

Series: Loving our City  
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Compassion, Nakuru  
Matthew 14:13-21

So the founder of the Vineyard tells an interesting story in one of his books. A guy was walking home and so a homeless person who looked beat and hungry and he was moved and even became a little angry because of the state this man was in.

He took the risk and took him home and gave him a place to shower and food to eat and had him there for a few days.

When the day came he took him to church. He walked up to his pastor quite mad. And narrated the entire story.

He said something like, "In the middle of the week I was walking around and I found a homeless person. He was angry and tired and beat and dirty. And no one was doing anything. I took him home fed him and clothed him. So I have brought him to church. Why isn't the church doing anything? What is the church doing?"

His pastor looked at him and responded, "Well the church picked a homeless person who was beat and tired and weak and took him, gave him food and place to lay his head."

This man had allowed himself to be moved by compassion and he had joined in the father's business, the family business of compassion.

#### Let's Pray

The story we are part of, the story of God is one of compassion to the world around us. Here at Trinity, we believe that Jesus offers everlasting hope. That he was not just a man in history but He was God revealed to humanity living this life with us.

And I have often said if you want to know how God would respond to anything, look at Jesus. He is the spitting image of the invisible God. He himself says this when one of his disciples asked that he shows them the father because he had often talked about the father. And Jesus looks lovingly at Philip and says, "When you see me, you have seen the father".

And he was often described as moved by compassion in everything he did. And he described what he did as doing what the father was doing. He said only what the father was saying. It seems that Jesus was doing the father's business and the father's business was compassion.

And the church, we have been called to join in the Kingdom business, the father's business, the family business. We cannot be in the Kingdom business without allowing ourselves to be moved by compassion.

The church is God's plan to heal the world. This church is God's plan for this city, alongside the rest of the body of Christ. We are called to have compassion on the sinner, the weak and

lonely, the unemployed, those who cannot afford to go to school or afford healthcare, those who cannot afford meals and the rejected of our city.

Here is a story I want us to read today from the life of Jesus

*When Jesus learned what had happened, He got on a boat and went away to spend some time in a private place. The crowds, of course, followed Jesus on foot from their cities. Though Jesus wanted solitude, when He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, and He healed the sick and the lame. At evening-time, Jesus' disciples came to Him.*

*Disciples: We're in a fairly remote place, and it is getting late; the crowds will get hungry for supper. Send them away so they have time to get back to the villages and get something to eat.*

*Jesus: They don't need to go back to the villages in order to eat supper. Give them something to eat here.*

*Disciples: But we don't have enough food. We only have five rounds of flatbread and two fish.*

*Jesus: Bring the bread and the fish to Me.*

*So the disciples brought Him the five rounds of flatbread and the two fish, and Jesus told the people to sit down on the grass. He took the bread and the fish, He looked up to heaven, He gave thanks, and then He broke the bread. Jesus gave the bread to the disciples, and the disciples gave the bread to the people; everyone ate and was satisfied. When everyone had eaten, the disciples picked up 12 baskets of crusts and broken pieces of bread and crumbs. There were 5,000 men there, not to mention all the women and children.*

**Matthew 14:13-21**

Okay, we are coming in the middle of a story. Jesus' relative John who baptised him had just been murdered by King Herod and the news had just gotten to Jesus. So he was hurting and grieving for his family. And also in some way probably knowing that he too will soon be the target of the political powers. There was a huge weight on his soul. He had enough reasons to simply turn inward and focus on himself so he desired to be alone.

You know, just like us. When we feel we have all the reasons to turn inward. You had saved enough to take yourself out for your dream retreat to the beach. You have just gotten a bonus and you want to buy the new Home Theater System. Your soul desires just a bit of time away.

This is where Jesus finds himself. And in this place, he looks around and sees that people have still followed him. And he says, “Why do they bother me now?” Have I not healed enough of them?” Have I not taught them enough for one day?” Can they just leave me alone for a day?” Can I just spend this day with myself? Can't I just spend this money on me?”

But, Jesus sees them and is moved by compassion. He sees the father's love for all those people around him. Compassion is not convenient. Compassion is not on our terms. Compassion is not for when it works out. For when you have a bit more than enough. Compassion is not for when it feels right.

So Jesus healed the sick and the lame among them. He gets into spiritual work that often takes a huge toll on one's soul, and he was already tired and needing solitude.

Then the disciples come to him and say, “Why don't you send them away to eat?”

The disciples have just noticed a need. Hey, we have done the spiritual stuff. We have prayed for them, we have preached to them, we have healed them now why don't you send them away for their physical needs like food and shelter and employment.

And Jesus says, no you take care of them. I bet the disciples never thought they would be getting into the food business anytime soon. They were just spiritual warriors.

They were like some of us who have moved from the stage of saying we will pray for you and they would actually pray for those who needed anything. Like we do here every week but they did not yet realize that meeting physical needs is part of compassion on the world.

Two years ago, when a hurricane hit Texas and some members of the church that planted us out were affected we were moved. They have often stood by us, praying for us and even with financial gifts. And I wondered how we would stand with our family while separated by seas. So I was writing to the lead pastor and just asking how we could pray.

A friend of mine wrote to me and said, in times such as these, what people hear more is financial support because they will be needing to rebuild their lives which costs money.

