The Power Of Compassion

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday August 5th, 2018

Text: Romans 12:19-21 (Matthew 5:43-45)

# Intro

1. It has been said, “Compassion is one of the greatest characteristics of the human spirit.”
   1. American Heritage Dictionary: “Deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it.”
   2. Webster’s College Dictionary: “A suffering with another; painful sympathy; a sensation of sorrow excited by the distress or misfortunes of another; pity; commiseration. Compassion is a mixed passion, compounded of love and sorrow; at least some portion of love generally attends the pain or regret, or is excited by it. Extreme distress of an enemy even changes enmity into at least temporary affection.”
2. Story of Shirley Plantation (Hopewell, VA) during the Civil War (1862)
   1. A working farm and plantation since 1613 on the James River, with the original house built in 1738 and currently lived in by the 11th & 12th generation of the Hill-Carter family! (They live in and occupy the upper floors while tours take place on the ground floor)
   2. During the Civil War the Hill-Carter men all joined the Confederate Army and went to war, leaving their women behind to tend the plantation.
   3. July 1, 1862 The Battle of Malvern Hill was fought between the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, led by Gen. Robert E. Lee, and the Union Army of the Potomac under Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, ending in a tactical victory for the North but with heavy casualties.
   4. On his way back to Berkley Plantation, a vacant farm McClellan occupied as a headquarters, he stopped in the night and left his many wounded and dying on the front lawn of Shirley Plantation with the promise to send ships to gather them as soon as he could.
   5. In the morning the residents of Shirley found their yard full of the enemy! Union troops wounded and dying!
   6. The women had compassion on the men and turned their residence into a field hospital for the Union soldiers! They provided water, soup, and bandages for the wounded until ships arrived on the James River to take them back to the safety of Berkley and to their own hospitals.
   7. Gen. McClellan said they had saved many lives. He so appreciated what they did that he rewarded them by issuing them a Federal Order of Safeguard and stationed soldiers as guards at their gate. This kept any Union forces from occupying or in any other way plundering the house or grounds.
   8. The staff at Shirley say, “Their acts of compassion spared Shirley from attack.”
3. This historical account highlights and exemplifies what Jesus taught in Matthew 5:43-45a:
   1. “You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.”
4. Romans 12:19-21: Tells saints to put in practice what Jesus taught…
   1. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord. “BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD (quoted from Prov. 25:21-22).” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
   2. The Shirley women could have justified any violence against the wounded men as being acts of war, but instead their compassion prompted them into action doing what Solomon said (Prov. 25:21-22) and what Jesus taught (Mt. 5:43-45; Rom. 12:19-21)!
5. There is power in compassion, both in this life and in the one to come!

# Jesus, Our Example in Compassion

1. I Pet. 2:21-25: Jesus left for us an example to follow so that we may not go astray!
2. Jesus was moved by compassion on many occasions:
   1. Prior to feeding the five thousand (Mt. 14:14)
   2. Prior to feeding the four thousand (Mt. 15:32)
   3. Compassion towards a leper (Mark 1:41) – Healed him!
   4. Compassion for the widow of Nain (Luke 7:13) – Raised her only son from the dead!
   5. Compassion shown to two blind men (Mt. 20:34) – Healed them!
   6. Compassion caused Him to teach (Mk. 6:34) – Saw they were like sheep without a shepherd so He taught them “many things.” His word brings us back to God! *(I Pet. 2:25)*
   7. His compassion caused Him to die for His enemies and take away the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29; 3:16; Rom. 5:6-10) – He grants eternal life to those who obey Him!
   8. He is now our compassionate High Priest (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16) – He is merciful and sympathetic to our troubles in life!
3. Jesus’ compassion moved Him to do what was best for people!

# The Good Samaritan Showed Compassion

1. *Lk. 10:25-37:* 
   1. A lawyer (scholar of the Law) asked Jesus how to inherit eternal life and Jesus had him answer his own question from the Law *(Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18; Mt. 22:35-40).*
   2. He then asked another question, “Who is my neighbor?” which prompted Jesus to tell a parable about the “Good Samaritan” (Lk. 10:30-37).
   3. At the end of the parable, when the man answered correctly who the neighbor was, Jesus told him, “Go and do the same” (“Go, and be a neighbor!”).
2. Lk. 10:36: Jesus’ concluding question, “Which man was a neighbor?”
   1. Jesus didn’t point out who was the neighbor, but asked who *proved* to be one.
3. Lk. 10:37: The lawyer knew and said, “The one who showed mercy toward him.”
   1. Meaning: the one who made himself a neighbor.
   2. The two attitudes contrasted:
      1. The lawyer: “Who do I ***have*** to love?” (“Who is my neighbor?”)
      2. The Samaritan: “How can I ***be*** a neighbor?”
4. The Samaritan’s compassion:
   1. Lk 10:33: “A Samaritan came by…and he had compassion on him.”
   2. That was what made the difference in the actions of all involved in this story told by Jesus:
      1. The robbers did not have compassion, the priest and Levite did not have compassion, but the Samaritan did! *To the Jews, their enemy! (Jn. 4:9)*
   3. Jews & Samaritans: hundreds of years of hatred and animosity *(Jn. 4:9).*
   4. Yet the Samaritan “had compassion.”
   5. The priest and Levite needed to learn what Jesus told the Pharisees in Mt. 9:11-13: “I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE” (Quoted from Hosea 6:6).
5. In his compassion, the Samaritan did what needed to be done (Like the women at Shirley):
   1. His help was impartial (He did not check his color – did not care that the man was a Jew)
   2. His help was spontaneous (He did not consult with others or form a committee)
   3. His help was personal (He got his hands dirty and blood on his clothes)
   4. His help was thorough (He did not decide, “I have done my share, somebody else can take him to the inn”) He saw it through at great personal expense!
6. The Samaritan’s compassion was sacrificial (It cost him time, effort, oil, wine and money)!

