church, in the world around us, but folk are just happy watching from a distance. They agree, but working the harvest interferes with

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**personal affairs** and **personal time**. It's always been the case, Nehemiah understood this in his day when he went to inspect the walls of Jerusalem, "**And I arose in the night, I and a few men with me**" (Nehemiah 2:13). For many years, if not centuries, the local church assemblies have been maintained by a few.

**APPLICATION:** **I do not brow beat nor beg you to work**. I don't want you to **help** or **minister** because of some sort of **guilty conscience**. **If the word of God won't motivate you to work, then nothing will**. If the **words** of God **won't bring** you to **repentance**, then a **twelve verses invitation and scary stories at the end won't either**. I will tell you of the needs here at MCBC, but I won't plead or bribe you.

**Finally, we pray. God knows our needs, He knows the needs of the ministry**. He knows what needs to be done. The "**Lord of the harvest**" is a title of God that represents His role as judge. He is the judge of the unsaved who will stand before Him. We are to "beseech" which means "to desire, long for, to call to one's aid." We know there is a world of people, family, neighbors and friends who don't know the Lord, and we beseech Him to send workers to share Christ.

**Waiting on the Lord is an essential part to serving Him**. We pray for Him to send help. We wait for the Lord to provide. Jumping ahead of God and doing it "your way" will always result in disaster. In Acts 1:14 we find the prescription to serving God, "**These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer**." They **devoted themselves** to **prayer**, to see, to know what and **where** and **how** **God was going** to **use them**.

### CONCLUSION/APPLICATION

1. Do you feel compassion on those around you who aren't Christians?
2. The sheep need a shepherd, one that will feed, water and care for the flock. A shepherd gives what is necessary to the sheep, not what they want. There are many today who have false shepherds feeding the flock cotton candy and not meat.
3. The harvest is plentiful, will you pray for God to send workers?
4. Maybe today you are watching from a distance, you admire God, you believe there is a God, but you don't want to get too close. Will you believe today and be a true follower of the Lord?