So I invited you and you responded in generosity and we did the reverse. Usually, you have churches sending gifts to churches in Kenya. You were bold enough to send a gift the other way.

Every time we meet people's with felt needs and we go all spiritual and mystical when we could meet their need, that is not compassion. Oh, I will pray for you why not do something about it.

I saw a meme last week of a guy knelt down in prayer asking God to show him who to love all the while being surrounded by people in need. And sometimes we are wondering where our love is needed? Where our compassion is needed.

But I like that the disciples could identify the need right in their faces. What need do you see right in front of you? In your own family? In your own village? In our won city? What is that need that seems to be inconvenient if you got involved in?

You know we live in times where it is easier to show compassion by a click on Facebook than actually being compassionate. We know at the scroll of our newsfeed what is happening across the oceans. We know of the number of people who have died of the from the coronavirus in china. We know what is happening in Syria right now.

This is great, the challenge is how we think that compassion is signing an online petition to be taken to the UN. We think that compassion is sad emoticon on Facebook and hitting the share button or sending to the WhatsApp group you are the proud admin of.

The online culture has made it easier to only engage in compassion when it is convenient and not likely to touch us or blow up in our faces.

It easily blinds us to the needs around us because we are consumed by the needs we can not do much about. Social media has a way of making you feel like you have to care about everything. And it bring some sort of fatigue and disillusionment. Because you realise there is something wrong with the word everywhere, everyday.

Around the time we gave towards hurricane relief in TX there was a friend who pointed out that it was hypocritical of the world to be crying out for TX and ignoring floods in some place in Asia. And I don't think it was necessarily aimed at me but I must say it was posted right after I shared our church's campaign on my Facebook page.

And I get what he is saying. There is something wrong with how media is skewed. Yet at the same time, it is easy to be bowed into inaction by being made to feel like you have to care about everything. Actually, you practically cannot.

You are called to love this city. Open your eyes to the needs right in front of you. These are the people God wants you to feed. Who is unemployed that God needs you to help? Who is grieving that God needs you to comfort? Who is lost that God needs you to show Jesus too? Who needs new footwear and you only have just bought an extra pair?

Yes someone in a different county had no money to go to school and it was online, you are called to respond to the young person next to you who could not go to school. And maybe that young person is just your relative. Have you realised how it is easier to be compassionate to strangers and not your won family?

So the disciples see the hungry people and Jesus asks them to feed the crowd. 5000 people counting men only. Which means we are talking about around 20000 women and kids?

It is not convenient to get into compassion because you have no idea what it will look like. Yet the resources we need to show compassion are already what we have. It is not when you become a bit wealthier or a bit more free with your time. It is with the little resources you have.

And when we are partnering with God to show compassion, he multiplies what we have in a way that surprises us too.

What if they take advantage of us? What if they take the water filter and sell them? What if they take more than one bag of food? And what if we feed one and 20 more come back?

What if I give them a job and they are ungrateful? What really are we getting into? The family business of compassion.

So how do you know where to start showing compassion? What is right before your eyes that break your heart? What surrounds you that you sometimes wish you could come to the office and say to me, "Pastor, what is the church doing about this?"

Where are you wishing the church or even the government could respond? And it is okay. You can keep tweeting about it. You can keep sharing it on Facebook but what can you do about it? How can you spend your money and your time on this?

God is already putting into your hands resources to respond to the world in compassion. More than just, I will pray for you. It will start with the bread and fish that you had gathered just for yourself.

And how would you know that compassion is something you value other than your WhatsApp forwards to many? It will show up on your balance sheet. It will show up on your bank statement and Mpesa statements.

If it does not, then God is inviting you to show compassion on the world in the same way you have received His compassion.

Here is something I can suggest. Rearrange your spending. Why not try this, when you get your paycheck, First Give, then save then live on the rest. I know it sounds smart. I did not come up with it.

And I know we are not all able to make ends meet but what little is in your hands? Can you make a commitment to generosity? To compassion? It is not in plenty that we are compassionate.

And I guess this is where the tire meets the road for believers. Do we trust Jesus enough that if we lift whatever is limited before him he and multiply it for compassion? I want us to move from a place of reading scripture and saying, "Okay, praise the Lord, that was cool" to a place where we say, "Okay, God I trust you can do it again. "

And our faith is both individual and communal. The fish and bread were both given by the boy as well as the band of Jesus followers to the crowd. The homeless guy was taken home by both this individual and the church.

So we will do this together as a church. yet, I want this to be something we also do individually. Do not relegate your call to be compassionate to the church. How can you show compassion as an individual, to the sinner, to the weak, to the poor, to the unemployed, the sick around you?

Let me invite the band back on stage as our communion servers take their place here.

**Community Prayer**

*Is anyone crying for help? God is listening,  
ready to rescue you.*

*If your heart is broken, you'll find God right there;  
if you're kicked in the gut, he'll help you catch your breath.*

*Disciples so often get into trouble;  
still, God is there every time.*

*He's your bodyguard, shielding every bone;  
not even a finger gets broken.*

*The wicked commit slow suicide;  
they waste their lives hating the good.*

*God pays for each slave's freedom;  
no one who runs to him loses out.*

***Psalms 34:17-22***

Let's pray