# Saints are to Show Compassion

1. Jesus said to love one another as He loved us (Jn. 13:34-35) and forgive as He forgave us (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13) – He was the example in all that He said and did!
   1. There were those who were not! – Mt. 23:2-3: The Pharisees
   2. Jesus said of the Pharisees, “Do as they say, not as they do!”
   3. The compassion of the Pharisees went only as far as they could serve themselves!
2. Christians are commanded to be compassionate (merciful), loving individuals – Col. 3:12-14:
   1. We are to have compassion for one another – I Pet. 3:8; 4:8
      1. Does your compassion go as far as it will serve you? *(Phil. 2:3-4: Not to be selfish, or like the Pharisees!)*
      2. Does your compassion go as far as doing what is best for others?

## Do you have compassion towards your brethren when they sin?

1. Does your compassion move you to warn them? *(Acts 20:31)*

## How do you treat those who fall away and then come back to God?

## Do we allow them to be swallowed up with sorrow? *(II Cor. 2:1-7 –* Vss. 6-7).

* + - 1. Do we “reaffirm” our love towards them? *(II Cor. 2:8).*
      2. “Love covers a multitude of sins” (*Prov. 10:12; I Pet. 4:8)*
  1. We are to have compassion for the lost – Jude 22-23 (“Mercy” is “compassion” in NKJ)
     1. There are those who “walk” as “enemies of the cross of Christ” *(Phil. 3:18).*
     2. We are to teach them *(as Jesus taught the crowds in Mk. 6:34)* so that they may repent and be saved from the fire! *(II Tim. 2:24-26; Jude 22-23)*
  2. We are to have compassion for our enemies – Mt. 5:43-45; Rom. 12:19-21
     1. We are to pray for those who hate us and persecute us! *Hard thing to do!*
     2. To offer them the physical help as we are able *(Rom. 12:19-21; Gal. 6:10)*
     3. To offer spiritual help when needed: to seek to correct and forgive, not to humiliate and condemn (*Col. 3:12-14; II Tim. 2:24-26; Jude 22-23)*

## How we treat others in this life is how we will be treated in the life to come!

## Mt. 5:7: The merciful will receive mercy *(means compassion and is same word used in Mt. 18:33; I Tim. 1:13, 16; Jude 22-23)*

## *Mt. 18:23-35:* The Parable of the King and the Unmerciful Servant

## A servant owed the king a huge debt and could not pay and asked for mercy. The king granted it but the servant was unmerciful to another servant. The king found out and had the unmerciful servant thrown into prison.

## Mt. 18:33-35: Jesus said it will be the same for the one who does not show mercy! We need to be merciful with cheerfulness (Rom. 12:8)!

## Paul said he was shown mercy by God so that he would be an example of the grace and loving-kindness of Jesus *(I Tim. 1:13-16: He said he was a “violent aggressor”)* – like the servant in the parable should have been!

## Mercy, compassion and forgiveness are all tied together in our actions – Col. 3:12-14

## There is power in compassion!

# Conclusion

1. Jesus quoted from Hosea 6:6 and said to the Pharisees in Mt. 9:11-13: “I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE.”
   1. Heb. 13:16: “And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” *Our acts of compassion are sacrifices that please God!*
2. The power of compassion...
   1. Was an example by the Samaritan to show how to be a neighbor *(Lk. 10:36-37)*
   2. Saved the world from sins and reconciled man to God in the death of Jesus *(Jn. 1:29)*
   3. Saved Paul and exemplified the grace and mercy of God *(I Tim. 1:13, 16)*
   4. Shown in action by the Shirley women who saved many lives and in so doing saved their plantation (Civil War, 1862)
   5. When shown by us today we will be shown compassion on Judgment Day! *(Mt. 5:7)*
3. Show the power of compassion to those around you in all that you say and do!
4. If you are not a Christian, you need to be! He has shown such compassion for you; He died and paid your debt with His own blood and promises rest for your soul. Repent and be baptized!
5. If a Christian with unrepented sin in your life, His compassion is extended to you as well, repent and He will forgive you. We will forgive you. Repent before it’s everlasting too late!
6. Whatever your requests, let them be made known ***NOW*** while we stand & sing!