

The title for today's message is: **Compassion**

Mark said: ***When He (meaning Jesus) went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them,***

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

In today's gospel, the apostles have returned from their mission of preaching, teaching and healing, which Jesus had sent them on earlier.

Jesus, being the excellent listener and caregiver that he is, sees how tired they've become.

Indeed, Mark tells us that the clamoring crowds are still milling about so ***“they had no leisure even to eat.”***

How could these crowds be so insensitive and lacking in understanding, showing no compassion for Jesus and his disciples?

Didn't they realize how demanding they were being? However Jesus certainly sees the disciples are in need of a rest.

That's why He said to the disciples; ***Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.***

Here we see that Jesus has compassion on not only the crowds, but also for His apostles.

So it is for us too, look there are times when we become so overloaded, run down, and so tired, that we too need a desolate place to rest awhile.

So it is for us, look there are times when we become so overloaded, run down, and tired, that we too need a desolate place to rest awhile.

However today finding a desolate place is hard to do. So hopefully by coming to church every Sunday were able to find that needed rest and renewal for our life.

All of us need time out to reflect, meditate and pray to sharpen our focus on the larger picture of showing the true meaning of our life.

Allowing us to be drawn in closer to our relationship with God. And to be more aware and appreciative of God's holy presence in our life

So I rejoice in seeing all of you here today where we can and will receive our much needed rest each and every week.

However, it is also true that we cannot give to others if we forget about them altogether or refuse to give to them, what we ourselves have received.

A Chaplin once said: When I was doing my chaplaincy training and taking my year of clinical pastoral education.

I can remember how, oftentimes I hated, with a passion, having to carry a beeper and be on call 24hrs at a time, sometimes for several days.

Inevitably the beeper would go off in the middle of my beauty sleep and I'd have to get up in the dark of night.

Completely disoriented, and making a rushed trip into the hospital to respond to the call of someone in great need.

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At first, I felt this was such a hostile interruption to my life and I resented it. Yet, as time went on, and after I realized the nature of the calls.

I grew to accept the interruption's, and indeed, I was even enriched by them.

For I was able to offer comfort, counsel and compassion to patients who were dying or in very traumatic circumstances.

Look, such people needed my compassion, just as the clamoring crowds in today's gospel needed the compassion of Jesus and his disciples.

Jesus, of course, knew that their greatest need was compassion, that's why they had flocked in such large numbers seeking out His healing.

And Jesus, being who He is, offered compassion to those in distress, willing to give them His help and care.

Mark describes it like this: ***“he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.”***

Dr. William Barclay captures something of Christ's own emotions and commitment to the clamoring crowds in His translation of verse 34.

He wrote: “he was moved to the depths of His being with pity for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.”

My friends, to be deeply moved like Jesus was towards these crowds of people, is what we today as His disciples are also called to do so?

How do we respond to the needs of others around us? Hopefully if we take the time to rest and be filled spiritually.

Through prayer, meditation and reflection; we then can go back into our lives and give of ourselves what we have received from God.

Now, its interesting that Jesus and His disciples are often with others, meeting them on their turf, and responding appropriately to their needs.

We too are called and inspired by our Lord's compassion to do the same in the movement of Jesus' ministry.

Where we too should have compassion for those who are written-off as out-casts.

Now in today's Gospel, Mark tells us who were brought from far and wide seeking Christ's healing.

And Jesus didn't judge or avoid such people whom the religious establishment of the day may have been more inclined to write-off.

No, Jesus always remembered that every single human being is created in the image of God.

Therefore, for that reason alone, they deserve to be treated equally in a compassionate and humane way.

So it is with us too, in our practice of compassion. Hopefully we too shall not forget that every human being is created in God's image.

Therefore we deserve to be treated as an equal, that is in a compassionate, humane way.

This includes not only the well, the so-called normal folks of society, but also the out-casts. The homeless, the mentally and physically challenged.

The homeless, the mentally and physically challenged, the people struggling with addictions of all kinds, the homosexuals, the prostitutes.

Those of another race or creed, even prisoners and enemies, all are in need of compassion, all are created in God's image.

In fact, the outcasts may have the greatest need of our compassion, since the lack of it is likely one of the major reasons why they are outcasts in the first place.

Now, according to one Theologian: “Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment.

Or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”

Think about that the next time you’re called to show compassion towards someone whom you find it difficult to even give the time of day!

We never know how a simple act of compassion might be inspired by God working through us to reach another.

The following story illustrates this very well: A little girl was sent on an errand by her mother.

Now she took too long in coming back. Mother, therefore, her mother demanded an explanation when she finally did return.

The little girl explained that on her way she had met a little friend who was crying because she had broken her doll.

“Oh,” said the mother, “then you stopped to help her fix her doll?” “Oh, no,” replied the little girl. “I stopped to help her cry.”

That little girl had more sense of caring than a lot of adults do. We often forget that the English word care comes from the Gothic word meaning, “to lament.”

In other words, we show our care by, as this little girl did: crying with those who are crying.

Doubting or questioning with those who are doubting and questioning;
laughing with those who are laughing.

Rejoicing with those who are rejoicing; being willing to journey with people
where they are, rather than trying to “fix them.”

In our simple acts of compassion and solidarity, God is at work and is able
to change and heal other’s lives, just as Jesus does here in our gospel.

Amen

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of
the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.